

Mental health in manufacturing

In the working world there has been a monumental push to recognise [mental health's importance](#) to overall [employee wellbeing](#), alongside that of physical health. One of the Government's aims outlined in the King's Speech was to give mental health the same priority as physical health in an effort to abolish stigmas and ensure positive progress.

The manufacturing sector has long had a reputation for being a fast paced and tough environment, with long, sometimes irregular, shift patterns alongside a plethora of [health and safety](#) concerns for employers to manage. This has meant that in some instances the conversation regarding [mental health](#) in the manufacturing industry has taken somewhat of a backseat.

There are, however, ways for business owners to address the mental health issues and challenges faced by manufacturing workers, as well as offer mental health support to their workforce. Under your employers '[duty of care](#)' you need to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your staff, this includes their mental health.

For expert advice on how to support employee mental health in the workplace, as well as to understand your [Health and Safety obligations](#) as an employer, contact Croner today on 0844 561 8133 and quote your membership number.

Manufacturing industry challenges to mental health

Manufacturing can be a particularly demanding job physically, with operatives working repetitively, having to endure the strain on their bodies, whilst often having to be aware of the various [hazards](#) that come hand in hand with the job, typically in the form of machinery and/or the working environment.

Prolonged exposure to the aforementioned, can result in high levels of [stress](#) which can negatively impact mental health, leading to instances of work-related anxiety and depression. The [physical stresses](#) of the job means that mental health challenges can often be overlooked. Coupled with the lack of mental health resources, this can create a problematic situation for employees and ultimately employers.

Mental health challenges in the workforce

The manufacturing industry's manual nature and working environment are not the only factors that can have a detrimental effect on the mental health of employees. The workforce itself being a particularly male dominated one, can often harbour traditionalist values regarding masculinity and showing vulnerability, which can result in the stigma around mental health issues still being prevalent.

This "stiff-upper-lip" mentality can mean that many employees do not feel comfortable to come forward if they are experiencing poor mental health, through fear of judgement from their peers and colleagues. Even if your business has [mental health services](#) available to staff, they may not be engaged with them, due to this fear.

What are the consequences of poor mental health in the workplace?

There is both a financial and human cost to a workplace that exhibits poor employee mental health, and in the manufacturing industry, the cost can be higher due to the [hazards](#) involved

such as the physical demands of the job plus the [machinery](#) involved. Just some of the issues caused as a result of this is:

- Decreased productivity due to [presenteeism](#)
- Increased error count
- Increase in the frequency of [workplace accidents](#)
- Increase in costs due to [sickness absence](#)
- Potential claims against the business from employees

Creating a positive culture regarding mental health in the manufacturing industry

Whilst it's true that old habits can "die-hard", creating a [culture](#) in which employees can feel comfortable being open about any mental health struggles they may be experiencing, is the solution to help end the stigma and create a supportive workplace mental health culture.

Ensure to encourage regular breaks

[Breaks](#) are productive, they give employees time to take stock of things, and take a momentary physical rest which can reduce fatigue, reducing the risk of workplace [accidents](#) due to tiredness. A reduction in fatigue can also result in reduced [workplace stress](#).

Train management to recognise mental health related issues

Management should be given mental health awareness training and given access to mental health resources. These can be then made available to their individual teams ensuring they have access to them when they need them.

Incorporate workplace flexibility

[Flexible working](#) is soon to become a day one right under the [Employment Rights Bill](#), however, incorporating flexible working into your business if feasible can have a positive effect on mental health. Offering flexible working to employees can allow them to achieve a better work-life balance, allowing them to attend medical and counselling appointments more easily.

Introduce an Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Part of promoting mental health awareness and improving mental health initiatives in the workplace could be to introduce an [Employee Assistance Program](#). An EAP can offer confidential counselling services and mental health support for employees. This can either be work-based support or support with issues in their personal lives.

Actively promote mental health awareness and a culture of openness

Possibly the most important measure a business can take is to actively encourage the conversation. Employees are more likely to engage with the issue if there is a feeling of safety to do so. On the contrary, if your business has all the policies and support, but doesn't convey this safety to discuss the issue then, this will come across to employees as merely lip-service and can actually have the counter effect of creating mistrust.

Encourage management to help remove the stigma surrounding mental health by empowering and educating their teams.

Talk to Croner today to ensure a healthy culture in your business

Our expert team of [Health and Safety](#) and [HR specialists](#) can help you implement policies and [documentation](#) to help your workplace thrive. We also provide an industry-leading EAP service to support your staff when they need it most.

Call today on 0844 561 8133 and quote your membership number.