



let's end mental health discrimination

Time to Change Mini Healthcheck for Employers

Over the last few years, Time to Change has collaborated with a range of organisations to deliver a completely independent Organisational Healthcheck, which helped identify practical steps they could take to reduce the stigma, fear and secrecy about mental health problems and improve employee resilience and mental wellbeing. We provided this funded service to nearly 50 organisations which were committed to do more to develop mentally healthy workplaces.

Consultants with lived experience of mental health problems conducted a policy review, staff survey and staff interviews to generate a report for each organisation on its health with regards to mental health stigma and discrimination.

The Healthcheck report demonstrated, with data and anecdotal evidence, areas to make improvements and provided organisations with a series of recommendations to realise its ambitions to be a supportive employer and reduce stigma and discrimination in the workplace. Using our learning from the Healthchecks completed, we have designed this Mini Healthcheck toolkit for employers to deliver within your own organisation. The Healthcheck is designed to enable you to take stock of how mentally healthy your organisation is and identify practical steps you can take to further reduce the stigma, fear and secrecy about mental health problems in the workplace. Whether you've already signed the **Time to Change Employer Pledge** and are looking to take the next steps on your organisation's journey to tackle mental health stigma, or, perhaps this is the first time you have started to look at mental health in your workplace, this resource is aimed to guide you through Time to Change's unique Healthcheck tool.

This Mini Healthcheck toolkit aims to:

- Help you identify gaps between the aspirations of your mental health-related policies, and actual practice and culture.
- Highlight discrepancies between how management perceive they are treating those

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with mental health problems and how those employees who experience them feel they are treated.

- Facilitate practical steps your organisation can take to close these gaps.

We will take you through seven simple steps that will help you take stock of where your organisation currently is, enable you to look forward and then plan clear actions for the months ahead. These steps are:

1. Review your organisation's policies and practices
2. Evaluate your progress so far
3. Review your internal communications
4. Consult with your staff
5. Step back and reflect
6. Plan and take action
7. Share your findings and next steps

Good luck with your Mini Healthcheck!

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Step 1: Review your organisation's policies and practices

Whether you choose to have a standalone mental health policy or address mental health within existing policies, it is important that managers and employees are informed about what they should do when encountering mental ill health. Your next steps:

- Start by reviewing your current policies to ensure your workplace is supportive of people experiencing mental health problems using the Time to Change Policy & Practice Checklist in **Appendix 1**.
- Once you've done this, consider implementing a standalone mental health or wellbeing policy to highlight the organisation's commitment to supporting your employees with their mental wellbeing. Ensure this links to your existing policies.
- Bring your policies to life by integrating case studies into existing policy documents and training to highlight to managers and staff how these operate in practice.
- Promote positive health behaviours and prevention measures such as introducing **Wellness Action Plans (WAPs)** for staff to support them to stay well and signposting to information on **managing stress** and **staying mentally healthy at work**.
- Lastly, review your organisation's lifecycle of employment, from recruitment through to returning to work after an absence. Look at every interaction where mental health may come up as an issue for an employee to ensure policies and support tools create a positive environment for someone to recover and continue thrive at work.

Step 2: Evaluate your progress so far

Whether you signed the Time to Change Employer Pledge a few months or a few years ago, or are looking to sign the Pledge in the near future, it's useful to look back at your organisation's progress to date in raising awareness about mental health in the workplace.

If you have signed the Employer Pledge, now is your chance to dust down the Pledge board and dig out your organisation's action plan. Take a chance to evaluate the activities you have completed as part of your action plan by asking yourself the following questions:

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1. Which activities has your organisation delivered to raise awareness about mental health and tackle stigma at work?
2. Did these activities go to plan?
3. If things didn't go to plan, how can this learning be used for future activities? How can you adapt future activities so they are successful?
4. Why did some activities get cancelled or postponed? How can you remove these blockers in future?
5. Have you measured the impact of these activities on staff engagement and awareness? What can you learn from these findings? If you haven't measured them, how can you put in place a measurement process in future?

