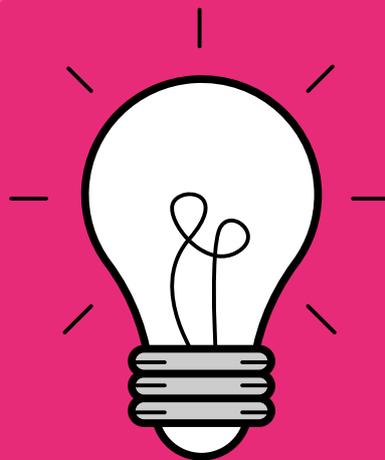




Building block 6

Case study: Effective implementation of reasonable adjustments

A case study from Burness Paull LLP





One of the key findings to emerge from our See Me in Work staff See Me in Work staff survey results and our drop-in sessions was the need for an improved 'return to work' process after absence. Although our employees were confident that they would be supported by human resources, they were not confident that line managers had the training to adequately deal with mental health problems. Further analysis of this revealed that line managers did not feel they had the confidence or expertise to have successful conversations around mental health and reasonable adjustments. It was clear that one of our first priorities was to open up conversations on mental health in our organisation, and we identified that one way we could do this would be in relation to the absence management and 'return to work' process.

Prior to partnering with See Me we had been ready to launch a new absence management policy, process and manager guidelines, and on the back of our results we decided to reassess our approach and include specific guidance for managers around how to have 'return to work' conversations when an employee has had a mental health related absence. Our new guidelines give examples of the types of conditions that employees may experience and how to spot signs and symptoms of these. We incorporated language and examples from the See Me 'Lets Chat' tool to help managers open up conversations. We have included specific guidance on when and how to make Occupational Health referrals and specific guidance on reasonable adjustments including a list of examples. We have incorporated signposting to external resources such as our Employee Assistance Programme and counselling services, as well as links to external resources such as Scottish Association for Mental Health, Samaritans and Mind.

In conjunction with the policy and manager guidelines, we have introduced new mental health categories in our human resources system so that we can more accurately record and report on mental health related absences. This will not only reinforce the business case for ensuring a mentally healthy workplace but will allow us to pick up on mental health related absence quicker. This will also allow us to ensure that each time a mental health related absence is recorded, the line manager is prompted to check in with the employee, open up a conversation and offer support.





The See Me in Work Peer Learning Network has been invaluable in sharing ideas, processes and practices which have made it much easier for us to achieve significant changes to our absence management policy and process. We anticipate an initial spike in mental health related absence due to improved reporting capabilities and increased disclosure; however, we envisage mental health related absence to decline in the long term as a result of a more supportive culture, which encourages employees to talk about their mental health and seek support before their condition ever has to cause them to be absent.

Our take-home message: Tackling mental health stigma and discrimination is foundational to driving mental health improvement in the workplace. Employers are legally required to put in place reasonable adjustments when disclosing a mental health problem that lasts or is expected to last 12 months or longer. Line managers are instrumental in ensuring employees feel confident in disclosing mental health problems and supported to stay in work, or return to work swiftly following a period of ill-health. It's therefore important to ensure line managers are informed about their duties, understand reasonable adjustments, and are confident in having a person-centred, supportive conversation with employees they line manage that starts with what the individual feels would work best for them (not what might work for the business!).





Contact:

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