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INTRODUCTION TO EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION FOR HR AND MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION



Equality, diversity and inclusion (“EDI”) covers any type of difference between individuals. Managing EDI includes more than merely complying with the legislation but more to do with encouraging and promoting equal opportunities in the workplace and avoiding

any type of discrimination. All companies should value differences and ensure employees feel integrated into a dynamic team. An inclusive and positive working culture is ideally what employers should strive for and is part of good people management.

Definitions

Equality: It is ensuring equal accessibility, treatment, outcomes, resources and opportunities in the workplace. Each employee must be given an equal opportunity to work and deliver in their job role successfully, no matter what their background is. An employer needs to identify barriers and biases (whether unconscious or not) in order to make a more inclusive environment, and, by taking positive steps to overcome discrimination, marginalisation, systematic oppression, unfairness and disadvantages. The leading legislation is the Equality Act 2010.

Diversity: Is the differences, similarities and unique characteristics we each have. It can even be described as different groups of people from a particular culture. For example, religious groups, groups of people with similar ethnic backgrounds or working backgrounds. Each individual will fit into more than one “type” of diversity group.

Diversity is important because it brings different thought processes, abilities and experiences together. It allows us the opportunity to find solutions in different ways given different thinking styles. New ways of thinking helps us appreciate that circumstances can be handled in more than one way and it does not necessarily mean one approach, idea, belief or thought process is better or correct in comparison to the other.

Inclusion: Is creating an inclusive environment regardless of differences such as culture, gender, age, thinking styles and nationalities etc. It is about providing a space in the workplace where all voices are heard and acknowledged with mutual respect, regardless of their backgrounds.

All managers should make the time to look at their own behaviours and evaluate how they behave and lead, whether inclusive or not. It is key for management and HR to consider their own awareness around equality, diversity and inclusion. Awareness training may also be useful.

Equality Act 2010

In the UK, under the Equality Act 2010, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation, are all considered to be protected characteristics covered by discrimination law to give employees protection against being treated unfairly. It includes employees who identify as neurodiverse.

Problems with discriminatory treatment at work:

- Impact on an employee’s wellbeing, performance at work and their motivation to stay in the job;
- An employer failing to recognise skills based abilities, potential and experiences; and
- Resulting in grievances, ACAS settlements or

Tribunal claims with significant legal costs, compensation and settlements that could have been avoided.

Intersectionality

Definition: Accepting that individuals are unique and that we should respect each other's beliefs,

opinions and ways of working. We should try to make the effort to learn about and be curious about differences around us in society, irrespective of our typical "diversity groups". We are all likely to have overlapping identities based on our personal experiences and so may fit into more than one diversity category.

WHY EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IS IMPORTANT IN THE WORKPLACE

Promoting and supporting equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace is vital and shows effective people management. We must value our staff as individuals in their own right. However, at the same time it is important to ensure that we implement an inclusive environment where everyone feels able to participate and to achieve their potential in the workplace. Effective equality, diversity and inclusion management is not simply complying with UK legislation. It should include employee engagement and wellbeing support. Over recent years, employers are recognising the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion, which not only benefits the employees but also the company to meet business needs and objectives.

Our behaviour depends on how inclusive we are and the more inclusive we are, the more likely we are to appreciate, encourage and embrace diversity. Both need to work hand in hand so that employees feel valued and supported. In turn,



this results in better performance, achieving results and an agile and innovative environment, improving business outcomes.

Everyone deserves opportunities to develop their skills and talent to their full potential, to work in a safe and supportive environment, to be fairly

rewarded and recognised for the work they do and to have a meaningful voice on matters that affect both the company and employees.

It is also crucial for the sustainability of a business in line with the current economy. HR has a key role to play when it comes to leading their organisations on equality, diversity and inclusion. An inclusive employer will have fair policies and practices in place and do all they can to have a diverse range of people working together.

Individual differences include visible and

non-visible factors. For example, personal characteristics such as background, culture, personality, work style, accent and language. It is important to recognise that the same approach to managing everyone does not achieve fairness and equality. People have different needs, values and belief systems.

