



MENTAL HEALTH ISN'T JUST FOR LOCKDOWN

**How to tackle workplace
mental health & wellbeing in 2021**



Contents



| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Mental health isn't just for lockdown | PG3 |
| The priorities | PG4 |
| A mental health crisis - what you need to know | PG5 - PG6 |
| Quick tips & resources for you and your teams | PG7 |
| Writing a mental health sick day policy | PG8 |
| Managing burnout | PG9 - PG10 |
| Managing anxiety | PG11 - PG12 |
| Physical Health | PG13 |
| Financial Wellbeing | PG14 |
| Employee engagement | PG15 - PG16 |
| About Sanctus | PG17 - PG18 |
| References | PG19 |

Mental health isn't just for lockdown



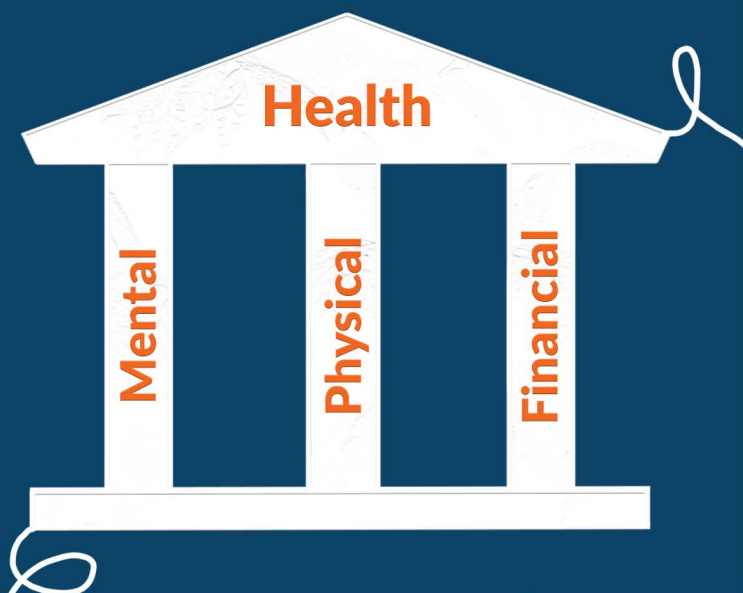
The last year or so has forever changed the way that we'll work and live, and COVID will have a far-reaching impact beyond just concerns around the virus.

The effect that the pandemic, and a conveyor belt of lockdowns, has had on people's mental health is enormous. It's predicted that people will still feel the psychological impact of COVID long past the ending of the pandemic.

So it's fair to say that we've all got some work to do.

This handbook is here to help.

The three core pillars of wellbeing to focus on:



Included in this handbook:

- What your business needs to prioritise
- Various tips and guides for supporting employees who are struggling
- Supporting physical and financial health
- How to measure what's working, and what isn't
- Key stats to help you build a business case

The priorities

Mental health needs to be at the forefront

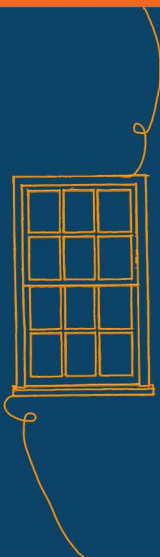
It's the part that businesses are most nervous about stepping into, but it's also the part that is arguably the most important.

It's the cornerstone of a good, well-rounded wellbeing strategy.



Be transparent about what you're working on

Not only is transparency key for trust, but the very nature of talking about wellbeing helps to destigmatise the parts that people don't want to talk about.



Senior leaders need to be on board

Senior leaders need to be publicly behind this. Without senior leaders backing, employees simply won't trust the company's intentions. Senior leads must be held accountable for the actions that are, or aren't, taken.



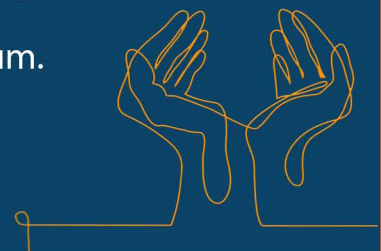
Measure your progress

What you can measure, you can improve. You don't need the most in-depth scientific formula to get this right. A simple and free survey is a good place to start. We'll cover this in this handbook.



Be diverse and inclusive

People have different needs. This will be even more the case as many businesses move to a remote-first or distributed model. Be sure to explore a range of services up and down the wellbeing spectrum.



A mental health crisis - what you need to know



It's been fairly well documented that cases of mental health issues were continuing to rise even before the pandemic struck.

