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Less than a fifth of employers taking action on mental health

Rachel Muller-Heyndyk (/contact-form?

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JANUARY 18, 2019



(/article-images/203097/mental_health_illo_popup.jpg)

I'm a coach and a mediator. As I listen to the stories some of my clients tell me, it somehow feels that there is a conspiracy of ignorance that allows difficulties to escalate to a point of serious ...

John Dooner
JANUARY 18, 2019 12:46

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As MPs debate mental health first aid in parliament, new research reveals that companies aren't doing enough to tackle employee stress and mental wellbeing

Less than a fifth (18%) of companies are taking steps to manage employee stress and mental health issues, according to research from GRiD.

The research, which involved a survey of 500 HR decision-makers, showed that there is still room for improvement when it comes to looking after the health and wellbeing (<https://hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/the-importance-of-psychological-safety>) of staff. It found that just 15% of companies are taking steps to improve financial wellbeing, and just 18% are supporting staff with caring responsibilities.

Katharine Moxham, a spokesperson for GRiD, cited financial concerns and caring responsibilities as some of the main causes of stress among employees. "Financial worries and problem debt are major sources of stress, affecting every area of an employee's life and they can greatly affect productivity and lead to increased absence," she said.

"Likewise, an increasing number of employees now have caring responsibilities, looking after elderly relatives, young children or older children that now live at home for longer. As well as being a source of stress this can also increase financial pressures as people have to fund eldercare, higher education or training and general living expenses."

The research comes as MPs gathered to debate mental health first aid at work in parliament on Thursday 17 January. MPs, campaigners, charities, and businesses have called for mental health to be given equal parity to physical health (<https://hrmagazine.co.uk/article-details/hot-topic-mental-and-physical-health-parity-part-two>), through allocating every workplace a qualified mental health first aider.

Tim Loughton, MP for East Worthing and Shoreham and former children's minister, spoke about his experiences with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and emphasised the importance of mental health first aid.

"You can get better, managing mental health is hard, but if we can go into these workplaces and say 'we do treat mental health as seriously as we do physical health', we can change people's lives," he said.

While the debate was poorly attended, Loughton asserted that mental health is an issue that the government takes seriously: "There will be people who have been following this debate intensely and never talk about it [their mental health]. It's not easy to speak about this in this house, but I would say, just because there aren't a lot of people here, and there isn't all the raucous shouting, [it doesn't mean] that this isn't important to many of us. There is a mental health revolution in this country, we are committed to parity of esteem. I sincerely hope the government will take this forward."

COMMENTS

I'm a coach and a mediator. As I listen to the stories some of my clients tell me, it somehow feels that there is a conspiracy of ignorance that allows difficulties to escalate to a point of serious harm.

John Dooner, JANUARY 18, 2019 12:46

REPLY

The crossover with menopause and depression is overlooked, compounding the need for more awareness. Simple steps will reduce absenteeism, improve productivity and especially improve morale.

Kathryn Colas, JANUARY 18, 2019 12:52

REPLY

The committed companies who genuinely care about the wellbeing of their employees are not just looking at mental health 'first aid' training. There has to be a joined up approach towards support of individuals struggling with mental health in the workplace. Many EAPs, in my experience are not providing the necessary level of support and some are little used. Experienced corporate practitioners that deliver the training and then provide ongoing support provide the correct solution. It is not just about training. As the article so rightly points out the stressors may be outside of the work environment but inevitably impact on the individuals performance in the workplace. Far too much lip service has been paid to this area in the past. Government intervention, albeit welcomed in an advisory capacity, is not the solution. Education of employers to understand how much balanced healthy individuals add to the production and performance of the workplace is paramount. Large and small companies are in my portfolio; there is no barrier to reaping the benefits of a happy, balanced and motivated workforce that feel cared for.

Kevin Garrington, JANUARY 18, 2019 13:22

REPLY

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Comment



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