



WORKING TOWARDS

**An aid for businesses signing
the Charter for Employers
who are Positive about Mental Health**

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Working Towards

The aim of *Working Towards* is to help you look after your staff and to run your business by

- ✓ Recognising the good practice you already have in place
- ✓ Identifying areas where there is need for improvement
- ✓ Planning how you can work towards the aims of the Charter

Working Towards is laid out in such a way that it takes you through the individual elements of the Charter and facilitates a practical response to each one. It's up to you how you use it. It may be useful to address one section at a time rather than complete it all in one go. Plan your practical responses in realistic ways within realistic timescales. You don't have to tackle the issues it raises on your own. The MINDFUL EMPLOYER[®] initiative is all about helping employers to help each other – other managerial, HR and Occupational Health expertise is available to you as will be support from *WorkWAYS* which facilitates the initiative.

You are under no obligation to share this with anyone – although it would be important for it not to be something that gathers dust on a shelf... **Pages 6-7 also reflect *On the Way*, which is the Review process Charter signatories are asked to undertake** two years after signing (and subsequently every 3 years) so it may be helpful with planning for that as well.

We would also invite you to send a copy, in complete confidence, to *WorkWAYS* so, if you wish, we can offer any additional support and assistance to you in achieving the aims laid out in the Charter. We would also be pleased to work with you in reviewing your progress as times goes on.

The Charter for Employers who are Positive About Mental Health is a tangible display of commitment to improving the working lives of staff. It's different from IiP, the 'two ticks' Disability Symbol, Chartermark and other accreditations. The Charter recognises that policies and good practices are not necessarily currently in place – it's a set of aims: *something to work towards*.

The Charter for Employers who are Positive About Mental Health is just one part of MINDFUL EMPLOYER. It's a voluntary agreement which seeks to support you in working within the spirit of its positive approach. It is not legally enforceable and doesn't negate the need for you to get the right person with the right experience, qualifications and skills for the job. Whether you are a small, medium or large employer, the Charter fully respects there will be many different priorities, policies and practices which influence the way you recruit and retain staff – you are the expert on your business.

The Charter is about *working towards* the principles of it not the immediate fulfilment of them – signing up is a step along a journey not the end of it.

For the purpose of this exercise, the term 'mental health' includes harmful levels of stress, anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, psychosis and other recognised diagnoses. You may feel it appropriate to include alcohol and drug abuse and eating disorders.

Where We Are Now

To start off with, take a look at what's happening in your business now – the good things, the pressures, the areas which need improving.

Our Mental Health

1. What factors, both internal and external, can you identify in your organisation that might influence the level of stress/mental health issues among employees?

2. Which of the following applies to your organisation (please tick):

- Mental health is addressed within distinct, separate policies
- Mental health is addressed within existing, generic policies
- Mental health is not addressed within any of our policies

List the policies you have that address mental health in the workplace and summarise their content

3. Do you have existing employees who you know have a mental health issue?

Yes – if so, how many? No

Are you aware of anybody who has left the company, or changed their position within the company, due to mental health issues in the last year?

Yes No

4. How many days sick leave have employees taken for all reasons during the last year?

What % of these was for stress/mental health issues?%

Working Towards the Charter

Reflect on the previous section and then bring in the following statements:

As an employer we recognise that:

- ✓ People who have mental health issues may have experienced discrimination in recruitment and selection procedures. This may discourage them from seeking employment.
- ✓ Whilst some people will acknowledge their experience of mental health issues in a frank and open way, others fear that stigma will jeopardise their chances of getting a job.
- ✓ Given appropriate support, the vast majority of people who have experienced mental ill health continue to work successfully as do many with ongoing issues.

How true is that of your company?

As an employer we aim to:

- ✓ Show a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues. This will include positive statements in local recruitment literature.
- ✓ Ensure that all staff involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health issues and The Equality Act 2010, and given appropriate interview skills.
- ✓ Make it clear in any recruitment or occupational health check that people who have experienced mental health issues will not be discriminated against and that disclosure of a mental health problem will enable both employee and employer to assess and provide the right level of support or adjustment.
- ✓ Not make assumptions that a person with a mental health issue will be more vulnerable to workplace stress or take more time off than any other employee or job applicant.
- ✓ Provide non-judgemental and proactive support to individual staff who experience mental health issues.
- ✓ Ensure all line managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace.

What do you know to be specific areas of good practice?

What are the areas which need improvement?

What action do you plan to take?

Promoting the Charter commitment

We would encourage you to display the printed Charters in your premises and place the MINDFUL EMPLOYER logo on:

- Your website &/or intranet – with a link to www.mindfulemployer.net
- Letterheaded paper
- Compliment slips
- Annual Report
- Newsletters & staff bulletins (online & paper)
- Other publications aimed at staff

What action will you be able to take to promote the Charter?