

**time to change**

let's end mental health discrimination

# Time to Change Employer Pledge

A guide to creating your action plan

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# Welcome

Welcome to our guide on how to fill out your Time to Change Employer Pledge action plan. This document contains all the information you need to complete your plan.

We hope this document is helpful in answering your questions and supporting you to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination in your workplace.



# Why do you need an action plan?

The action plan is the heart of your Employer Pledge commitment. We believe that to achieve lasting change within your workplace, it's important to create a plan of tangible activity to break down mental health stigma.

The action plan is designed to be a starting point for your plans. It asks you to detail the actions you are committed to delivering within your organisation to tackle stigma and discrimination around mental health. It can also celebrate activity you have already delivered.

The action plan should be a living and breathing document that is edited as your plans evolve and we recommend it is reviewed on a regular basis.

# Your next steps

Once you have completed your action plan, you can submit it online [here](#)

We want to help as many employers sign the pledge as possible but hope you understand that we have limited resource within the team. Because of this, we require at least six weeks' notice of your pledge signing date to receive your action plan, review it, provide feedback, approve your plan and commission your pledge board.

Please note this lead in time may increase during peak periods, but this will be flagged clearly online.

## The process from here



[Submit your action plan online](#)

We review your plan and provide feedback within four weeks

We will provide feedback on your plan - you have two weeks following feedback to resubmit it

Once we've approved your plan, we will send you a pledge board for your signing event

# How to structure your action plan

We are often asked what makes a good action plan. To make filling out the action plan template as simple as possible, we asked hundreds of employers who have already signed the Pledge to identify the key elements which have made their work in this area a success.

As a result, we have developed seven key principles. You should demonstrate at least **one tangible activity** against each principle in your action plan.

The coming pages outline each principle, suggest activities you could choose to fulfil these and case studies to bring them to life.

# Seven key principles

**Demonstrate  
senior level  
buy-in**

**Demonstrate  
accountability and  
recruit Employee  
Champions**

**Raise awareness  
about mental  
health**

**Update and  
implement policies  
to address mental  
health problems in  
the workplace**

**Ask staff to share  
personal  
experiences of  
mental health  
problems**

**Equip line  
managers to have  
conversations  
about mental  
health**

**Provide information  
about mental  
health and  
signpost to  
support services**

## Demonstrate senior level buy-in

Buy-in from the senior leaders in your organisation is crucial to the success of your action plan. If you have their support, you will find it much easier to change the culture of your workplace. Even better, getting them to be open about their mental health at work can create a seismic shift in how mental health problems are talked about amongst your employees.

How will you show that your senior leaders are committed to addressing mental health in the workplace?

### Ideas for your action plan:

- Secure a senior sponsor to sign your Employer Pledge at an all staff event and ask them to talk about the importance of tackling stigma in your workplace - we recommend this isn't your HR Director so you can break mental health out of the 'HR box'.
- Encourage senior leaders to share their personal experiences of stress, low mood or other mental health problems in the workplace.
- Ask a senior leader to write a blog or intranet post to highlight the pledge and their commitment to drive culture change.

The [Bank of England's](#) Chief Economist spoke out to the media about the importance of signing the Time to Change pledge. Plus watch [Ruth Hunt](#), Chief Executive of Stonewall, share their top down approach to tackling mental health stigma.

## Demonstrate accountability and recruit Employee Champions

Accountability ensures that your action plan is successfully delivered. It is important to find the right team or person for this responsibility to sit with - this will ensure your organisation keeps the momentum going on changing attitudes to mental health. It's also crucial to put in place ways to monitor your progress so you know what's working.

Recruiting [Employee Champions](#) is a fantastic way to support your work and help you get the message out to all levels of employees.

### Ideas for your action plan:

- Establish a cross-functional group to take forward the mental health agenda within your workplace.
- Decide who will have oversight of implementing the action plan and carefully choose someone who can bring together departments to work collaboratively.
- Share your action plan with your Employee Champions and think about how you will communicate with your Champions on a regular basis.
- Think about how you can measure current data on mental health within your workplace, eg: absence and disclosure rates so you can measure the impact of your action plan.
- Improve your ability to understand your employees' wellbeing levels by including questions in staff surveys.
- You can find more information on what Employee Champions are and how to recruit them [here](#).

Read about how [Barclays](#) focused on fixing the basics first and integrating how they will measure success from day one.

## Raise awareness about mental health

To create an environment where conversations about mental health are commonplace, you need to make people aware of the issue. Many people have never thought about their mental health before so it's important to make them aware of how important it is.

Raising awareness can happen internally through activities in your organisation or externally through being part of wider campaigns such as World Mental Health Day and Time to Talk Day.

### Ideas for your action plan:

- Sign your Time to Change Employer Pledge at an organisation wide event, such as an all staff briefing.
- Run an internal communications campaign using Time to Change [promotional materials](#) to encourage employees to start talking about mental health in the workplace.
- Harness the power of your Employee Champions who can run events on your behalf to ensure that your message reaches many more employees.
- Share [mythbusting](#) information and [case studies](#) on your staff intranet or newsletters.
- Encourage staff to show their support for the campaign by signing the Time to Change [Individual Pledge](#) and using our email banner.
- Take part in key Time to Change campaign dates and run activity within your workplace for World Mental Health Day (10<sup>th</sup> October 2016) and Time to Talk Day (3rd February 2017).