This is perhaps most starkly seen in national suicide statistics. Suicides in the UK continue to rise, with 2019's suicide figures being at their highest point since 2000.¹ Even more staggering are the stats from the US, which has seen a 35% increase in suicide rates between 1999 and 2018.²

COVID, and all the worry, stress and loneliness that has come with it, will only have exacerbated this.

Research by McKinsey has found that COVID could increase the prevalence of behavioural health conditions by as much as 50%.³

This is a view supported by several leading public health specialists, who took to the British Medical Journal to warn⁴

“the mental health impact of the pandemic is likely to last much longer than the physical health impact”.

While this can feel like a lot of ifs and maybes, we can look to history as a rough predictor for what might be to come. Following the SARS outbreak in 2003, also a pandemic, there was a 30% increase in suicides in people over the age of 65.⁵

A mental health crisis - what you need to know

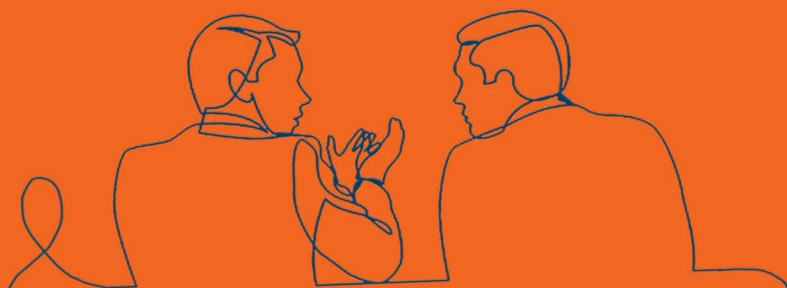


What's clear is that the pandemic and multiple lockdowns have both sparked mental health conditions, as well as poured fuel on existing fires. Anxiety, depression, OCD, PTSD, stress and chronic loneliness are expected to be some of the areas that people feel most impacted.

It's also important to understand that a large percentage of people aren't seeking help.⁶

Businesses have a duty to create a working environment where people can be their best selves. And this includes supporting them when they struggle. It's not a business' duty to force people to talk if they aren't ready, but they can help to remove many of the barriers people face by providing sufficient workplace support.

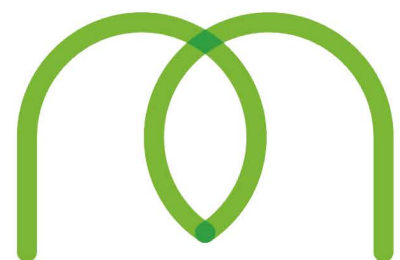
It's not only the right thing to do, but it can also help increase productivity by up to 12%.⁹



The mental health charity Mind found that over 60% of people say their mental health worsened during the pandemic, and yet 32% of adults feel that their issue isn't serious enough to seek help.⁷

This, alongside cost, are major barriers to people seeking the help that they need.

On top of this, Mental Health First Aid England found that 29% of employees have never discussed their mental health with their employer.⁸



MHFA England

Quick tips & resources for you and your teams



Let's look more specifically at what you can do for your teams.

Educate yourself on supporting those who are struggling

The mental health charities are a good place to start:

- Rethink Mental Illness - signs of poor mental health
- Mind - supporting someone else with mental health issues

Have avenues for support on hand

Be sure to refer people to your internal benefits, as well as having a list of external resources. We've put together a mental health directory with free and paid services for mental health, including recommended therapists.

Policies and benefits

- Signpost all existing wellbeing benefits
- Have inclusive policies that cover all sides - both physical and mental health
- Survey the business to find out people's different needs
- Cover the full mental health spectrum - from reactive to proactive
- Have a sick day policy that covers mental health - more on this on the next page

Tips for approaching someone who may be struggling

- A good place to start - imagine you are struggling, how would you like to be approached? How would you like them to start the conversation?
- Offer someone what you've noticed in them. Perhaps you've noticed someone is quieter than usual. Say this and leave out any assumptions you've got about why. Give them the space to respond
- Be mindful that the person you're speaking to may not want to open up
- Let them know that you're available and space is there for them, should they wish to take it



A mental health toolkit

A simple yet effective table you can share with your teams to help them boost their mood.

[Click here to view.](#)

Writing a mental health sick day policy



Many businesses have a fairly common sick day policy in employee handbooks, but the reality is that these often only cover physical health. So it's important that you address mental health sick days too.

It's a topic that businesses are nervous to approach and employees are scared to ask for. And we get it - it's a tough one.