Leaders, talent and HR professionals must ensure that the workplace practices and policies are fair but also flexible and inclusive in order to support both employees and business needs.

HOW TO SETUP AN EDI PROCESS IN THE COMPANY

Starting points:

- Businesses should examine their own people management practices and policies and also, diversity data to understand where the current barriers are.
- Targeted initiatives are needed and while there is no legal requirement, it is advisable to implement a written equality, diversity and inclusion policy. This shows that the company is serious about being an inclusive employer and can encourage employees to treat each other equally.
- A coherent strategy is also required to make sure the business practices are compatible with an inclusive culture and embracing

differences. It is best to include this strategy into the company values or ethos, if possible.

- HR, managers and operational staff should consider participating in equality, diversity and inclusion awareness training.

Establish the baseline in the company:

- Undertake an audit of current processes and policies that are already in place.
- The baseline will allow you to review where the company is currently in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion and it will allow the company leaders to decide which areas need focusing on or are lacking.

- It will allow the company to identify any gaps and formulate a plan.
- **NB:** It may not be possible to obtain data and evidence on each area that the company is investigating because of the current processes and systems that will be in place.
- It may also depend on the type of data the company is allowed to collect due to legal and privacy reasons and again this depends on the nature of the company.

It is only once a company knows what areas are lacking within the business that it can begin

the steps to consider appropriate strategies for change.

One example of collecting equality, diversity and inclusion data is asking the employees to confirm their demographics (on an optional basis), such as:

- Gender;
- Sexual orientation;
- Religion;
- Identifying as disabled or having a long term health condition;
- Age.

RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Some companies will start collecting data from the start of the recruitment process such as the application form, screening, assessments, job offer and employment contract.

Data from the recruitment process is highly useful, as it should capture data on the employees' demographics and show if there is actual or unconscious bias when it comes to the current hiring process.

However, there are some companies that do not capture the above data at the recruitment point in order to reduce bias from the outset and therefore these companies may be limited on

the statistical and evidential data they will have at the earliest stage of the recruitment process.

Other areas of data collecting could involve job promotions and leaving surveys.

- One common example since COVID-19 is agile and flexible working. It would be useful to see the demographics of who applies for agile/flexi working at the company and who it is approved for. Consider if this area can be improved and if there are identified gaps.
- Flexible working is especially beneficial for those employees who fall into demographics around disabilities, caring

responsibilities or those with other personal commitments. A company may want to review its current employment contracts, contract types offered and whether it offers full time only or both part time/job share and full time opportunities to provide more flexibility.

- If a company is really lacking in data and evidence, it may choose to roll out either named or anonymous employee engagement surveys periodically through the year but it would be limited to those who feel comfortable to reply.

HOW TO ASSESS AND EVALUATE EDI IN THE BUSINESS

Bringing all the evidence and statistical data together will allow a company to identify if there are likely barriers to different groups of people and any challenges on equality, diversity and inclusion.

The specific areas of concern could be different categories such as communications, recruitment/talent management, performance management and working practices.

A company should consider new objectives and draft a plan of the relevant areas that need to be improved and identify possible ways in which the company leaders will implement the new business strategies. Throughout this process it is advised to collect any relevant data (where possible, and legally permitted to do so) and compare it with past data to undertake a thorough evaluative review of the evidence.

How is a company going to consider and discuss equality, diversity and inclusion in its strategic

planning?

- Business plans;
- Customer discussions;
- Marketing and communications;
- Company's mission, ethos, purpose and values;
- HR policies;
- Company targets;
- People and talent management;
- Use of language, for example, gender pronouns.
- **NB:** One point to consider is how often the current policies are being reviewed by the company. It is ideal to review them at least every year to ensure they are kept legally up to date.

