



TAKING STEPS

**How employers are working towards
the Charter aspirations**

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Taking Steps

A recent evaluation of employers who had completed a review of their commitment to the Charter for Employers who are Positive About Mental Health revealed a wide range of current practice and a willingness to address those areas which needed improvement, together with practical remedial action. (You can read the full evaluation at www.mindfulemployer.net/information.html)

The findings collated in the following tables will be particularly useful as a 'quick guide' towards relate the aspirations of the Charter to your business demands and staff support requirements.

These real examples of current practice by employers may give you some practical ideas for working towards the Charter aspirations within your organisation.

Current practice

Aspiration 1: Show a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues. This will include positive statements in local recruitment literature.

- Relevant policies included within the application pack along with job-description, person specification etc.
- 1:1 supervision and group/team support
- 'Open door' policy by managers
- Use of Mindful Employer logo and Disability Symbol on letterhead paper, job advertisements, publicity, website etc
- Positive statements on website, job advertisements and within policies
- Use of customer/service user experience in recruitment
- Occupational health or other specialist support

Aspiration 2: 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.

- Information about the law in recruitment and selection materials
- Specific training about the law in this area
- Mental health awareness training
- Use of guidance for managers in recruiting staff with a mental health condition (e.g. *Line Managers' Resource*)
- Ensure awareness of policies
- Availability of HR expertise

Aspiration 3: 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 issue will enable both employee and employer to assess and provide the right level of support or adjustment.

- Applying principles behind service delivery to own staff
- Clear statements about non-discrimination in relevant policies and publicity
- Statements explaining that disclosure of health issues helps in providing adjustments and support and health checks not used as part of short-listing or interview process
- Advising applicants about employer support provision (e.g. counselling) at recruitment stage
- Guaranteed interview for applicants with a health problem who can demonstrate meeting minimum requirements for post

Aspiration 4: 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.

- Readily accessible policies on workplace stress
- Specifically addressing bias and negative assumptions through training, forums, policies and day-to-day practice
- Monitoring staff absence
- Having Mental Health First Aiders on staff
- Promotion of Mindful Employer commitment
- Displaying posters in the workplace which challenge stigma and discriminatory attitudes
- Use of customer/service user experience in developing good staff practice

Aspiration 5: Provide non-judgemental and proactive support to individual staff who experience mental health issues.

- Policies and procedures to provide non-judgmental and proactive support
- Access to an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)
- In-house mental health support
- Guides on reasonable adjustments for all managers and the majority of employees to access, with specific examples of mental health
- Counselling service
- Diversity and Equality in Employment policy and supporting guides
- Link with the local NHS mental health trusts to promote access to their employment support advisers for service users who are employees and who need this extra support at work
- Support & supervision
- Flexibility around time management and breaks
- Opportunities to take part in creative activities on-site opportunities for relaxation and wellbeing, like yoga etc.
- Fostering an atmosphere of openness about health (or ill health) and wellbeing
- Mental health awareness training (which also allows a forum for exploring and challenging discrimination, fostering a tolerant and non-judgemental working environment)
- Negotiation of working conditions/contracts to provide the best working environment for all staff
- Staff support groups
- Review sickness absence policy and disability support policies in line with the changes brought in with The Equality Act 2010
- Support groups specifically for line managers
- Drop in service for staff and line managers in relation to mental health in the workplace
- Drop in session with the occupational health nurse where confidential issues may be discussed
- Phased return provided for any employee returning after long term illness, this includes top up with sick pay
- Various topics and information provided via newsletters, leaflets, talks, company council minutes, etc.
- Leaflets put out on information racks, topics changed every month

Aspiration 6: Ensure all line managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace.

- Encourage identification and involvement in training
- Identify gaps in knowledge of particular staff members, teams and managers
- Seek help, advice and training from external organisations
- Toolkit for employees which relates to disability communication
- Training on well-being in the workplace
- Mental health awareness training

- Having a 'Health Week' event in the workplace to provide information and raise awareness
- Intranet pages giving information on managing staff and reasonable adjustments
- Sharing personal experience and knowledge
- Newsletters and e-bulletins from specialist mental health organisations circulated to managers
- Drop-in session for line managers
- Leaflets about conditions made available and/or on display

Additional examples from supporting evidence

- A specific disability employment policy
- Policy statement which ensures that disability will not be used as a criterion for redundancy
- Involvement in a local health at work award scheme
- Health in the workplace survey

The next table shows some practical actions being taken by employers to address areas they have identified as requiring improvement and development.

Remedial actions

Aspiration 1: Show a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues. This will include positive statements in local recruitment literature.

- Raising awareness of the support available to staff
- Develop publicity, website information and case studies
- reviewing and developing policies.
- Develop consistent approach across whole organisation

Aspiration 2: 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.

- Greater liaison with colleagues in recruitment and learning and development departments
- Keeping up to date with changes
- Using case studies in raising awareness
- Add mental health and equality and diversity issues to training.
- Increase amount of information available
- review selection and interview skills training

Aspiration 3: 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 issue will enable both employee and employer to assess and provide the right level of support or adjustment.

- Include a statement similar to the wording of the aspiration within the revision of occupational health check questionnaire
- Review current questionnaires, forms and policies to ensure they are up to date and continue to reflect the aspiration

Aspiration 4: 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.

- Develop an awareness campaign, linked to HR guides, wellbeing and support mechanisms
- Use specific mental health examples in recruitment materials
- Place statements in policies which reflect this aspiration

Aspiration 5: Provide non-judgemental and proactive support to individual staff who experience mental health issues.

- Join up the various support mechanisms
- Addressing uncertainty or negativity among staff about what support might be received
- Increase awareness of HR, occupational health and other provision, such as EAP, and the benefits that they can deliver
- Improving awareness, publicity and information about the support available

Aspiration 6: Ensure all line managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace.

- Deliver bespoke mental health awareness training
- Promote the availability of existing training

You are very welcome to contact us to discuss the steps your organisation wants to take and to ask us for assistance – tel 01392 677064 or info@mindfulemployer.net