If your organisation has not signed the Employer Pledge yet, you can still take an opportunity to evaluate the activities you have organised to date. This is a chance to start thinking about the actions that have been completed that could be included as part of your action plan as you get ready to sign the Pledge, so start by asking yourself the following questions:

1. Has your organisation delivered any activities to raise awareness about mental health and tackle stigma at work?
2. Have you measured the impact of these activities on staff engagement and awareness?
3. If there has not been any action to date, are there any particular reasons for this?
4. Who are your allies and senior supporters who can help you drive this agenda?
5. When would be a good time for your organisation to sign the Employer Pledge?

Step 3: Review your internal communications

One of our key findings from carrying out Healthchecks in the past few years is that organisations often offer fantastic support tools to their staff but simply do not communicate this offer effectively. Investing in these tools is worthless if staff find it difficult to find and use the support when they need it. Our top tips in this area are:

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- Take a look at how you are currently communicating your organisation's policies and support tools. What communication tools does your organisation use? Is your support offer clearly signposted through the most used methods? People take in information and learn in a range of ways so it is essential to use a variety of communication methods whilst ensuring this is inclusive, easy to access and the messaging is simple.
- It is sometimes useful to examine how an employee would be aware of each policy or support tool and consider the pathway they would have to travel to reach that information.
- Often, a really simple way to reach your employees and highlight the support tools and policies that are available to them is to create a clear section on your staff intranet that can act as a portal for policies, signposting to support, awareness raising and sharing stories or blogs from employees with lived experience of mental health problems. This can be further supported by regular communication through all staff briefing sessions, staff newsletters and desk drops to keep a 'constant on' for your communications around mental health in your workplace.
- Lastly, it's particularly important that line managers are fully informed about all of the support tools on offer as this may often be the most effective way to communicate this information.

Step 4: Consult with your staff

One of the most valuable elements we've found at Time to Change in the Healthcheck process is consultation with staff. This will enable you to find out if they are aware of your organisation's policies and support tools, how these are working for them and if they were to experience a mental health problem, whether they feel supported and comfortable sharing with colleagues and their manager.

You could do this formally or informally, but it is essential to ensure that staff feel that are able to share their views in confidence. It is also essential to ensure you are reaching a

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broad range of employees from differing levels of seniority, divisions and those with and without lived experience of mental health problems to get a rounded picture.

Here are some ways you could choose to engage with your staff and gather their views:

- Focus groups – An informal discussion group facilitated by an internal or external colleague to explore perceptions, opinions and attitudes around mental health in their workplace.
- Skip level meetings – There are meetings that bring senior management to talk to non-managerial employees to engage staff, share and listen to stories in a non-judgemental way and demonstrate commitment from the top.
- 121 interviews – These are particularly useful to gain insight from employees who have experienced mental health problems in a safe and confidential environment.
- Staff survey – A mass reaching survey, either completed on paper or online, can allow you to gather views and opinions from a wide range of staff members in an anonymous way.

Take a look at our recommended Mini Healthcheck questions in **Appendix 2** to help focus your information gathering. You may also want to include specific questions about the effectiveness of your organisation's support tools or awareness of a particular event or activity. You can choose to integrate these questions into existing staff engagement surveys, or run a standalone consultation.

Step 5: Step back and reflect

Now your exploration is complete, take a step back and reflect on your findings. Here are some questions to help you summarise your discoveries:

1. Are your policies and practices meeting the minimum standards from the Policy and Practice Checklist in Appendix 1 or do you want to aim higher and ensure you are implementing best practice policies?
2. What has your progress been to date to raise awareness about mental health and

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tackle stigma in the workplace?

3. How are you communicating your strategy and activities on this agenda to your staff?
4. How supported do your staff feel about mental health at work?
5. Do your staff feel they are encouraged to be open about mental health in your organisation? What are your aspirations as an organisation? Where would you like to get to in 3 months, 6 months, 1 year and 5 years?

Step 6: Plan and take action

It's time to close the gaps between your aspirations as an employer and what you have found is happening in practice. You may find there is a specific area to focus on such as communication, or creating a mental health policy, or you may want to put together a comprehensive plan to tackle multiple areas. Hopefully the steps above have helped you identify the gaps and areas to focus your resources on. Here are the five key themes we identified across Time to Change Healthchecks:

Clear communications of policies & support tools

Organisations can put much investment into support tools and have policies in place that recognise support for employees experiencing mental health problems. But if these are not communicated in an effective way staff will find it difficult to navigate and use these when in need.

