

“Mental health underpins everything to do with a person’s health and wellbeing, and must be prioritised by employers”

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With Mental Health Awareness Week taking place from 13 to 19 May 2024, [Towergate Health & Protection](#) is keen to increase understanding that mental health underpins all other aspects of health and wellbeing and it must be prioritised by employers, as work is an ideal place to provide support.

Debra Clark, head of wellbeing at Towergate Health & Protection says: “Wellbeing is supported by four pillars: mental, financial, physical, and social. They are all intrinsically linked and if an employee is experiencing challenges with one aspect, it is likely to impact more areas of their overall wellbeing. Some say that mental health underpins everything to do with a person’s health and wellbeing and, therefore, any mental health issue will impact an employee in their workplace as well as their home life.”

It is well reported that people who are well are more productive, more loyal and less absent from work, whether that is through direct absenteeism itself or presenteeism. According to the Health and Safety Executive, stress, depression, or anxiety accounted for the most days lost due to work-related ill health in 2022/23 – a total of 17.1 million days¹.

A range of issues and support options

Mental health and mental illness cover a large range of issues from low mood and anxiety to depression or PTSD. The options available for support follow the same scale and span from prevention to intervention.

Debra Clark adds: “Employee benefits offer so much support for mental health, from prevention to support

for serious issues. If the company has a benefits programme – and please remember the added-value services and not just the core benefits – then Mental Health Awareness Week provides a good opportunity to remind staff what is available to them and how to access it.”

For companies that do not offer employee benefits that incorporate support for mental health, then now is the time to consider introducing some: an employee assistance programme (EAP), group life assurance or a cash plan could all be less expensive than expected, and can all provide support for mental health. If the company simply cannot afford to provide any support via employee benefits, then HR professionals could use robust communications to signpost to specialist charities or regional support groups, such as Mind or the Mental Health Foundation.

Whatever the situation, it’s a good idea for all businesses to ensure their line managers are trained to be supportive. They also need to know what mental health support is available within the employee benefits programme, so they can signpost their staff to help if needed.

Debra Clark comments: “Line managers are critical when it comes to an employee’s wellbeing at work: they often know their people best and can spot subtle changes in behaviour that might indicate they need support. So managers are in a good position to really help their team members be the best versions of themselves and therefore produce their best work.”

Mind: www.mind.org.uk

Mental Health Foundation: www.mentalhealth.org.uk