

The 6 Steps Pledge

Improving Mental Health in Workplaces

Committed to improving **support**
and **wellbeing** in the workplace



 **mind**
Hertfordshire
Network

Business and Organisations,
Working **together**
across **Watford**



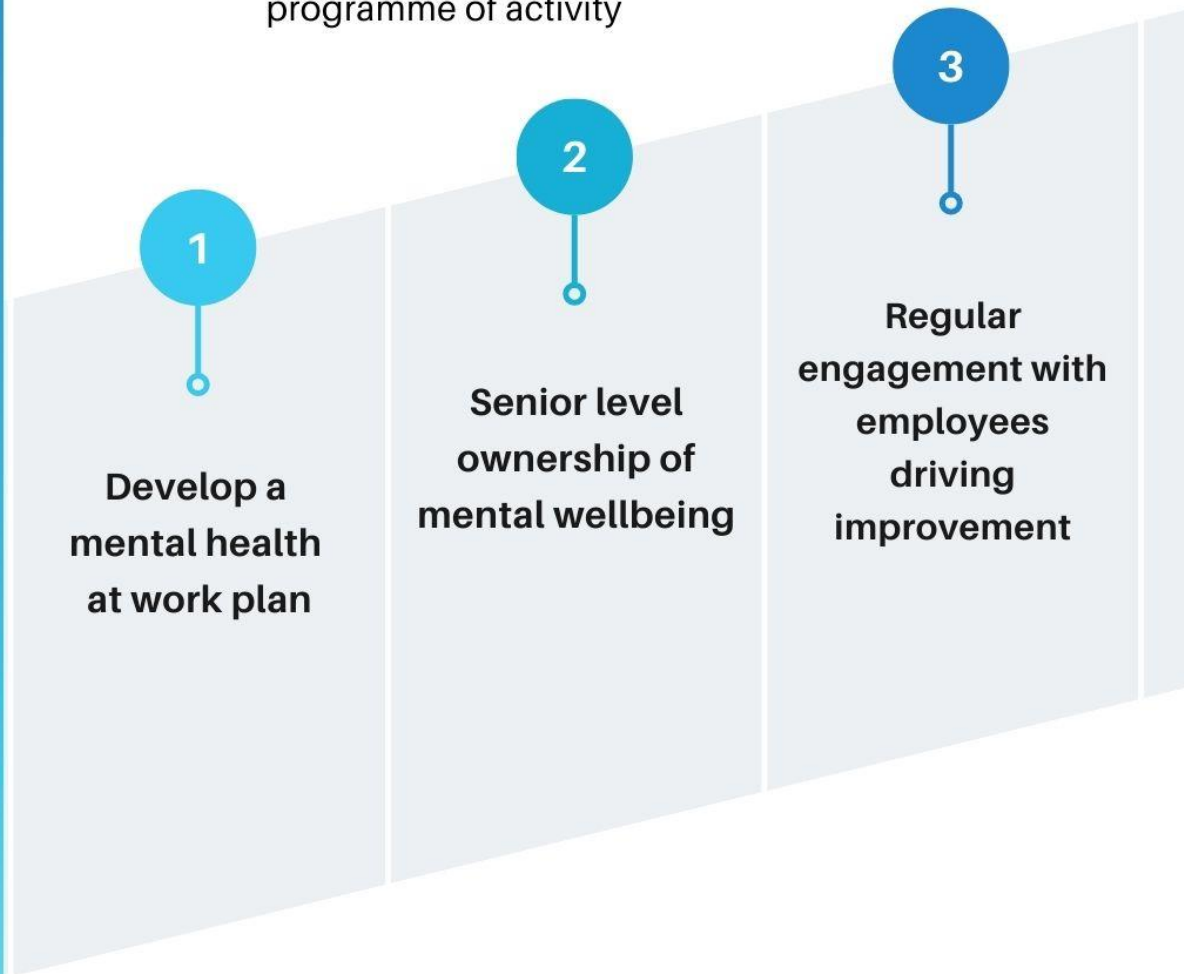
WATFORD
BOROUGH
COUNCIL

Step 1

Putting mental health on the agenda



Prioritise mental health in the workplace
by developing and delivering a systematic
programme of activity



Step 1 Guidance

Developing a systematic programme of activity to prioritise workplace mental health is, actually, what the 6 Steps Pledge is about. There are all sorts of individual actions you can take – from training courses, to support services, to awareness-raising activities – but to make a long-term difference, **they should fit into a coherent whole, with a clear ethos, purpose and commitment behind it.**

Senior buy-in, including at board level, is vital. That's often the way to send the clearest message: "Employee wellbeing is a priority for this organisation." And building it into governance structures, as something to be reported on, says unequivocally that your wellbeing activities are an inherent part of doing business as usual, not an extra or a distraction.

Step 1 Guidance

So, commitment from the top is one half of this. But the flipside is equally important: **involving staff's own experience is critical** too. Their experiences of mental health issues, their experiences of life as a member of your workforce, and their opinions and priorities for what needs to change. When employee involvement feels like not just occasional input but a fundamental underlying principle, real change is possible.