INCORPORATING EDI INTO THE BUSINESS STRATEGY

There are many ways in which a company could incorporate equality, diversity and inclusion into their business strategy:

- Produce an equality, diversity and inclusion annual report (made available to the employees and customers);
- Consider what targets around equality, diversity and inclusion need to be set based on the current statistical data that has been audited;
- Raise topical discussions around equality, diversity and inclusion in the company wide meetings; not just with leaders but with all employees;
- Keep up-to-date with the law and review policies via checks, audits and consultations;
- Consider introducing a communication strategy to encourage conversations around equality, diversity and inclusion;
- Consider how to raise equality, diversity and inclusion with customers/stakeholders;
- Draft processes and provide appropriate training to line managers to assist them with responding appropriately to diversity needs in their team;
- Review how the current talent process is aiming to embrace, develop and retain diversity of employees and candidates;
- A company may even choose to share the new policy strategies with the employees outlining the audit process. This will demonstrate to the employees that the company is committed about making its policies and processes more inclusive;
- A company may even consider to partner with external organisations and charitable organisations that share the same ethos;
- Involve those who are vital to the decision making process such as stakeholders in the board meetings and shareholder meetings;
- A company may choose to have equality, diversity and inclusion “champions” who are experienced employees with sufficient qualifications, skills and training on encouraging topics around inclusivity in the workplace;
- Prioritise collecting and using quality people data to identify barriers and solutions.

Professional standards

The BSI and ISO human resource management suite and Investors in People, provide guidelines to assist companies and organisations to recognise the actual and potential value of

their employees and ensure people policies and working practices are free from bias.

You can find out more about applying for the BSI, ISO and IIP standards via their respective

websites:

<https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/standards/>

<https://www.iso.org/>

<https://www.investorsinpeople.com/>

BEST PRACTICE FOR RECRUITING TALENT

For HR, recruiters and resourcing staff

Most employees want to work for an employer who they feel valued by and feel comfortable to share their voice with. Employees naturally want to feel motivated and listened to. Not just by management but by fellow employees and also those in lower grade posts. It is therefore vital that embracing equality, diversity and inclusion and raising awareness around this takes place with employees of all grades so that they are aware that their employer is keen to create an inclusive workforce.

Companies should ensure they incorporate equality, diversity and inclusion objectives into job descriptions and person specifications and assess this during performance reviews, recognising and rewarding achievement.

Recruitment and talent management is considered in three different areas: recruitment, developing talent and retaining talent. A company may have a delegated chief people officer/head of talent and/or head of reward.

1. Recruitment process and attracting talent:

- Some employers may stipulate that only certain candidates from specific universities or with specific degree grades can apply for the job role. Some may argue this could be limiting diversity right from the outset. It doesn't mean that those with a lower degree class will not bring value, as they may have other skills and experience.
- Some employers will hire trainees under a graduate scheme but over the recent years we have seen more younger candidates deciding that they want to start their career at the age of 16-18. These graduate schemes will normally involve a prerequisite that the candidates need a degree and again it would mean those without a degree would not qualify. In this instance alternative schemes such as paid internships and apprenticeships are useful to allow an alternative route.
- An employer and recruiter must bear in mind, the more restrictions that are

placed in job descriptions and person specifications, the more narrow the process becomes in limiting diversity of talent, later down the recruitment process. One example is limiting applications to the number of years of experience. While this may be required for say, senior decision making roles, it may not be the only contributing factor to demonstrate an applicant's competence. They may have less practical experience than an applicant with more experience but be more able and high achieving, in comparison.



- An alternative method of assessment of applications could involve a recruiter suggesting that their employer client carry out an assessment day with shortlisted applicants. This would allow all shortlisted applicants to be assessed in the same way such as interview, group interview, a test or presentation.
- It is worth having these discussions when kickstarting the hiring process before job adverts become live and especially if you are working with a new customer as a recruitment specialist.
- A recruiter could encourage their employer to include the benefits of working in the company and promoting diverse opportunities such as flexible working/ job share, inclusive company culture and pointing out relevant employee networking or support groups. Furthermore, the use of language in job adverts and person specifications is something employees will look at when deciding whether or not to apply. Is your customer using inclusive and simple, jargon-free language? If not, could you assist with rephrasing to inclusive language?
- You may be working with some customers who are keen to diversify their staff within the organisation. It would be useful to ask your customer for specific written guidelines

on what their equality, diversity and inclusion requirements are.

