Psychosis: tips for employers
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Be open and available
When employees feel able to talk openly about their mental health with their managers, mental health issues can be raised earlier and help sought sooner, and sickness absence is likely to be reduced or avoided.
- Encourage staff to talk openly about their mental health.
- Identify key people that staff with mental health issues can turn to if they need support or start to feel unwell.

Get involved with care planning
You can play a vital role in helping employees stay well or help them to recover sooner. Don’t simply say, “I think you’re becoming unwell, you need to go home.” With your employee’s permission:
- Keep in touch with their mental health team.
- Ask to take part in their mental health care planning meetings.
- Invite their mental health team to take part in occupational health assessments and review meetings.
- Report any concerns or developing issues to their mental health team.
- Ask their mental health team if there is anything about your workplace that is making the person unwell.

This type of holistic approach can help keep the person at work and help them to recover sooner and remain well.

Keep them in work: do things differently
Making acceptable, reasonable adjustments can help people to remain in work, which can help them maintain better mental health.
- If someone is becoming unwell, don’t leave them to deal with it on their own: ask if they want support to make and attend an appointment with their GP or mental health team.
- Work with them to understand their triggers and early warning signs and think about what you can do differently.
- If they hear voices perhaps they could wear headphones, or work in a quiet space away from others if they need to interact with their voices.
- If there are specific workplace situations that cause them anxiety, help them to avoid, resolve or manage those situations.
- If they are experiencing work-focused paranoia or there are particular colleagues who they find it difficult to work with, work with the person and their mental health worker to understand, address and find solutions to the issues.
- Think about what the person can usefully do, not what they can’t. Try adjusting their role for a while to play on their strengths and do what they enjoy.
Educate your team

If an employee has behaved unusually in the workplace due to psychosis, colleagues may feel uncomfortable around them and may need reassurance about whether the person presents a risk to themselves or others.

- If the person is comfortable sharing their experiences, support them to talk at a staff meeting, write an open letter to colleagues or an article for the staff Intranet or newsletter. Ask them to be clear that psychosis and mental health are not taboo subjects.
- Arrange mental health first aid training for your staff in the same way as you arrange regular first aid training – details at www.mhfa.org
- Introduce a wellbeing slot at team meetings and make psychosis the first topic. You could use Boaz’s shared experience at www.diymh.com as a starting point for discussion.
- Use annual awareness events such as World Mental Health Day and Mental Health Awareness Week to hold an in-house psychosis awareness campaign.

Help people return to work

If someone has been off sick because of psychosis, it is completely possible for them to return to work. Help them by keeping informed and in touch either directly or through their mental health team, while they are off.

- Meet them outside of the workplace to talk through anything they may feel awkward, embarrassed or sensitive about, for example strange behaviour that may have been witnessed by colleagues. Together, work out solutions.
- Meet with a small group of trusted colleagues before returning to talk about their experience of psychosis, how they are now and support that might be useful on their return.
- Let immediate colleagues know that the person is returning to work and encourage them to ask how they are and how they can support them.

Seek advice

If you are concerned about an employee, you should:

- Seek advice from Mind, Rethink, your local early intervention in psychosis team or mental health crisis (intensive) service.
- Encourage the person to see their GP or their mental health team (if they have previously used mental health services).