

Better for business



How learning can benefit your team's mental health.

Workplace
Health and Wellbeing **Academy**

Introduction

In this guide, we'll look at how creating a learning culture within your organisation can boost mental health, as well as work productivity.



Click the home icon at any point in this guide to return to this page.



Mental health

Five ways to wellbeing

Learning



Mental health in the workplace

Each year, around one in four adults in England will experience a mental health problem, such as anxiety or depression. Poor mental health has personal implications, but can also impact friends and family. And mental health has an impact in the workplace – it affects performance and productivity, and has economic costs.

Looking after your team and recognising the importance of mental health in the workplace is key, and employers have a legal responsibility to help. Working to improve wellbeing and mental health should be a priority in all companies and for all managers. One way to achieve this is to create an inclusive learning culture within your team.

1 in 4 adults
Each year, around
one in four adults
in England will
experience a mental
health problem.



Mind, 2025.

Mental health
in the workplace

The importance of
wellbeing in the workplace

Learning new skills
for mental health





The importance of wellbeing in the workplace

Mental health problems can seriously affect a person's wellbeing and may lead to physical illness and problems with relationships and work. Between 2022 and 2023, it's estimated that 875,000 workers had work-related stress, depression, or anxiety. And between 2024 and 2025, stress, depression, and anxiety accounted for the majority of days lost to work-related ill health in the UK. People with mental health problems may face discrimination at work and are at increased risk of losing their job.

It's estimated that around the world, 12 billion working days are lost each year due to depression and anxiety. This not only causes financial loss to a company but has wider implications for the economy. Poor mental health costs UK employers around £51 billion a year.

Globally, around 12 billion working days are estimated to be lost each year due to depression and anxiety.

Poor mental health costs UK employers around £51 billion each year.

Stress, depression, and anxiety accounted for the majority of days lost due to work-related ill health in the UK during 2024 and 2025.

World Health Organization, September 2024.
Deloitte, 2024.
Health and Safety Executive, October 2025.



Learning new skills for mental health

Learning new skills, in whatever form, can be useful. They help us achieve things, become better at a task, or open doors to new possibilities. Research shows that learning and education can also improve our mental wellbeing. Learning new skills can help boost confidence and self-esteem and give a sense of achievement.

For some people, learning a new skill could be associated with getting a qualification to improve and enhance their career. You may have team members who are keen to increase their skill set in the workplace. But there are lots of different ways to incorporate learning into daily life to achieve a positive impact on wellbeing.

Creating a psychologically safe environment where your employees have the option to learn will not only benefit them personally, but will also benefit your team.

Learning a new skill could be associated with getting a qualification to improve and enhance an employee's career.



Five ways to wellbeing.

1 Learning

Learning has been classed in government-commissioned research as one of five key ways to improve your wellbeing.

Many people think of learning as school, university, or college as we are taught new skills. But **continued learning throughout life can:**

- enhance self-esteem
- help you feel more productive and in control of your life
- provide connection with other people

2 Connect

Build relationships, make new connections and talk.

3 Be active

Stay physically active and reduce time being sedentary.



4 Take notice

Be present, notice what's around you and how you're feeling.

5 Give

Give back to the community, help others and be kind.



Implementing learning opportunities in your team

Learning isn't just courses and qualifications. Increasingly, large-scale employers make learning a key part of their working culture and talent management systems. Businesses need structures and systems in place to support learning, and a shared vision for learning and transformation. Even if your business isn't large, there are things you can implement to create a learning culture in the workplace to develop your team. **Here are some ideas.**

Create time for your employees to learn

It's hard to find both time and space at work to learn when there are deadlines and projects to deliver. If a team member expresses the desire to learn a new skill, give them some time to do so. Let them know that you see this time as valuable work (that is, not separate to their work, but part of it).

Give regular feedback

Positive and critical feedback are both important. Critical (or negative) feedback may feel hard to give, but it's important to remember that without it, your team member won't learn and grow. With the right training, it can be delivered well to give the recipient the confidence they need to work on the feedback effectively.

Encourage mentorship

Having a mentor at work can help develop professional skills and navigate certain challenges. A mentor can also be a great point of contact to discuss career opportunities. Encourage your employees to have a mentor or help them identify a suitable individual.

Lead by example

As a manager or leader, you set an example to your team. Make sure you explore your own growth and learning opportunities and share these with your team.



Informal versus formal learning

A good way to view learning in the workplace is as formal or informal.

Formal learning

Formal learning encompasses organised and structured learning. Examples of formal learning include having access to training courses, development days, or workshops. Encourage all employees to take part in these where possible.