Some resources to get you started:

[People managers' guide to mental health](#)

[The Acas framework for positive mental health at work](#)

[How to implement the Thriving At Work mental health standards in your workplace](#)

Step 2

Implementing in the workplace



Proactively ensure workplaces and organisational culture drive positive mental health outcomes

1

Mental health literacy and opportunities to learn

2

Employee feedback to create good workplace conditions and culture

3

Work-life balance and flexibility

Step 2 Guidance

What's expected of your people? And where, when and how are they expected to do it? **Nobody's work is just a set of actions in a vacuum; we're all affected by what's around us.** We know that physical working conditions can make a big difference: from interactions between staff, the connection between hydration levels and concentration, to daylight, fresh air, diet and mood. And, when we consider that physical and mental health conditions can often go hand in hand, it's clear that a holistic approach is the only way forward.

But other people are a key part of the work environment too. **The messages that colleagues send, consciously or unconsciously, combine to produce the norms and expectations in a workplace.** This is why work/life balance isn't just an issue of rules and permissions. It's important to signal, through our behaviours and the culture we create, that people aren't expected to see their emails late at night.

Step 2 Guidance

That it's OK to have other things going on in your life, and that sometimes these will affect work. That annual leave, lunch breaks and flexible working hours are not only actively encouraged, but a core part of how your organisation thrives.

These overall considerations can add up to create an environment in which people feel supported to do their best work. And, when combined with a focus on mental health during the early stages of job design and the recruitment process, they mean **coming to work can be a positive force for wellbeing.**

Some resources to get you started:

[Wellbeing in small business: how you can help](#)

[Wellbeing at work](#)

[Managing mental health in changing business models](#)

[Employing disabled people and people with health conditions](#)

Step 3

Changing workplace culture



Promote an open culture around mental health



Step 3 Guidance

These four goals are closely related: **one of the best ways to raise awareness about mental health, and challenge stigma, is to encourage conversation about it.** This is the message at the heart of initiatives like This Is Me and Time To Talk Day. Another key way is to empower individuals in an organisation to take an active role in championing the issue – from holding wellbeing fairs, quizzes and pledge walls to encouraging each other to learn, give and exercise more. That's the basis of anti-stigma activities like mental health champions and their industry-specific equivalents.

Both help create a culture where people feel able to come forward if they need support. It's clear that **passionate employees and volunteers, at any level of the organisation, are often the drivers** of that cultural change. This is the story behind most of the case studies here on Mental Health at Work.

Step 3 Guidance

But employers have a role to play here. By fostering an environment in which these conversations can take place, and supporting grassroots enthusiasm to champion mental health issues, they can play an integral role in keeping staff well.

Some resources to get you started:

[This is Me](#)

[Take 10 Together: Starting the conversation](#)

[The importance of Time To Talk Day](#)

Step 4

Being ready and effective



Increase organisational confidence and capability

1

Staff prepared for effective mental health conversations and signposting

2

Line managers trained in all aspects of workplace mental health

3

Employee mental health built into all managers' roles

Step 4 Guidance

Much of the Pledge is about actions you can take, or policies or services you can put in place. This standard is, too—but its focus is more on the **who**, not just the **what**.

You can never know when or where an opportunity to make a change, a request for help or a trigger for a conversation might arise, so having a workforce that feels confident in responding positively is vital. Regular training is one part of that jigsaw; information and awareness-raising is another. You also need to be putting mental health on the agenda during inductions, supervisions and return-to-work conversations.

People at all levels of an organisation have a role to play, and employers should support them all in fulfilling it.

Step 4 Guidance

Some resources to get you started:

[Talking toolkit: preventing work-related stress](#)

[People managers' guide to mental health](#)

[Approaching a sensitive conversation around mental ill health](#)

[Suicide prevention training from the Zero Suicide Alliance](#)

[Training, support and consultancy services](#)

[Leadership Insights: How can you create a more mentally healthy workplace?](#)

Step 5

Knowledge across the business



Provide mental health
tools and support

1

Staff aware of
resources and
tools available

2

Resource to
support and
signposting to
further options

3

Targeted help for
particular issues

Step 5 Guidance

One of the easiest ways to support employees is to **make sure people are aware of the help, tools and services available to them**. But it's not just about signposting; **actively promoting the use** of wellbeing tools, mental health support and local and national services is a way of creating a culture in which these things are OK to talk about. Tools like wellness action plans can also be useful in making sure those conversations happen regularly between managers and line reports.

As well as these, there's a role for workplaces to play in providing specific services and encouraging their uptake. Employee assistance programmes provide confidential support for employees on a range of issues both workplace and personal, and can cost as little as £100-£200 per year. Choosing the right occupational health service can ensure that staff are properly supported to be in work, including during or after periods of unwellness.

Step 5 Guidance

There are certain factors that we know can have an effect on mental health, ranging from financial wellbeing and caring responsibilities, to disability or physical health, to shift working and lone working, to LGBTQI+, minority ethnic, older and younger workers. It's worth paying particular attention to these.