- Recruiters may also wish to encourage their customers to include the following within the job advert: The employer *“aims to be inclusive with all candidates and applicants, irrespective of gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, race, ethnicity and nationality”*. Also, remember that these are not the only diversity groups and there are others such as education and background, which whilst not in the Equality Act, can sometimes be a barrier to otherwise new talent.

Here are some demographics which a employer should avoid considering (or asking questions about) when recruiting candidates:

- Location of candidate;
- Age;
- Specific types of qualification – e.g. class of degree or university;
- Career breaks;
- Health declarations or requests for reasonable adjustments;
- Unfamiliar names or different backgrounds.

During any interview or assessment day, a recruiter should arrange a diverse hiring panel with at least two or more people interviewing a

candidate (where possible, and this may not be possible for small businesses).

A scoring scheme on skills and competence is normally used in most interviews and on an assessment day and you should advise management to keep written notes for auditing purposes. This focuses on evidence of competence and not personal preferences.

2. Development of employees:

- Employers and HR must be competent in equality, diversity and inclusion awareness and if not, may need training on the hiring process. It is not just about having policies in place. It is equally important that management are well equipped and competent to be able to encourage equality, diversity and inclusion discussions with their employees. They also need to be mindful of the likely consequences of narrowing the recruitment funnel with too many pre-requisites in job specifications.
- HR should encourage all employees to take part in equality, diversity and inclusion, disability and mental health awareness training to set a benchmark of what is expected and to ensure an all-round inclusive, trusting and positive working environment.
- Employers should keep a record of who stays in the company and who leaves so

that they can monitor the diversity trends over the year.

- Employers should consider arranging team building days for all employees. It is important that team building opportunities are accessible to all. For example whilst residential courses can be exciting opportunities, they may not suit those with health difficulties and/or caring commitments.
- Another factor to consider is the wellbeing of employees and those who may find large crowds or long distance training locations stressful. Management should ensure that an employee who is neurodivergent and/or with physical or mental health difficulties can effectively participate in such events and agree adjustments to create an inclusive environment.

3. Retaining employees:

- Generally speaking those companies that embrace and lead on equality, diversity and inclusion tend to report higher % of employee retention.
- Many people leave their job because they do not feel that they belong or are valued in their company.
- Consider flexible working arrangements to adapt to an employee's change of circumstances, such as a new medical

diagnosis or caring responsibilities. Is the company capable of implementing a flexible working policy to allow some employees to work from home even if it involves hybrid working? (a combination of work from home and office based). This seems to be a more common process but is still not implemented by many office based roles. However, agile working may not be a viable option for frontline roles. Even if it is not an option, an employer could consider if an alternative job role (with a similar paygrade) would suit an employee's change of circumstances.

- Part of the equality, diversity and inclusion process involves incorporating a wellbeing and mental health awareness policy. It is advisable that employers consider implementing a wellbeing or mental health at work policy to show employees it is there to support those who may otherwise fear that they are being judged if they disclose personal vulnerabilities. Mental health and wellbeing in work awareness training is available nationwide and some employers may wish to delegate this to HR and wellbeing champions or mental health first aiders. More can be found here about mental health first aid training: <https://mhfaengland.org/>
- Does the company provide a free employee

assistance scheme to their employees to support their wellness? There are plenty of affordable options for businesses of all sizes, including start ups. This can also include counselling and talking therapy support and an adviceline/helpline to manage their financial and personal circumstances in a confidential space.

- It is also good practice for the company to ensure that they have notice boards onsite and on the intranet online about topics of equality, diversity and inclusion, disability and mental health awareness and support so that employees feel supported.
- Some employees may report to management/HR that they have medical conditions or disabilities, mental health difficulties and/or neurodiversity. For those who have requested reasonable adjustments, the company should discuss this with a HR adviser or refer the employee to an outsourced occupational health therapist who can assess the employee and provide a written report with recommended workplace adjustments. Whilst these will be subject to business needs, it is good practice to sit down with the employee and involve the line manager to discuss reasonable adjustments to support the employee. It would also give the employee the opportunity to share what they think will

help.

