

TEXTE

Mental health in the workplace: what can employers do to help during Covid?

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The pandemic has taken its toll on the wellbeing of people across the country. As businesses continue to adapt to these unprecedented circumstances, an expert says that a preventative approach to mental health is key

Over most of the past year, many of us have found our working environments and schedules changing drastically. Working from home, following new guidelines in the workplace or juggling childcare with an overflowing list of tasks and targets all bring challenges, and can understandably leave people feeling unsettled. Now more than ever, it's vital that employees and employers are aware of their mental health and wellbeing needs, to keep the workforce happy and productive.

According to the Mental Health Foundation (MHF), addressing wellbeing in the workplace can increase productivity by as much as 12%, while the estimated value added to the economy by working people who have or have had mental health problems is £226bn a year.

So, how can employers implement strategies to ensure their staff are keeping their mental health in check? A first step can be setting boundaries, says clinical psychologist Linda Blair. She advises having open conversations about core working hours, especially now when more people are working from home. Respecting this and placing trust in your workers is key, she says. (...)

Blair recommends introducing five-minute weekly check-ins to discuss workloads, where managers and employers can ask employees individually if they are having particular trouble with any task or feeling overloaded. She stresses, however, that these check-ins should focus on work tasks, although there can be room to discuss mental health if the employee so wishes.

(...) When it comes to mental health in the workplace, Blair has an important message for employers: prevention is key. "If employers make sure that their employees get rest and know they won't be bothered outside of the bounded hours, they'll be more likely to remain mentally healthy than if they have counsellors, because that's preventative."

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