

HSE launches Working Minds campaign to encourage employers to promote good mental health in work

Work-related stress and poor mental health risk becoming a health and safety crisis for Great Britain's workplaces, the regulator has warned.

While the full impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is yet to be fully understood, mental health issues are the number one reason given for sick days in the UK. Last year more than 17 million working days were lost as a result of stress, anxiety, or depression. A recent survey by the charity Mind suggests that two in five employees' mental health had worsened during the pandemic.

In response the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is today, Tuesday 16 November, launching its new campaign, 'Working Minds', at its *Health and Work Conference*, which examines issues relating to health at work. The campaign aims to help businesses recognise the signs of work-related stress and make tackling issues routine.

While 'Working Minds' is specifically targeting six million workers in small businesses, HSE is calling for a culture change across Britain's workplaces, to ensure psychological risks are treated the same as physical ones in health and safety risk management.

HSE's chief executive Sarah Albon said: "Work-related stress and poor mental health should be treated with the same significance as risks of poor physical health and injury. In terms of the affect it has on workers, significant and long-term stress can limit performance and impact personal lives.

"No worker should suffer in silence and if we don't act now to improve workers' mental health, this could evolve into a health and safety crisis.

"The pandemic has highlighted the need to protect the health of employees who have faced unprecedented challenges; the Government is committed to building back better and we want to make sure good mental health is central to this."

HSE is reminding business that no matter where people work, employers have a legal duty to assess the risks in the workplace, not just in terms of potential hazards and physical safety. They should also promote good working practices. It says this promotes an open environment where employees can share their concerns and discuss options to ease pressures.

Sarah Albon added: "Our campaign is focused on giving employers a clear reminder of their duties while championing reducing work-related stress and promoting good mental health at work."

The regulator has partnered with a number of organisations to highlight the triggers of stress, the legal duty of employers and how to manage the risks. The network of Working Minds champions includes the charity Mind, which

supports and empowers anyone experiencing a mental health problem in England.

Working Minds is aimed specifically at supporting small businesses by providing employers and workers with easy to implement advice, including simple steps in its '5 R's' to Reach out, Recognise, Respond, Reflect, and make it Routine.

Employers and workers wanting to know more about the Working Minds campaign, including the legal obligations, advice, and tools available, should visit: workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/workingminds.

Comments in support of Working Minds

Dane Krambergar, Head of Workplace Wellbeing Services at Mind, said: "We're really pleased to be supporting HSE's Working Minds campaign which aims to support businesses to promote good mental health among their staff. Mind has long been working with employers of different sizes and sectors to help them create mentally healthy workplaces, but this has never been more important. This campaign couldn't have come at a better time, given the impact the pandemic has taken on employers and staff.

"We recently surveyed over 40,000 staff working across 114 organisations. Two in five (41 per cent) employees told us their mental health had worsened during the pandemic."

Prof Neil Greenberg, Chair of the Occupational Psychiatry Special Interest Group at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said: "Good mental health is just as important as good physical health, so it's vital that employers do all that they can to promote good mental health in the workplace. Employees should be given appropriate support to help minimise the likelihood of experiencing work-related mental health problems and be supported in their treatment and recovery if they do develop or live with a mental illness.

"HSE's campaign will give organisations and employers the necessary tools to spot potential signs of mental ill-health, and to develop or improve their practices to protect the psychological health of their staff."

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work Chloe Smith said: "Making sure businesses have the right tools to recognise and support their employees with their mental health is key to creating healthy workforces across the country.

"Campaigns like this are so important and alongside our other measures to help reduce ill-health related job loss and initiatives such as Access to Work we can ensure even more people can stay in their job and thrive."

Notes to editors

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. hse.gov.uk
2. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
3. The Working Minds campaign is supported by Mind, Lifelines Scotland, NHS, ACAS, Mates in Mind, the Farm Safety Foundation, the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Plastics and Composites Group, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Civil Engineering Contractors Association, the Federation of Small Businesses, CONIAC and the UK Home Care Association.
4. While seeking to raise awareness and seek a culture change across workplaces nationally, the campaign is specifically targeting businesses with fewer than 20 employees with a focus on Agriculture, Construction, Health, Manufacturing, Motor trade (repairs not retail) – providing an audience of 1.1m SME businesses with 2 – 19 employees, approximately six million workers in total.
5. More information on today's conference can be found [here](#).
6. Dane Kramberger, Head of Workplace Wellbeing Services at Mind, Continued: "The main reasons cited (in the survey mentioned above) including work life interfering with home life and fears about job security. Although many staff felt more comfortable talking to their employer about their mental health, too often, staff told us they were not offered any additional support or adjustments to their roles. Investing in the mental health of your staff is not only the responsible thing to do, but it saves money in terms of reduced sickness absence and turnover and increased staff morale and productivity. Employers also have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff – this includes staff whose mental health has a substantial adverse effect on their daily lives and has lasted or is expected to last more than 12 months."

[Polymer distribution company in court after worker's fingers severed](#)

A polymer distribution company has been fined after an employee's hand was trapped in machinery whilst attempting to remove a blockage.