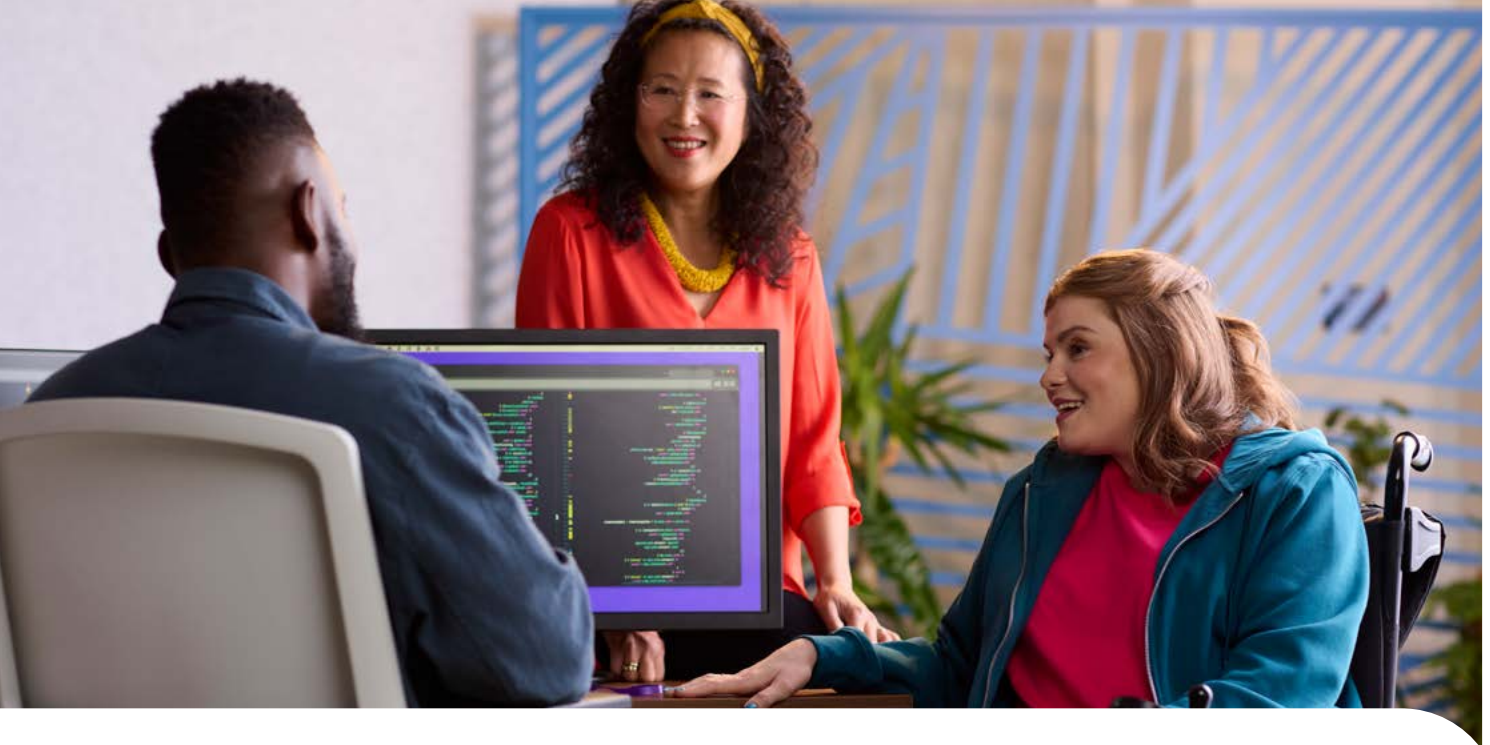
Informal learning

Informal learning involves developing knowledge and skill sets away from organised learning. This usually happens during standard work hours and while working on current projects. Examples of informal learning in the workplace include:

- problem-solving meetings
- sharing resources
- talking to team members and building relationships
- asking for help or advice

There are easy ways to encourage informal learning

- If a team member is working on a certain stand-alone project, ask them to share it with the rest of the team
- Hold regular team meetings that have flexible agendas and encourage informal conversation
- Invite people from other teams to share what they do
- Ask employees to work together on projects in small teams
- Subscribe your team to relevant journals, newsletters and online courses to encourage self-initiated reading



Creating a learning culture

Creating a learning culture within a team, workforce or organisation isn't easy. It requires a mindset shift from both employees and management. A key ingredient is for leaders to allow time for learning and to invest in learning opportunities, whether they're formal or informal. This will not only benefit the mental health of your team, but also the quality of work and company productivity.

When creating learning opportunities, it's important to create an environment that encourages inclusive learning and accessibility. Not everybody learns in the same way. And since up to one in five people in the UK is neurodivergent, you may need to take different approaches. Neurodiversity describes alternative thinking styles, including dyslexia, autism, and dyspraxia.

