Workplace wellbeing needs holistic approach

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Credit: University of Warwick

Experts from the University of Warwick have contributed to new guidance on promoting positive mental health at work.

Erika Kispeter and Sally Wright from the University of Warwick Institute for Employment Research (IER) examined how Suffolk County Council has responded to the challenge of managing mental health at work. The case study is published today [10] alongside new Acas guidance to mark World Mental Health Day.

The new Acas guidance aims to help employers promote positive mental health in their workplaces. Employers are encouraged to read the materials and develop practices and policies for their own workplaces.

The case study concluded that:

- Senior management support is essential to the success of mental health training programmes
- Training should be part of a broader organisational strategy and be reflected in business objectives
- Training materials need to be tailored to an organisation's unique needs
- The 'train the trainer' model can be effective but staff volunteers need support and time allocated to conduct training separate to their day-to-day responsibilities

Many employers recognise that there is a strong business case for supporting the mental health of their staff – healthier staff are more productive and take less time off work due to sickness.

The researchers found that there is also a need to take an equalities-based approach, and to consider how broader social issues including job insecurity, outsourcing of work, and severe income inequalities increase UK workers' vulnerability to mental ill-health.

Dr Kispeter said: "Steps taken by employers to improve mental health at work typically focus on individual workers' and line managers' ability to respond to workers' mental health issues, overlooking the need to take broader structural issues into account.

"Our case study highlighted the need to also think about quality of work, job security, and employment relations when managing mental health at work."

Tom Neil, Head of Acas guidance, added: "Most managers are used to dealing with physical ill health but can be less confident on the best approach for handling mental ill health.

"With one in six workers experiencing mental health issues it makes sense for managers to have an understanding of the signs and approaches that can be taken.

"Acas' new guidance can help managers develop the rights skills to support individuals as well as creating a culture of wellbeing in their workplace."

More information: Promoting positive mental health at work by creating a sense of shared responsibility, [www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/6/h/ … -work-case-study.pdf](www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/6/h/ …-work-case-study.pdf)

Provided by University of Warwick

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