



Lifelink Workwell

Men's Mental Health: A guide for employers





Why men's mental health matters at work

Men's mental health is often overlooked, but the reality is stark: **around three in four people who die by suicide are men** (1), and **men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women** (2). Despite this, many men struggle to open up or seek support when they need it. And even when they do, their concerns can be dismissed or minimised with comments like "you'll be fine."

For employers, this isn't just a wellbeing issue. It's a business issue. Poor mental health affects productivity, retention, absenteeism, and engagement. A workplace where men feel heard, supported, and respected in terms of their mental health is one where everyone performs better.

Understanding the pressure

Men's mental health challenges rarely stem from one cause. Pressures at work and home often overlap, creating an impact that can go unnoticed.

Factors contributing to the decline in men's mental health:

- 32% say work is their biggest cause of mental health issues
- 31% cite financial stress
- 23% link difficulties to their own physical health
- 40% have never spoken to anyone about their mental health (3)

Men also tend to have less knowledge about mental health and are less likely to recognise or report their own struggles (1).

When they do reach out, being dismissed can reinforce the idea that "men don't talk about feelings," deepening isolation.

Breaking the stigma at work

The stigma around men's health is one of the biggest barriers to getting help. Nearly 30% of men say they feel "too embarrassed" to discuss their mental health, while 20% believe there is a negative stigma attached to doing so (3).





Yet silence isn't always the problem - sometimes, it's how others respond. Casual dismissal ("you'll be fine") or laughter can be just as harmful as not talking at all.

What employers can do:

- Lead by example: Leaders who speak about mental health set a powerful example.
- Train managers: Teach active listening and how to respond with empathy rather than avoidance of the subject.
- Validate, don't minimise: Acknowledge what someone shares instead of offering quick fixes.
- Communicate confidentiality: Make sure employees know support is private and accessible.
- Normalise conversations: Keep mental health visible through awareness campaigns, and team discussions.

Breaking stigma won't be solved after a month or after one training session for your managers - it's an ongoing commitment to culture change.

Tailoring support across ages and industries

Men's experiences of mental health vary by age, life stage, and industry.

- Younger men (under 35): Suicide remains the leading cause of death in this group (4). They may face pressure to prove themselves in new roles and be less confident seeking help.
- Middle-aged men: Often juggle financial strain, family life, and demanding workloads.
- Older men: May experience health issues, loneliness, or uncertainty around retirement.

Industry matters, too. Male-dominated sectors such as construction, transport, manufacturing, and finance often carry "macho" cultures that discourage openness. Adapting your approach by using relatable examples, industry-specific wellbeing talks, or trusted peer champions ensures your support actually lands with the people it needs to.





Recognising the signs

Men may not always verbalise distress, so managers should look for behavioural changes.

Possible signs include:

- Withdrawal from colleagues or usual activities
- Sudden mood changes or irritability
- Declining performance or unexplained absences
- Increased use of alcohol or risk-taking behaviour
- Comments suggesting hopelessness or feeling unable to cope

Early intervention, and regularly checking in with male colleagues can make all the difference to noticing when things might be getting tough.

Building an inclusive culture

A supportive culture doesn't happen overnight. It's built through consistency and visibility from leadership and integration into your company's values.

To maintain progress:

- Keep mental health visible year-round, not just during awareness weeks.
- Regularly communicate updates on wellbeing initiatives.
- Encourage continuous feedback from staff to adapt support where needed.
- Partner with mental health organisations for specialist expertise and resources.

Men's mental health is not a niche issue but is essential for a business to succeed. When men feel supported, heard and taken seriously, workplaces become safer, stronger, and more productive through trust, loyalty and long-term engagement.

(1) CIPD / Mind – People Managers' Guide to Mental Health.

(2) Samaritans – Suicides in England (2023).

(3) Priory Group – Men's Mental Health: 40% of men won't talk to anyone about their mental health.

(4) Office of National Statistics – Suicides in Great Britain (2016 registrations).





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