Here's an exact copy of ours:

Mental Health Days

This isn't so much of a benefit (it should be the norm) but more of a naming.

We believe we treat mental health like physical health. We all have mental health is one of our rallying cries. This means we understand where some days your mental health impacts your ability to work as much as your physical health can.

It doesn't matter what the cause is, if you feel like you can't show up to work as a result of your mental health, we invite you to take a mental health day the same way you would a physical sick day.

No judgements. No questions. Apart from 'How can we best support you?' If you decide that's a mental health day(s) we trust you. Contact your manager and let them know and make arrangements to switch that out of office on.

Like physical health, mental ill health can persist - sometimes a little longer than we'd like it to. We trust you to tell us when it's right to return to work. There's no expectations to return sooner rather than later. We'd rather you made a full recovery and come back when you feel resourced enough. Sometimes the best self-care for you long term, doesn't feel good in the moment. It may feel tricky to ask for another day but if that's what's best for you, we trust it's the right thing.

We've also put together a guide detailing our belief on mental health sick days, how we went about writing our policy, and guidance for how you can create your own.

Grab that for free here or search "Sanctus sick day policy" on Google.

Managing burnout



Burnout has become one of the most commonly used terms in today's working world.

Rates of burnout have been increasing at such a rapid rate, that in 2019 the World Health Organisation (WHO) changed its definition of burnout.¹⁰

It went from being a “stress syndrome” to a “syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed”.

What's important to note here is that the main blame for the cause of burnout has been put at the feet of the workplace with **“long hours, economic insecurity, work-family conflict, and high job demands coupled with low job control”** being the causes. In fact, it was found that workplace burnout caused by these factors are as harmful to our health as secondhand smoke.¹¹

Here's how to help manage it.

What is burnout?

Burnout can develop if a person has been under stress for a long period of time. Stress is our body's response to a situation or event, and when bad stress is regular and consistent, it can result in a state of mental, physical and emotional exhaustion; also known as burnout.

(Cont.)

Familiarise yourself with the signs of burnout:

- **Demotivation and detachment from work**
- **Depleted energy levels or trouble sleeping**
- **Detachment from personal relationships**
- **Lower resistance to illness**
- **Pessimistic outlook on work**
- **Feeling overwhelmed**
- **Lower levels of self-confidence**

Supporting someone with burnout:

- **Offer someone what you've noticed in them - perhaps they've been more distant than usual. Don't make any judgements - simply allow them the space to respond should they wish.**
- **Be empathetic and understanding. Again, don't judge. Listen.**
- **Point them to any internal or external resources you have for where they can seek support from a professional**
- **Work with them on the best next steps. Some might be exhausted and need time off. Others may feel overwhelmed, and creating a plan with goals might help them to see clearer.**
- **Refer to our mental health directory for recommended avenues of professional support.**

Practical suggestions/questions for those struggling with burnout:

- **Are you taking time to switch off from work and have balance in your life?**
- **Do you work late/weekends, or check notifications when you shouldn't?**
- **Are you working on too many projects at once and having to gear switch often?**
- **Do you have the support you need on a particular project or issue?**
- **Have you structured your working week to allow some whitespace or deep work for projects?**

Resources for burnout:
Click the links below

TED



 **headspace**

- **Talks** - TED Talks on burnout
- **Apps** - Calm and Headspace - mindfulness apps
- **Book** - Burnout: The secret to solving the stress cycle
- **Podcast** - Preventing burnout
- **Information** - Managing burnout

Managing anxiety



Anxiety is a feeling of unease, like worry or fear, that can be mild or severe. It is the worry that a particular thing might happen before it has even happened (which it may not ever do). Everyone feels anxious from time to time but for some, anxiety can be overwhelming and debilitating, getting in the way of our everyday lives and relationships.

64% of participants reported symptoms of depression and 57% reported symptoms of anxiety.

Here's how to help manage it.

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, like a worry or a fear, that can be mild or severe. It is the worry that a particular thing might happen, before it has even happened (which it may not ever do). Everyone feels anxious from time to time but for some, anxiety can be overwhelming and debilitating, getting in the way of our everyday lives and relationships.

