

Mental Health Awareness - The Quality Conversation

1. **Choose an appropriate place** – somewhere private and quiet where the person feels comfortable and equal.
2. **Encourage people to talk** – people can find it difficult to talk about their mental health, but it helps to have an open culture where conversations about mental health are routine and normalised. Ask simple and non-judgmental questions and let people explain in their own words how their mental health manifests, the triggers, how it impacts on their work and what support they need.
3. **Don't make assumptions** – don't try to second guess what symptoms an employee may have and how they might affect their ability to do their job. Many people can manage their mental health and perform their role to a high standard but may require support measures when experiencing a difficult period. Avoid saying "I know how you feel."
4. **Listen non-judgmentally** – everyone's experience of mental health is different so treat people as individuals and focus on the person, not the problem. Remember effective workplace adjustments are often quite individual but needn't be costly or require huge changes.
5. **Be honest and clear** – if there are specific grounds for concern, like high absence levels or impaired performance, or there are health and safety concerns, it's important to address these at an early stage. Ensure your use 'I' and not 'We'.
6. **Ensure confidentiality** – people need to be reassured of confidentiality. This is sensitive information and should be shared with as few people as possible. Discuss with the individual what information they would like shared and with whom. Trust is something that takes time to build and can be easily damaged and never repaired. You are a manager and should always remain professional. In rare situations, you may have to break confidentiality if you feel that the individual is a risk to themselves or others, for example, if they admit to self-harming. You would need to refer to your HR Business Partner for advice.
7. **Develop an action plan** – work with your employee to develop an individual action plan which identifies the signs, triggers, impact on work, who to contact in a crisis and what support they need. The plan should include an agreed time to review the support measures to see if they're working.
8. **Encourage people to seek advice and support** – people should speak to their GP about available support from the NHS. You may be able to arrange counselling through your organisations Employee Assistance Programme.
9. **Seek advice and support yourself** – this training is just a part of the process. Speak to your HR Business Partner or Occupational Health or use the resource list at the back of this workbook and MHFA Line Managers Resource booklet which is also available to download online.
10. **Reassure people** – people may not always be ready to talk straight away so it's important you outline what support is available, tell them your door is always open and let them know you'll make sure they get the support they need.