- Access to Work is a department with the DWP and they may be able to support the employee with ergonomic equipment, mental health support and travel to work allowances. The employee would need to make an application themselves (over the phone or online), as the grant would be assessed following medical evidence but it would allow the employer to further support the employee where outside of the occupational health report with costs of equipment. This is a free service from the DWP for employees with long term health conditions and disabilities.

More information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

Disability Confident Leadership

- A company may wish to consider joining the Disability Confident charter with the Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) to encourage providing opportunities to candidates and current employees with disabilities or long-term health conditions. Becoming a Disability Confident Leader would demonstrate that the company is keen to lead the way and challenge societal attitudes and bias towards employees with disabilities and/or health conditions including hidden illnesses and mental health difficulties.

- Further information can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/disability-confident-how-to-sign-up-to-the-employer-scheme>

Flexible and remote working arrangements

Flexible or remote working depends on business needs and whether it is feasible for the company. If it is doable, this could be offered to employees either on an ad hoc basis or after their probation, permanently. The benefits of this is that it will significantly reduce commuting time and manage family, caring or other personal commitments. Alternatively, you may wish to consider flexible working hours.

Use of pronouns in the workplace

Employers should understand, support and respect employees with the use of pronouns and/or managing non-binary, transgender and LGBTQ+ inclusions. This should be included within the company's EDI policy. It is crucial management avoid making assumptions about someone because of the way they look, sound, behave or dress. Good practice involves training all managers, HR and employees. The company may even decide to designate the role to one member of staff who acts as a lead contact right from the start of the recruitment process through to being employed.

Companies will have employees and customers

who identify as LGBTQ+, transgender and/or non-binary and they should feel respected, included and empowered. It is important that HR keep the company's policies up to date and in line with current societal changes. Any form of harassment, bullying, discrimination and/or victimisation should be taken seriously and all employees must understand and comply with the company's policies. HR should also ensure that the job application forms, recruitment process, DBS checks, payroll systems, web profiles, building passes, uniform, pension records, emails, voicemails, the intranet, business cards, security clearance processes and photos are all fully up to date and kept inclusive.

Employees should be given the opportunity to advise management and colleagues what pronouns they wish to use. It is important that managers and HR speak with employees and ask them if they require any support with this. Some employees may advise that they wish to add their pronouns to their name badge/pass and their email signature, for example.



LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT FOR MANAGERS INCLUDING TRAINEE MANAGEMENT AND HR

Here are some suggestions of useful skills and techniques that a line manager/operations manager/HR should use to support their employees:

- Get to know the team - As a manager, it is important to make a conscious effort to engage with the team. Showing an interest in employees and forming a good working rapport will lead to better productivity, fewer sickness absences and fewer people leaving their job. No matter how busy a manager is, they should always make time to catch up with each employee and also have team meetings.
- Avoid making assumptions and instead ask open ended questions to employees as to how they feel, if they are getting on well in their role, what is going well and what is not, and if there is anything that they need help with.
- Ensure 1:1 meetings are held in a quiet room away from other colleagues to give them the opportunity to feel comfortable to share their thoughts. Likewise give the line manager the opportunity to provide feedback.
- Ensure expectations, targets and goals are provided to all employees and that they have the resources to refer back to. For example, targets could be put on the noticeboard, online intranet, emailed attachments or even a printed handout.
- Review employees' workload every month and as often as possible. Good communication will allow both the manager and the employee to consider any overlap of work, postponed timelines and if the workload is balanced fairly and in line with support such as work adjustments. It is good practice to keep meetings documented and signed by all employees. Copies of signed meeting records should be given to the employees or made available to them via their personnel records with HR.
- Open and honest communication is so important as a line manager in order to gain the team's trust. Managers should be leading by example and treat all employees with respect and act professionally. They should be a positive role model. This also includes avoiding any type of behaviour that is deemed derogatory or dismissive. Regardless of who a manager gets on with

at work there should never be favouritism shown towards certain employees and all must be treated fairly.

