

Emotional wellbeing.

How to talk to your employer about your mental health.

Information for employees

While it's true **1 in 4** of us will experience a mental health issue in our lives, everyone has emotional wellbeing needs that change day to day, week to week and year to year.

At work, the responsibility to have open conversations about mental health lives with everyone but disclosing personal struggles can be daunting. However, speaking to your employer can bring a lot of relief to anyone suffering and help them get the support they need.

Don't suffer in silence. Brendan Street, Professional Head of Emotional Wellbeing at Nuffield Health discusses how conversations about mental health at work can move from a '1 in 4' to a '4 in 4' focus, because we all need emotional support in the workplace.

1. Understand where you are

Before you talk to anyone, it's a good idea to really understand where you are with your mental health and how it's affecting you personally and professionally.

Your GP or cognitive behavioural therapist can help identify what's really going on.

Knowing this information, will also enable you to confidently explain how you're feeling to your employer and why you think your condition has been exacerbated.

2. Plan for progress

Before you speak to someone at work, think about what you want to get out of the conversation.

It might be you find the hustle and bustle of commuting during rush hour has a negative impact on your stress levels, so working from home or having flexible start and finish times might really help.

If you feel out of your depth or unsupported in your role, requesting a mentor at work or more regular catch-ups with your line manager, might be what you need to feel happier and more in control.

Requesting longer periods of absence than the official policy states, to recover properly from emotional ill-health, might also be something you need to discuss.

3. Decide who to speak to

There are no set rules for who to speak to about your mental health at work, it all depends on the relationships you have. If you're not close to your boss, it might be better to speak to a HR representative first. They're also likely to have had more formal training or previous experience to assist with such sensitive issues.

If you work for a small business with no HR department, it's best to speak to a senior person you feel knows you best or who has the authority to take positive action quickly.

4. Explain your situation

Frame the conversation as an opportunity, explaining you want to be able to perform to the best of your ability. Have specific examples to hand of things you find difficult at work and how this has impacted your performance or productivity.

Make sure to talk about this when not you're feeling at your most emotionally vulnerable, or at the end of a particularly difficult day. You'll be able to explain yourself more clearly and it's less likely stress will take over, making it harder to get your point across.

To learn more about our wide range of emotional wellbeing services visit www.nuffieldhealth.com/corporate-emotional-wellbeing