Familiarise yourself with some of the signs of anxiety:

- Restlessness or difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Shortness of breath
- Muscle ache
- Sickness
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Tiredness



Managing anxiety



Supporting someone with anxiety:

- **Don't pressure anyone.** Someone with anxiety is already putting enough pressure on themselves, so don't try and force them down a particular path.
- **Be empathetic and understanding.** Listen, don't judge.
- **Ask how you can help.** Allowing someone to give you specific requests around what you can do to help may take an immense amount of pressure off them.
- **Support them in seeking help.** Perhaps it's referring them over to an internal mental health benefit you have, or offering to arrange a GP visit for them.
- **Refer to our mental health directory for recommended avenues of support.**



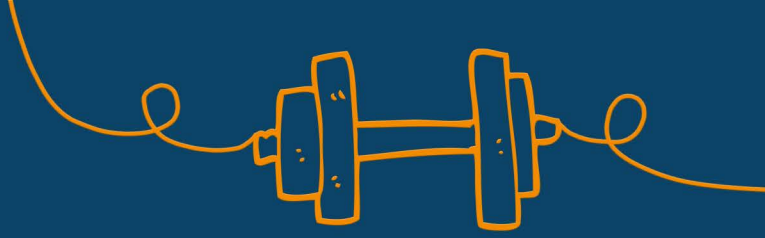
Resources for anxiety
Click the links below

TED



- **Talks** - TED Talks on anxiety
- **Information** - Anxiety and panic attack information from Mind
- **Podcast** - Feeling anxiety in your body
- **Guides** - Free resources from Anxiety UK
- **Sanctus Resources** - Anxiety

Physical health



The impact that our physical and mental health has on each other is clear; our mental health can be a great physical preventative measure.

Studies have found that instances of poor mental health, such as stress and depression, can cause “physiological changes, such as metabolic, endocrinal, and inflammatory shifts, that are markers and predictors of disease”.¹⁴

Put simply; the way to reduce health costs to your business, increase productivity and to, more importantly, look after your people, is primarily through the brain.

COVID has had a huge impact on people's physical health. Individuals who feel low are less likely to engage in healthy behaviours, and one study¹³ found that during COVID:

46% have been exercising less

37% have disturbed sleep

39% have developed musculoskeletal problems

1 in 4 are working from a sofa or bedroom, with half developing musculoskeletal problems

So, what to do next?

As well as prioritising mental health, there are some specific physical health benefits you can look at too. Health insurance is a good place to start, particularly something like Vitality, which rewards people who keep active and fit.

Also, consider looking at organisations like Gympass or ClassPass who offer a subscription-based service for a whole host of physical health classes.

Financial wellbeing



Another pillar of wellbeing which has started to gain a lot of traction is around our financial health. And its link to our mental health couldn't be clearer.

Back in 2017, CIPD found that 1 in 4 adults said that money worries were affecting their ability to do their job¹⁵, while in 2019 Perkbox found that money was the biggest cause of stress in the UK, with 61% of adults saying so.¹⁶

But what impact has COVID had on people's finances?

Global research from McKinsey¹⁷ has found that generally speaking, people feel worried about both their finances, as well as their country's economies.

The research also found:

- Incomes and savings have decreased between 30% - 80%
- 20% - 60% of people fear for their jobs
- More than half of these people have less than five months of savings

In the UK specifically, we've seen a:



36%
reduction in
household income



33%
reduction in
savings



50%
decrease in
spending

Does money = happiness?

There are numerous studies and opposing debates on this question. Putting aside the actual amount someone can earn or wants to earn, what is clear is that those who feel more in control and more knowledgeable about their earning, spending and saving will feel less stressed.

Again, earning more money isn't necessarily the key to happiness for someone. But helping them to understand how they can feel more financially secure can help.

So, what to do next?

The answer here doesn't have to be about giving everyone a raise. Instead, think about having an external speaker or coach deliver a workshop(s) that educates people on money, savings, pensions and investments.

Employee engagement



If you measure engagement, you can improve on it. While there are plenty of paid-for engagement software on the market, there's no reason you can't get started for free.

Important things to consider:

- Keeping it anonymous will yield more truthful and in-depth responses
- Run surveys both before, during and after any changes you want to make.
- This will give you the truest indication of the impact

Consider sending it out on different days and at different times to different employees to get a more broad, average snapshot of the mood in the business. For example, if you only send it to the whole business at 9 am on a cold and rainy Monday, you may find that the mood is naturally lower

- At the very least, consider sending this out every quarter
- Typeform is a great free service you can use to set up anonymous surveys

Structuring your mental health survey

Structuring your survey

Here's a short and snappy survey.

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you score the below?

- How would you score your mental health?
- How connected do you feel to the team?
- How well do you think [your company name] looks after your mental health?
- How productive do you feel?
- How happy are you with your mental health and wellbeing routine?