- Manage likely or actual conflict with an employee, as soon as possible. Failure to do so could result in a breakdown in rapport with the employee and at worst, grievance meetings or even legal repercussions. A manager and HR will not always agree with an employee but their role is to lead and support and to try to resolve a matter, as soon as possible. Otherwise, it could impact the employee's morale, job satisfaction and in turn their performance.
- Feedback given to an employee should be constructive and never personal. It is good practice for managers to thank their staff members and show appreciation where it is due. Positive reinforcement will encourage

employees to perform well in their role.

Even if during their appraisals there will be aspects of constructive feedback.

Constructive feedback should always involve advising on what further support can be given.

- Employees should never be criticised or given personal feedback publicly, as it could be humiliating for them.
- It is important to have faith in the team and to allow them to grow in their roles, partake in targets and to feel empowered. "Micromanaging" can be seen to be overbearing for employees and they may start to feel as though they cannot be trusted. Employees should have the opportunity to flourish in their role to ensure their own sense of personal achievement and to work towards goals.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN THE WORKPLACE

How a person thinks will depend on their own life experiences. However, sometimes these beliefs and views about situations, other people or things, may not always be right or even reasonable. We call this "unconscious bias".

The difficulty with bias is that a person could make a decision about somebody or something, which could be influenced by false beliefs or assumptions and this is called "stereotyping".

Everybody will think in a way that involves an element of unconscious bias in their life at some point.

How can a company avoid unconscious bias?

- Be aware of our own unconscious bias and try not to let that get in the way of making decisions about employees.
- Encourage job candidates from

underrepresented groups to apply for roles.

- Adopt a scoring system based on asking the same questions around the job role, person specification, skills and competencies to ensure a fairer interview process.
- Adopt a blind sifting approach when considering job applications.
- Where possible, have more than one member of the recruitment panel sift job applications and take part in the interviews and decisions.
- Always keep a written record of why a

decision was made.

- Avoid the temptation of saying that a manager understands what the employee is going through because of personal experiences, even if they intended to mean well.
- If an employer does not understand their employee's difficulties, give the employee an opportunity to explain this so that management gains a better understanding and can provide the right support through HR.

RESEARCH DATA ON EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Neurodiversity

- The UK unemployment rate for adults with autism is **78%**.
- **89%** of employees would like their company to include individuals with intellectual disabilities in their equality, diversity and inclusion process.

Gender

- Only **19.7%** of employees on company or organisational boards are women.
- Hiring chances increase up to **46%** for women when they take part in blind sifting

of job applications.

LGBTQ+

- **67.5%** of LGBTQ+ employees reported hearing negative slurs, jokes or comments at work.
- **29.8%** of LGBTQ+ employees reported experiencing at least one form of employment discrimination.
- The lack of diversity in the workforce would cause **41%** of LGBTQ+ job seekers to not apply to a company.

Ethnicity

- Ethnic minority employees hold only 1 in 16 top management positions in the UK.
- **Only 52 out of 1,099** of the most powerful jobs are held by ethnic minority individuals.

Social Class

- Hiring managers often hire employees based on a candidate's cultural fit. This unconsciously discriminates against applicants from working class backgrounds who have not had the same experiences or interests.
- Only $\frac{1}{2}$ of barristers attended a UK state school (**Bar Services Council Diversity Report**).

Neurodiversity

<https://hbr.org/2021/12/autism-doesnt-hold-people-back-at-work-discrimination-does>

<https://blog.clearcompany.com/12-workplace-diversity-statistics>

Gender

<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/leadership/women-in-the-boardroom.html>

LGBTQ+

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Workplace-Discrimination-Sep-2021.pdf>

<https://www.glassdoor.com/employers/blog/diversity/>

Ethnicity

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/employment-fairness-at-work-and-enterprise#fn:27>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/594336/race-in-workplace-mcgregor-smith-review.pdf

Social Class

<https://goizueta-effect.emory.edu/episodes/building-an-equitable-workplace-why-social-class-should-be-a-critical-component-of-your-diversity-strategy>

<https://didlaw.com/social-class-in-the-workplace-the-final-equality-frontier>

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE



Work-life balance*

- 8 / 10 people: Work-life balance would be a key consideration when looking for a new job.
- 53% The responsibility for ensuring a good work-life balance is shared between employee and employer.
- 52% of UK employees feel they do not have a good work-life balance.