Formal vs. informal

Generally within smaller organisations there is quite often an informal approach and there has been a strong sense of being family like and staff genuinely caring about each other. In this way, staff do feel very supported but this informality can mean that it is difficult to know what support is available and what one is entitled to with supporting seeming ad hoc. In a similar way, organisations that appear bureaucratic and formal can seem unsupportive and uncaring with implementation of policies often being inflexible to an individual's needs. It's important to gain a balance between the two to ensure employees feel supported when they

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become unwell whilst offering consistency of support by formalising processes and communicating these to the workforce.

Key role of line manager

Line managers are the cornerstone in supporting team members to manage stress and mental wellbeing, and encouraging open conversations about mental health at work. When line managers are unavailable or unapproachable there can be detrimental effects on how supported an employee may feel. Managers are also essential to gaining a level of consistency to deliver the support tools that an organisation has in place.

Support for managers

We have recognised that line managers are important to implementing a supportive and mentally healthy workplace but it is also essential that they are supported too. Building managers' awareness of mental health and support tools in the workplace and their confidence to have those conversations with their teams is essential to successfully creating a supportive working environment. You can do this by delivering specific line manager training on managing mental health in the workplace, embedding elements around mental health in existing manager induction and offering signposts to information to build their literacy around **supporting someone at work**.

Impact of speaking out

When employees have been open about their own mental health problems this has had a positive impact on shifting attitudes and demonstrating support received from the organisation as well as opening up the conversation about mental health at work. Offering short talks, blogs or networking to encourage staff to share their experiences and also reassure others to speak out too knowing they will be supported adequately.

Step 7: Share your findings and next steps

Now think about how you are going to share your findings along with next steps and recommendations with senior management, team members, staff who have participated in

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the consultation and any other key stakeholders. This is an important step in closing the communication loop so that employees stay engaged, can see the value in their participation and recognise the actions your organisation is committed to take forward.

You can do this in a number of ways such as:

- An all staff briefing to share key findings
- Staff workshops to explore next steps
- An email message or article from senior management
- Sharing detailed reports on the staff intranet

Remember to continue to keep staff informed of your mental health and wellbeing activities with a 'constant on' approach. Think about developing a communications plan for the coming months and perhaps consider introducing a different theme or activity each month to keep staff engaged and drive wellbeing forward.

If your organisation has yet to sign the Employer Pledge, you are now ready to start completing your action plan with the key actions you have identified as part of your Mini Healthcheck. Take a look at our **guide** to completing the action plan and signing the Pledge can help clearly demonstrate your organisation's commitment to raising awareness about mental health and tackling stigma in the workplace.

Good luck with your Mini Healthcheck and your journey to ending mental health stigma!

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Appendix 1: Policy and Practice Checklist

Relevant legislation

Employment Rights Act 1996

Equality Act 2010 (EqA)

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Most employers should have the following policies and procedures in place. Where possible we have set out minimum requirements that should be included in those policies or resources. Some employers may include more detail that will help employers demonstrate a commitment to best practice in relation to mental wellbeing in the workplace.

Recruitment Policy

Minimum

- Commitment to open and fair recruitment
- No health questions during recruitment unless within EqA permitted exceptions

Best Practice

- Inclusive recruitment processes
- Clear guidelines on referral to Occupational Health
- Use the [Mind and CIPD](#) template health questionnaire)

Disciplinary / Dismissal and Grievance Policy

Minimum

- Clear procedures for conducting meetings and appeals
- In line with [ACAS guidelines](#):

Best practice

- Employee's right to be accompanied
- Arrangements for reasonable adjustments to assist employees with a long term mental health problem or disability
- Separate procedure to manage performance issues (see below)

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Minimum

- Clear guidance for vulnerable employees wishing to raise concerns

Best practice

- Commitment to support for employees with mental health problems and other disabilities

Health and Safety Policy

Minimum

- Acknowledging workplace stress as a health and safety concern

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Best practice

- Managing stress and recognising the cause of stress at work following [HSE](#) guidelines / focus on cause and effect of stress at work
- Provide guidance for managers on supporting mental health at work such as Mind's guide to [managing stress](#) and [managing and supporting mental health at work](#)

