Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace

A supportive workplace recognises that mental health can affect people differently and may change over time. Employers should respond with sensitivity, practical measures and proper protection of confidential information rather than assuming every issue has the same solution.

1. Make it safe to raise concerns

Managers should know how to listen, ask what support might help and explain confidentiality boundaries. Employees should be able to use an appropriate reporting channel if the concern involves their line manager. Do not promise absolute secrecy where there is a serious safeguarding or legal issue.

2. Consider adjustments individually

A mental health condition can be a disability under the Equality Act 2010. Where the legal test is met, employers must make reasonable adjustments. Even where it is not a disability, practical flexibility can improve wellbeing and attendance.

Possible difficulty	Adjustment to consider
Anxiety linked to unpredictable shifts	More advance notice and a more consistent working pattern where feasible.
Difficulty concentrating in a busy workplace	Quieter work area, shorter check-ins or clearer task priorities.
Return after a period of illness	Temporary reduced hours or a phased return with review dates.
Stress caused by workload	Review workload, staffing, deadlines and managerial support.

3. Manage sickness and performance fairly

Use a structured sickness reporting process and consider fit-note advice and occupational health where appropriate. Separate an attendance concern from an assumption of misconduct. Before formal action, review any disability-related issues, support offered and possible reasonable adjustments.

Example A | Returning after stress-related absence

A staff member is ready to return but reports that full early shifts may make recovery difficult.

Employer response: The manager discusses a temporary later start, records agreed hours, schedules a review and ensures any sensitive medical information is accessible only to those who need it.

4. Respect privacy and review outcomes

Record only the health information needed for legitimate employment purposes, with a clear retention policy and restricted permissions. Follow up to check whether changes work. Train managers to recognise when specialist advice is appropriate rather than attempting to diagnose conditions.

Discuss your workforce requirements with Assyst

Assyst Workforce Management is a workforce management platform for multi-site employers, bringing together HR and paperless onboarding, time and attendance, workforce scheduling, payroll calculations, task management and a mobile staff app. To find out more or discuss how Assyst could support your business, visit www.assyst.uk and contact us through the website.

Useful official sources

Acas — Mental health adjustments
https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments/mental-health-adjustments

GOV.UK — Reasonable adjustments
https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers

HSE — Work-related stress and mental health
https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/

ICO — Employment records and data protection
https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/employment/employment-practices-and-data-protection-keeping-employment-records/collecting-and-keeping-employment-records

General guidance for employers in Great Britain, reviewed November 2026. Contract terms and individual circumstances may require professional advice.