*2021 Research by Glassdoor - <https://www.glassdoor.com/research>.

Employers should consider how they can give control to employees over their working arrangements to incorporate personal commitments, without it adversely impacting on

the business targets and objectives. Ofcourse, it depends on the finance and staffing resources that a company has in making a flexible working policy.

How can employers and managers support their employees' wellbeing?

- Open communication;
- Empathy;
- Good listening skills;
- Ability to take the lead and prioritise;
- Teamwork and morale;
- Team meetings;

- 1:1 catch up meetings;
- Training and development;
- Unbiased support; and
- Flexibility;

Optional employee exit interviews and surveys are a useful way to monitor whether work-life balance issues are contributing to employees leaving their role.

Encouraging a safe culture of wellbeing at work

Conduct a department-wide stress risk assessment to look at:

- Possible factors of stress;
- Approaches and strategies already in place;
- How effective are the current approaches and strategies and what changes could be made;
- Ask employees to fill out anonymous wellbeing in the workplace questionnaires;
- Managers need to feel supported by their own line managers;
- Attend wellbeing, mental health and disability awareness training;
- Consider becoming mental health first aiders;
- Put useful posters around the site and send

emails on wellbeing, which could include useful wellness ideas, information, resources and signposting details;

- Consider adopting an employee assistance programme, which includes counselling services.
- Consider wellbeing days, which could include team building, relaxation or creative activities and/or volunteering days.

Stress risk assessment / wellness action plan

- Wellness Action Plans (“WAP”) are used worldwide by employers and individuals who want to manage their own or others’ mental health. It identifies what causes an employee to become unwell, what ensures they stay well and how best to manage their mental health at work. They are drafted by both the employer and employee to encourage a safe and confidential discussion.
- This long term or short term plan, also known as a stress risk assessment, will give the employee an opportunity to set out their triggers and what makes their mental health deteriorate. It will also help the manager to decide on what support will assist their employee.

Advantages:

- Helps start a discussion about a mental health problem and work stress.
- Understanding what support your employee needs.
- Identifying appropriate adjustments.
- Ensuring employees return to work and to minimise sickness absences.
- Helps an employer identify possible warning

signs when something is not alright.

- Set boundaries around communication and especially when the employee is not well.
- Identify internal and external support that your employee requires.

How often: A WAP should always be held confidentially, in a completely private space on a 1:1 basis and reviewed regularly with the employee, for however long it needs to be in place.

HOW TO MANAGE MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES



The sooner that a manager becomes aware that a member of staff is experiencing mental ill-health the sooner they can take steps to prevent it becoming more serious and try to

identify support the employee requires.

Mental health difficulties can include the following:

- Changes in usual behaviour or mood;
- How a person interact with colleagues;
- Changes in standard of work;
- If an employee appears unhappy, negative, anxious, worried and/or withdrawn;
- Low self-esteem;
- Complaining of being tired all the time;
- Increase in smoking or drinking habits; and
- Sickness absence or turning up late to work.

This is not an exhaustive list.

Good practice and empathy will start with courageous conversations meaning that even if you are nervous about initiating such discussions as a manager, you are still going to engage in such discussions to support your team. Managers should speak to their own managers or HR if they feel they require further training or support.

In the event that an employee is off sick for more than a few days, it would be good practice to agree on how regularly the manager and employee are in contact and by what means. Encourage the employee to rest, seek medical advice and only return to work when they are feeling well and ready. Stay in contact with HR and occupational health and follow their recommendations.

Anyone with mental illness may be affected in such a way that it is considered to be a disability under the Equality Act 2010 and employers must ensure that they provide reasonable adjustments to people who are diagnosed with mental illnesses.

Employees should be signposted to Access to Work who provide free support and it also includes mental health support. The DWP department that provides this support can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>. The employee would need to make an application online/over the phone with the DWP to make a claim.