Some resources to get you started:

[Every Mind Matters](#)

[Employee assistance programme standards framework](#)

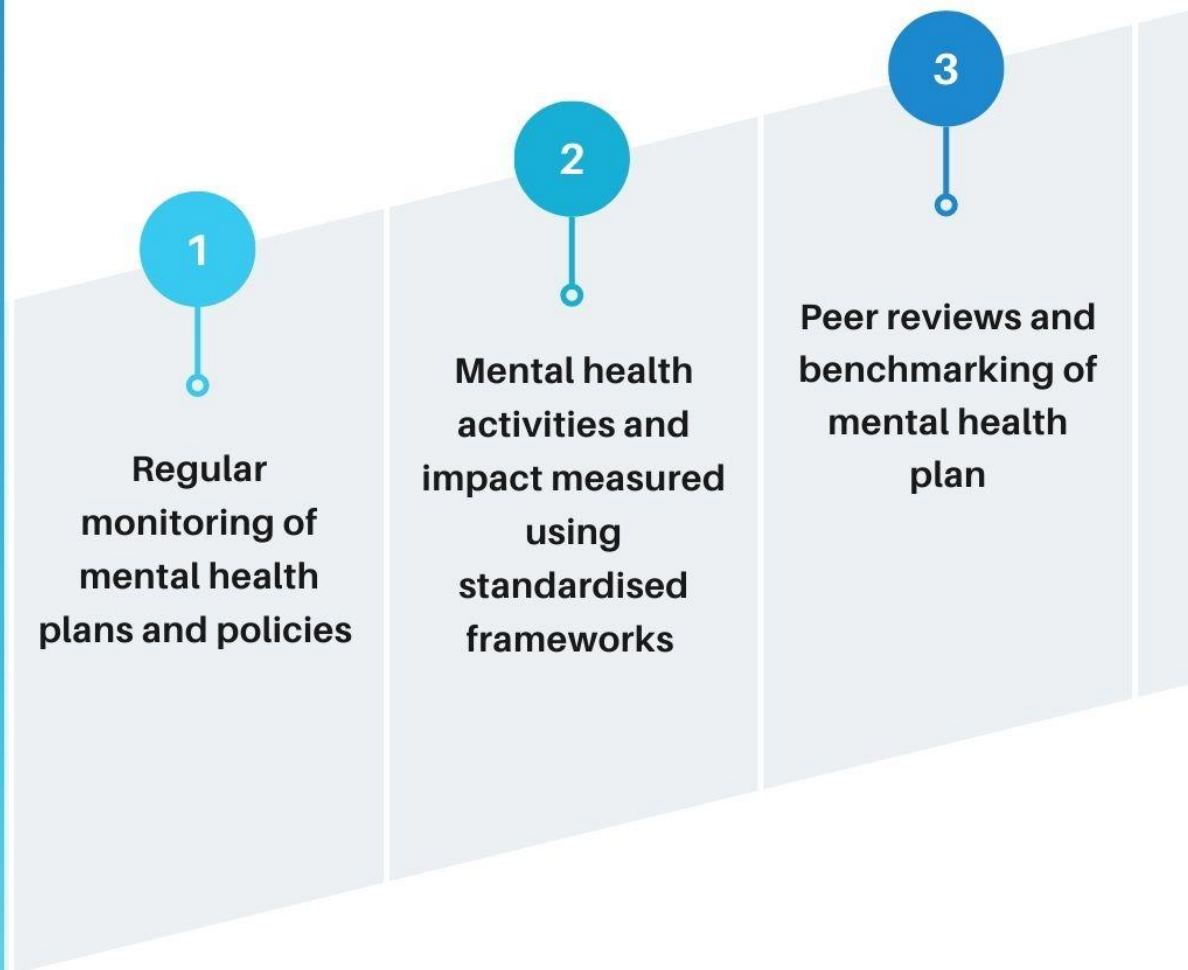
[Find more resources to suit your organisation on Mental Health at Work](#)

Step 6

Clear and accountable workplaces



Increase transparency and accountability of mental health plans



Step 6 Guidance

An organisation's staff team is one of its most important assets, and honestly assessing and reporting on their wellbeing shows people – whether employees, investors, clients or potential recruits – that you understand that.

But this isn't about saying "you must measure the following things, as only these will tell you how you're doing." It's more about developing a mindset in which key people understand that **factors like wellbeing and engagement are things that can, in principle, be recorded and reported on**, as a key aspect of your company's performance. From there, it's a matter of identifying how to get an accurate picture in a way that works for your organisation: its size, its activities, its location and its workforce.

Step 6 Guidance

Even more importantly, using a standardised tool or framework like the Index or the Tracker helps you to identify areas to focus on for improvement, often with specific and actionable recommendations. This can create a positive cycle in which reporting, planning, taking action and measuring impact are parts of **an ongoing process that continually improves outcomes for staff – and for your business.**

Some resources to get you started:

[Mind's Workplace Wellbeing Index](#)

[Responsible Business Tracker](#)

[Voluntary reporting framework on disability, mental health and wellbeing](#)

[CMHA Guide: Thriving at Work](#)

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Business Name

