

Tackling the UK Mental Health Crisis: The Key Role of Business Leaders

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Insight from Tim Ladd, Managing Director of Red Umbrella

In recent years mental health has become a more popular topic in the UK than ever before, with attitudes towards it having changed drastically compared to previous generations.

However, despite a seemingly positive widespread change in attitude, many still argue that although we've made progress, we still have a long way to go to succeed in effectively addressing the growing mental health issues in the UK.

With more people than ever being signed off work due to mental health issues, and the NHS struggling to cope with demand for mental health services, it is employers' duty to step up and help fill some of these gaps.

There was a flurry of media coverage across the UK when former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak recently [stated](#) that "something has gone wrong" since the pandemic, referring to the huge number of individuals being absent from work due to mental health problems - roughly 850,000 more since the pandemic.

Tim Ladd, managing director of [Red Umbrella](#), which specialises in providing workplace mental health training and support solutions, states that "there is much more business leaders can do stop the mental health crisis in its tracks".

He commented, "Whether or not you believe that there is a mental health 'crisis' in the UK, mental health is an issue that is having a significant negative impact, and effective solutions and systems must be put in place to handle it for the good of the country and our workforces."

He went on to explain what he sees as the solution to combat mental health issues in the workplace: “Mental health training in particular is something that should be considered by all businesses, large or small. As well as safeguarding employees and being a highly effective resource in educating people and reducing stigma, it can help businesses protect organisational function and foster growth in progress and capability.

“However, employers can’t simply rely on performative or ineffective statements and actions to ‘tick a box’ in an attempt to display an effort to address the issue. They must implement a bespoke training strategy to solve individual mental health issues in their business – which will be entirely unique to the business and the industry it operates in.

“Training is a bridge: it connects and it brings awareness. But the right training should be driven by a purpose, and that’s why off-the-shelf isn’t going to work all the time.

“Companies should work with mental health training experts that are able to appropriately identify the company’s needs, and from there create a tailored solution.

“There are companies that have much higher suicide rates than others, often due to the industry they operate in. There are some where employees appear to be happy, but there are underlying issues that are not being addressed. There may have been a specific incident in a workplace that has given rise to particular issues or needs.

“Overall, there are really specific challenges within each business and industry, which means each organisation requires different types and modes of training.

“Solutions can include suicide awareness training, Mental Health First Aid training, sexual harassment training, line management training, coping with change training such as to tackle concerns about AI or an upcoming merger, for instance. Some employees may respond better to face-to-face training, while global businesses may be in need of virtual training solutions to unite their multinational workforce.

“And this is why there shouldn’t and can’t be a one-size-fits all approach to mental health training.

“It’s important that the new Government places tackling mental ill health in the workplace at the centre of its agenda.

“But businesses have a key role to play in our battle to improve mental health in the UK, but in order to do so effectively, they must look at their workforce as a whole, working with the right training partners to assess challenges and issues and implement the right solutions.”