## Update and implement policies to address mental health problems in your workplace

Whether you choose to have a standalone mental health policy or address mental health within existing policies, it is important that employees are informed about what they should do when encountering mental ill health. A clear mental health policy establishes a framework for everyone to work within and shows new recruits and current employees that your organisation takes their mental wellbeing seriously.

How easy is it for an employee struggling with a mental health problem, or their line manager, to find out how your organisation will treat them? How can you change your policies to encourage those with mental health problems to come forward?

### Ideas for your action plan:

- Review your current policies to ensure your workplace is supportive of people experiencing mental health problems. e.g. Review your sickness absence policy to ensure this supports both those with physical or mental health related illness.
- Resources such as those on the [Support for Managers](#) section of our website can help get you started.
- Consider implementing a standalone mental health or wellbeing policy to highlight the organisation's commitment to the issue and link to existing policies.
- Integrate case studies into existing policies to highlight to managers and staff how these operate in practice.
- Promote positive health behaviours and prevention measures. e.g. Introduce [Wellness Action Plans](#) (WAPs) for staff to support them to stay well.
- Review your lifecycle of employment, from recruitment, through to returning to work after an absence. Look at every interaction where mental health may come up as an issue and put in place policies to ensure they are positive for your employees.

## Ask staff to share personal experiences of mental health problems

The majority of employers tell us that getting their employees to share their personal experiences of mental health problems with one another is an incredibly powerful tool.

By getting just a few people to open up and tell their story, you signal that it's okay for employees to be open with each other about their mental health. We recommend you do this at an organisation-wide level but also encourage conversations at an individual level.

### Ideas for your action plan:

- Get senior or high-profile employees with experience of mental health problems to speak out and lead by example.
- Encourage staff at all levels to write blogs and share their experiences through internal communications or staff intranet.
- If you think your staff will struggle to do this, ask for anonymous submissions and gradually work up to people putting their name to their story.
- Host a Q&A panel session with people with experience of mental health problems who are comfortable sharing their story to empower others to share their stories.
- Set up a wellbeing network for colleagues to share experiences and tips for managing mental health and wellbeing at work.
- Organise a 'Tea & Talk' session to bring employees together. Create an open and friendly space where they can share their experiences with one another.

Read this story from [Rachel Anchors at BAE Systems](#) about how speaking about her experience of mental health problems at a staff conference made a big impact.

**Equip line managers to have conversations about mental health**

**It's critical that all of your line managers feel confident having a conversation about mental health with their line reports.**

**Increasing their capability to spot signs and symptoms in their team, and feel confident in discussing this with those who are struggling will help stop problems before they become more challenging.**

**Ideas for your action plan:**

- Organise mental health awareness training for line managers to build knowledge around mental health problems and information on spotting signs and symptoms of mental ill health.
- Deliver training for line managers on how to have an important conversation, with a particular focus on mental health.
- Integrate mental health into existing training and induction to highlight the topic and demonstrate it's okay to raise any issues staff may be facing.
- Consider how you will train line managers who are reluctant to address mental health issues - non-compulsory training risks only reaching the line managers who are open to talking about mental health.
- Use Time to Change filmed [workshops](#) to build knowledge around stress reduction techniques.

**Read about how [E.ON](#) have seen tangible business benefits from equipping their line managers to talk about mental health.**

**Provide information about mental health and signpost to support services**

Once you've got your workforce opening up about mental health, it's important to provide information about the subject and enable employees to easily access support services available to them when in need.

How will you ensure your employees have easy access to information on mental health and where to find help?

**Ideas for your action plan:**

- Take stock of the support tools your organisation has available and consider how much employees know about these and how to access them.
- Create a permanent space on your intranet or on your sites for people to access information about mental health.
- Signpost to local providers such as peer support groups, NHS services and voluntary sector support.
- Highlight stories of staff members who have benefited from using support services such as your Employee Assistance Programme or policies.
- Consider training Mental Health First Aiders.
- Invite your service providers into the workplace to highlight the support package and allay any fears staff may have about accessing services.

Read about how [Birmingham City Council](#) has worked to highlight their support package.

# Your Pledge signing event

1. Once your action plan is approved, we will send you your Pledge board.
2. Ask your CEO (or the most senior leader possible) to sign your Pledge in front of as many employees as you can gather.
3. Pick a significant day to get your message out more easily - whether that's World Mental Health Day, Time to Talk Day or a significant day for your organisation such as a staff conference.
4. Make sure you communicate your Pledge signing to all of your staff - preferably with a message from whoever signed it about why it's important to them.
5. Tell the world about your Pledge! We encourage you to use social media and send out a press release if you'd like to. You can find a template press release [here](#).



# What happens now?

Once you've submitted your action plan online, we will work with you to review and approve your action plan in time for your Pledge signing date.

We will then be on hand for up to a year after you have signed your Pledge to help you embed your action plan including:

- Answering any questions you have over email and phone.
- Attending planning meetings you are holding or advising in person about how to make this area of work successful.
- Invitations to Masterclasses where you can learn from leading employers on how they have achieved success.
- Connecting you to employers who have implemented initiatives similar to those you are planning.

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# Good luck!

We hope you have found this guide helpful and we look forward to receiving your action plan.

Thank you for your commitment to ending mental health stigma and discrimination within your workplace. Together we can achieve lasting change and create workplaces where no one has to face discrimination because of a mental health problem.

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