Manchester Magistrates' Court heard how, on the 12 October 2018, an employee of Albis (UK) Ltd was filling an autoloader machine when a blockage occurred

in the chute, preventing the product from dropping into the mixer. The employee opened the mixer in order to insert their hand into the chute to remove the blockage, at which point, the butterfly valve was released. This caused the index finger of their right hand to be trapped resulting in the loss of the tip of the index finger below the first joint and the tip of his middle finger above the first joint.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), found that the company had made alterations to the roof area of the premises sometime before the incident. Due to these, the length of the chute had had to be decreased making access to dangerous parts of the machine possible. A risk assessment had not been carried out subsequent to the shortening of the chute, neither had operatives been fully instructed on how to unblock the autoloader. The machine had also been reconfigured unbeknown to the safety manager, allowing the valve to continue moving when the interlock had been broken. The machine should have cut out when the mixer lid was opened, but it failed to do so, resulting in the incident.

Albis (UK) Ltd of Montgomery Way, Parkgate Industrial Estate, Knutsford, pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The company was fined £33,000 and ordered to pay costs of £3,684.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Martin Heywood said: "This incident could so easily have been avoided. Employers should ensure they carry out an assessment of the risks and put in safe system of works for the operation of all machinery. Employers should also ensure that adequate information, instruction and training is provided to all who use it."

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: [Why is machinery safety important?](#)
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

[Construction company fined after injured worker loses sight](#)

A Bradford-based construction company has been fined after an employee was injured at work leading to significant sight loss in his right eye.

Manchester Magistrates' Court heard how Pearl Services UK Ltd had been contracted to carry out refurbishment of a retail store in Cheetham Hill, Manchester. On the 23 February 2020 employees were erecting PVC hoarding within the store to separate the refurbishment work area from members of the public. An apprentice decorator who was helping joiners set up the hoarding, struck one of the PVC panels using a mallet causing it to splinter. A fragment penetrated their right eye, causing serious injury and loss of sight. The incident has resulted in a life-changing injury to the person who will not regain full sight in his right eye, despite a number of post-accident operations

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Pearl Services UK Ltd had failed to suitably plan, manage and monitor the project. Risk assessments and method statements had not fully identified the need to wear safety eyewear during the erection of the hoarding. In addition to this, the supervisor had failed to ensure that the documentation available on-site was communicated to the operatives before commencing work. Although safety eyewear was available on site, the wearing of it had not been made mandatory, neither were checks carried out to ensure it was worn.

Pearl Services UK Limited of Pearl House Comondale Way, Euroway Trading Estate, Bradford pleaded guilty to breaching Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and was fined £16,500 and ordered to pay costs of £5,778.40

After the hearing, HSE inspector Phil Redman commented: "This incident could so easily have been avoided by providing suitable information, instruction, supervision and training to site personnel in respect of the fitting of the PVC site hoarding.

"Companies should be aware that HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

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Construction employee sustains multiple fractures after fall from height

Trevor Cook Construction Ltd has been fined after a roof worker fell six metres through a fragile roof sheet whilst working on a barn at a farm in Amesbury, Wiltshire.

Swindon Magistrates' Court heard how, on 22 May 2019, the employee was replacing broken roof sheets using a mobile elevating working platform (MEWP) to gain access to the roof of the barn and crawling boards to traverse the roof. The employee's foot slipped from one of the crawling boards and he subsequently fell through the fragile roof material, sustaining serious injuries including neck fractures, a collapsed lung, and a bleed on the brain.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that Trevor Cook Construction Limited failed to plan the work appropriately. The company was aware of the risks and often used netting when undertaking large re-roofing projects, but made a conscious decision not to install nets for smaller jobs, which involved the replacement of individual roof sheets. The chances of falling whilst working on fragile roofs are very high and the company should have had the appropriate safeguards in place.

Trevor Cook Construction Limited of Garlands, Cadley Road, Collingbourne Ducis, Marlborough, Wiltshire pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 4(1) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The company was fined £63,278 and ordered to pay costs of £6,721.

Speaking after the hearing, HSE inspector Stephan Axt-Simmonds said: "Falls from height remain one of the most common causes of work-related fatalities in this country and the risks associated with working at height are well known.

"Falls through fragile roof materials are not inevitable. They can be prevented by careful planning, using trained and experienced workers with suitable equipment, and employing a high level of supervision.

"This incident could so easily have been avoided by using established control measures and safe working practices."

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2. More information about working with fragile roofs and preventing falls can be found here: [Fragile roofs: Safe working practices GEIS5 \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
[Agriculture: Preventing falls \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)
 3. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
 4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>
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[Landlord fined and sentenced to a community order for gas safety breaches](#)

A landlord has been fined and sentenced to a 12-month community order for failing to maintain gas appliances at a rental property.

Colchester Magistrates' Court heard how landlord Hannah Leek failed in her duty to have the gas appliances at her rental property in Tendring, Essex, regularly inspected and maintained and failed to provide a Landlord Gas Safety Record, all of which are legal requirements. Ms Leek also failed to comply with an Improvement Notice issued by an HSE inspector which required her to take action to deal with these issues.

Hannah Leek of Wicklow Close, Shepshed, Loughborough, pleaded guilty to breaching the Gas Safety Installation and Use Regulations 1998, Regulation 36(3)(a), Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Section 21 and Section 20(2)(j) and was sentenced to a 12-month community order and 100 hours of unpaid work and ordered to pay costs of £3,292.05 and a victim surcharge of £85.

After the hearing HSE inspector Carla Barron said: "Landlords must ensure gas appliances at their tenanted properties are maintained in a safe condition and are checked by a Gas Safe Register engineer at least every 12 months.

"HSE will not hesitate to take appropriate enforcement action against those that fall below the required standards."

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2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at:

legislation.gov.uk/; www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic/faqlandlord.htm

3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>