Maternity / Paternity / Adoption / Parental / Dependents Leave Policy

Working Time / Leave Entitlement

Minimum

- Clear guidance for employees about paid and unpaid leave

Best practice

- Enhanced entitlement to time off for medical/counselling appointments or adopting flexible working practices (see below)

Flexible Working Policy

Minimum

- Right to request flexible working for parents/carers

Best practice

- Organisational approach to work/life balance e.g. flexible working/home working
- A policy that applies to all employees and recognising the value of flexible working

Sickness Absence Policy

Minimum

- Guidance on sickness absence and sick pay

Best practice

- Organisational approach to managing sickness absence and return to work
- Commitment to implementing Occupational Health recommendations or identifying and implementing reasonable adjustments
- Provide guidance for managers on managing return to work such as [CIPD's resource](#)
- Provide guidance for managers on [managing someone who is experiencing a mental health problem](#).

Redundancy Policy

Equality and Diversity Policy

Minimum

- Acknowledgement of duty to make reasonable adjustments under EqA

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Pay and Other Benefits

Some employers may have additional policies and procedures again aimed at demonstrating a commitment to best practice in relation to mental wellbeing in the workplace. These may include:

- Performance management
 - Clear guidance on making referrals to Occupational Health
- Wellbeing Policy
 - Indicating a positive commitment to maintaining staff wellbeing
 - Highlight key support provisions for employees experiencing stress and other mental health problems at work
- Organisational commitment to an open workplace culture.
- Organisational approach to personal development
- Organisational approach to change management
 - A policy recognising the impact of change on mental wellbeing and taking steps to minimise that impact
- Training for line managers on soft skills and people management
 - Including managing stress and mental health of a team
- Engaging with employees or seeking views of employees with mental health problems in developing policies and procedures
- Support provision
 - e.g. Employee Assistance Programmes, private health insurance, CBT, in-house counselling service

Additional guidance and recommendations may be found at:

- [Mind](#)
- [CIPD](#)
- [Health and Safety Executive](#)
- [ACAS](#)
- [Employment Tribunal Guidance](#)
- [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

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Appendix 2: Time to Change Mini Healthcheck Questions

1. **Have you experienced stress, low mood or mental health problems while in employment?**
 - a. Yes, only whilst an employee of this organisation
 - b. Yes, only whilst an employee of a previous organisation
 - c. Yes, both at this organisation and at previous organisations
 - d. No, never
 - e. Prefer not to answer

2. **How often have you gone into work when experiencing poor mental health (for example stress, anxiety, depression or other)?**
 - a. Always
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Rarely
 - d. Never
 - e. Don't know/cannot remember

3. **Are you aware of any support your organisation offers to staff on wellbeing and mental health?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

4. **If yes, please tell us what that support is.**

5. **How would you describe your current mental health?**
 - a. Very good, please go to question 7
 - b. Good, please go to question 7

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- c. Moderate, please go to question 6
 - d. Poor, please go to question 6
 - e. Very poor, please go to question 6
 - f. Don't know, please go to question 7
 - g. Prefer not to answer, please go to question 7
- 6. Do you think that your moderate or poor mental health is the result of any of the below?**
- a. Problems at work
 - b. Problems outside work in personal life
 - c. A combination of problems at work and outside in your personal life
 - d. Don't know
- 7. In your opinion, does your organisation encourage staff to talk openly about mental health problems?**
- a. Yes – very much
 - b. Yes – a little
 - c. No – not very much
 - d. No – not at all
 - e. Don't know
- 8. In your opinion, how well does your organisation support employees who experience mental health problems?**
- a. Very well
 - b. Fairly well
 - c. Not very well

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- d. Not at all well
- e. Don't know

9. What could your employer do to improve mental wellbeing for employees?

FOR MANAGERS

10. How confident do you feel in supporting people you line manage with mental wellbeing at work?

- a. Very confident
- b. Confident
- c. Not confident
- d. Not at all confident

11. Do you feel you have been given sufficient information and guidance from your organisation on how to support people you line manage that experience mental ill health?

- a. Yes, more than sufficient
- b. Yes, sufficient
- c. No, insufficient
- d. No, none at all

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