On a practical level, consider accessibility to learning for disabled or neurodiverse employees. Factor in everything from external locations and settings to travel, to ensure every employee can maximise the benefits of learning opportunities.

A key ingredient to creating a learning culture is for leaders to allow time for learning, and to invest in learning opportunities.

Businesses need structures and systems in place to support learning, as well as a shared vision for learning and transformation.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2020

Resources

References

- Mental health facts and statistics. Mind, published September 2025
www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/statistics-and-facts-about-mental-health/how-common-are-mental-health-problems/
- Mental health conditions, work and the workplace. Health and Safety Executive. hse.gov.uk, accessed April 2026.
www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mental-health-overview.htm
- Sin J Elkes J Batchelor R Et Al. Mental health and caregiving experiences of family carers supporting people with psychosis. Epidemiol Psychiatr Sci 2021; 30:e3.
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7116786/.
[doi: 10.1017/S2045796020001067](https://doi.org/10.1017/S2045796020001067)
- Mental wellbeing at work. Context. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), published March 2022
www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng212/chapter/Context
- How to support mental health at work. Mental Health Foundation, published 2024
www.mentalhealth.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/How-to-support-mental-health-at-work.pdf
- Mental health at work: statistics. Mental Health Foundation. mentalhealth.org.uk, accessed April 2026
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/statistics/mental-health-work-statistics>
- Mental health and wellbeing plan: Discussion paper. Department of Health and Social Care, updated May 2023
www.gov.uk/government/consultations/mental-health-and-wellbeing-plan-discussion-paper-and-call-for-evidence/mental-health-and-wellbeing-plan-discussion-paper
- Brouwers Epm. Social stigma is an underestimated contributing factor to unemployment in people with mental illness or mental health issues: Position paper and future directions. BMC Psychology 2020; 8(36)
www.bmcpsychology.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40359-020-00399-0
- Mental health at work. World Health Organization, published September 2024
www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-at-work
- Mental health and employers. Deloitte. deloitte.com, published May 2024.
www.deloitte.com/content/dam/assets-zone2/uk/en/docs/services/consulting/2024/deloitte-uk-mental-health-report-2024-final-new.pdf
- Smith PJ and Merwin RM. The role of exercise in management of mental health disorders: An integrative review. Annu Rev Med 2021; 72:45-62.
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8020774/.
[doi: 10.1146/annurev-med-060619-022943](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-med-060619-022943)
- Studying and mental health. Rethink Mental Illness, last updated March 2024
www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/living-with-mental-illness/wellbeing-physical-health/studying-and-mental-illness/
- Five ways to wellbeing. Mind, accessed April 2026
www.mind.org.uk/workplace/my-mental-health-at-work/five-ways-to-wellbeing
- Talent management. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, published November 2025
www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/resourcing/talent-factsheet

Resources

- Creating learning cultures. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, published April 2020 www.cipd.org/globalassets/media/knowledge/knowledge-hub/reports/creating-learning-cultures-1_tcm18-75606.pdf
- Performance feedback. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, accessed published September 2022 www.cipd.co.uk/Images/performance-feedback-evidence-review_tcm18-111378.pdf
- Coaching and mentoring. Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, published August 2025 www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/people/development/coaching-mentoring-factsheet
- Mental wellbeing at work. Recommendations. National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice), published 2 March 2022 www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng212/chapter/Recommendations
- Laubengaier DA, Wiggers J, Powell DJ. The Role of Formal and Informal Learning in Developing an Organizational Learning Culture. Research-Technology Management 2025; 68: 31-47. DOI: 10.1080/08956308.2025.2534317. www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08956308.2025.2534317#abstract
- Kittel Afd Kunz Rac and Seufert T. Self-regulation in informal workplace learning: Influence of organizational learning culture and job characteristics. Front. Psychol 2021; 12:643748. www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.643748
- How to encourage informal learning in your organization. Forbes, accessed 20 March 2020 www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2020/03/20/how-to-encourage-informal-learning-in-your-organization/?sh=47d57571526b
- Support for neurodivergent children and young people. UK Parliament. post.parliament.uk, published October 2024. www.post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0733/
- Working days lost in Great Britain. Health and Safety Executive. hse.gov.uk, published October 2025. www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/dayslost.htm
- Supporting adult learners' positive mental health. OpenLearn. open.edu, accessed April 2026. www.open.edu/openlearn/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=166863§ion=_unit3.4

Bupa health insurance is provided by:

Bupa Insurance Limited. Registered in England and Wales No. 3956433. Bupa Insurance Limited is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.

Arranged and administered by:

Bupa Insurance Services Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Registered in England and Wales No. 3829851.

Registered office: 1 Angel Court, London EC2R 7HJ

© Bupa 2026

bupa.co.uk/workplace-wellbeing