Anything you want to add? [Space for free text/responses]

Employee engagement



More complex survey

And here's a survey with a bit more detail.

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, how would you score the below?

- I believe [your company name] cares about my mental health and wellbeing
- I believe [your company name]'s leaders are supportive of mental health and wellbeing
- I believe my manager cares about my mental health and wellbeing
- I can be open and honest with my manager about my mental health
- I can be open and honest with colleagues about my mental health
- I enjoy my work
- I enjoy being part of [company name]
- I can take time off when I need to
- I can be flexible with my working hours
- If I'm struggling with my mental health, I know what support I have available
- I believe our company has a supportive mental health and wellbeing policy
- I wake up feeling refreshed and rested
- How would you currently score your mental health?

General Health Questionnaire

You can also consider using the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ), a widely used questionnaire that has been used since the 1970s. More information on this [here](#).

What to do with the scores

The feedback and scores that you receive give you a good indication of what is, and what isn't, working within the business. Make a plan of action of what you're going to tackle, be transparent about this with the business, and track your scores over following surveys. You should hopefully see an increase over time in the areas you're focusing on.

About Sanctus



Sanctus is making mental health more accessible for employees.

We do this by creating safe spaces where they can learn, reflect and talk about their mental health.

Whether that's through 1:1 Sanctus Coaching, Talks or Workshops, our mission is to make mental health accessible for all.



Give your employees the support they need

Stress? Work problems? Something to celebrate? Personal development? Our Sanctus Coaches can handle it all



Free up the time of HR and Management

Spending a large bulk of your time on personal and mental health-related support? Our team of qualified Coaches can handle that for you, freeing you up to focus on the professional development of your teams



Build a proactive mental health strategy

1 in 4 people will have a mental health issue at any one time. But, 4 in 4 people have mental health all of the time, and prevention is always better than cure



Create a one-on-one space for your employees to talk

For employees to truly open up, they need a space that's separate from the business. Through 1:1 Coaching, either physically or virtually, we create these spaces

Organisations we work with...



What our partners say...

Jane Gibbon, Group HR Director



JUST EAT

"Sanctus is the best people initiative we've ever had, and has increased usage of our other employee benefits, lowering the cost per head for these services"

Harry Richardson, People Partner



onfido

"A key member of staff said in a manager one-to-one that Sanctus was one of the main reasons he had stayed with the company, which covered the cost of Sanctus for two years." It also costs an average of £30K to replace an employee"

Debby Penton, Manager Director



wildfire

"More people thank me for Sanctus than the annual bonus!"

Sanctus a glance...

8000+

Employees who attended
a Sanctus session in 2020

95%

Percentage of employees
who report improved
mental health after using Sanctus

40%

Average percentage of employees
using Sanctus at our Partners

Keen to find out more? Book a chat with us today.

www.sanctus.io

References



- 1 <https://www.bmj.com/content/370/bmj.m3431>
- 2 & 3 <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/healthcare-systems-and-services/our-insights/mental-health-in-the-workplace-the-coming-revolution#>
- 4 - <https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2020/05/05/the-long-term-mental-health-impact-of-covid-19-must-not-be-ignored/>
- 5- <https://econtent.hogrefe.com/doi/10.1027/0227-5910/a000015>
- 6 - <https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20201021-coronavirus-the-possible-long-term-mental-health-impacts>
- 7 - https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/5929/the-mental-health-emergency_a4_final.pdf
- 8 - <https://workplaceinsight.net/employers-need-to-catch-up-with-the-mental-health-crisis/>
- 9 - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-support-mental-health-work#:~:text=Good%20mental%20health%20at%20work,by%20as%20much%20as%2012%25.>
- 10 - <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>
- 11 - <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/607750>
- 12 - <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/covid-19-pandemic-significantly-increased-anxiety-and-depression-in-the-uk>
- 13 - <https://www.rsph.org.uk/about-us/news/survey-reveals-the-mental-and-physical-health-impacts-of-home-working-during-covid-19.html>
- 14 - [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045\(04\)01597-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanonc/article/PIIS1470-2045(04)01597-9/fulltext)
- 15 - <https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/employee-financial-well-being#gref>
- 16 - <https://www.perkbox.com/uk/resources/blog/financial-wellbeing-survey#:~:text=Over%20a%20quarter%20of%20adults%20experience%20financial%20stress%20on%20a,often%20people%20experience%20financial%20stress>
- 17 - <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/financial-services/our-insights/a-global-view-of-financial-life-during-covid-19>