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Business In The Community (BITC) - Mental Health At Work Survey Report 2017:

To: All Branches

Dear Colleagues,

BITC have published their second National Employee Mental Wellbeing Survey.

It reveals that although there has been progress against the BITC's three calls to action and recommendations in their 2016 report, too many men and women with mental health issues are suffering in silence at work, unable to seek help from colleagues or managers. Fears of prejudice and exclusion are limiting employees' ability to achieve their full potential, in the workplace or at home.

60% of employees have experienced a mental health problem due to work or where work was a contributing factor at some point in their career, compared to 62% in 2016.

Three out every five employees (60%) have experienced mental health issues in the past year because of work, according to their survey. Almost a third (31%) of the workforce has been formally diagnosed with a mental health issue (29% in 2016). The most common diagnosis was depression or general anxiety. While more people are comfortable talking about mental health at work than in 2016, just 13% felt able to disclose a mental health issue to their line manager. Those who do open up put themselves at risk of serious repercussions. Of those employees who disclosed a mental health issue, 15% were subject to disciplinary procedures, demotion or dismissal (9% in 2016).

91% of managers agree that what they do as a manager affects the wellbeing of their staff. This is a potent example of why a pervasive culture of silence remains entrenched in the workplace. Mental health is still one of the most difficult subjects to talk about at work (out of nine equality and social issues asked about in the survey). Just over half of all employees (53%) feel comfortable talking about mental health issues like depression and anxiety at work, although this is an uplift from 50% in 2016.

The BITC's 2017 findings show that particular groups, among them young people, men, and black and minority ethnic employees, are more at risk in some areas. Younger employees are more likely to have mental health issues, with 37% of those aged 18 to 29 having been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition, compared to 29% of employees in their 50s. This may be because of growing awareness about mental health among the age group, but they are also less likely to disclose concerns. Less than half (44%) feel comfortable talking about mental health at work compared to 57% of those in their 40s and 50s.

Only a third of 18 to 29 year olds are comfortable talking with their manager about mental health issues compared to almost half of people in their 40s.

Headline statistics from the 2017 survey

- A majority of employees are affected by the symptoms of poor mental health.
- More employees feel comfortable talking about mental health.
- A disconnect persists between the vision for workplace mental health and the reality.
- The threat of disciplinary action when experiencing mental ill health is very real.
- **24%** of managers have received training in mental health.
- **49%** of managers would welcome some specific basic training in mental health.
- **53%** of employees feel comfortable talking about mental health issues like depression and anxiety.
- **60%** of employees have experienced mental health issues due to work or where work was a related factor.
- **6%** of employees have been living with a formally diagnosed condition for over 10 years.
- **31%** of employees have been formally diagnosed with a mental health issue.
- **76%** of those who have experienced a mental health issue as a result of work feel that colleagues care about their wellbeing.
- **11%** disclosed it specifically to a line manager.
- **84%** of managers accept that employee wellbeing is their responsibility.
- **91%** of managers agree that what they do affects the wellbeing of their staff.
- **58%** of employees feel that their line manager is genuinely concerned about their wellbeing.
- **15%** of cases where the employee disclosed a mental health issue to a line manager the employee became subject to disciplinary procedures, dismissal or demotion.

Time To Stop Talking And Take Action

The BITC Report states very strongly that the time has come to stop talking about the importance of good mental health at work and to start taking action. Good practice exists in some organisations, but for the vast majority of employees, mental health is still a no-go area, a subject that cannot be discussed with colleagues or managers for fear of discrimination and victimisation.

1 Talk 2 Train 3 Take Action

The Report advises employers to **1 Talk, 2 Train, 3 Take Action,** to break the culture of silence that surrounds mental health by signing the '**Time to Change Employer's Pledge'** and investing in basic mental health literacy for all employees and first aid training in mental health to support line manager capability. It also recommends implementing practical actions from the BITC **Mental Health Toolkit for Employers.**

Calls to action for employers <u>Recommendations</u> - Take ownership of mental health in your workplace:

- Sign the Time to Change Employer's Pledge.
- Embed wellbeing at the heart of your organisational culture.
- Use the Business in the Community and Public Health England Mental Health Toolkit for Employers.
- Send a clear message that mental health and physical health have the same priority.
- Adopt a zero-tolerance approach to stigma.
- Appoint a mental health champion to your senior team, to drive better mental health and encourage all leaders to act as role models.

- Ensure that leadership and management teams are attending mental health training to develop awareness.
- Ensure there is a first aid trainer for mental health within the organisation.
- Ensure all employees know where to go for guidance and support.
- Support employees to have the confidence to start a conversation about mental health.
- Share Business in the Community's 'Listen Up: Let's Talk Mental Health' with all employees.
- Challenge yourself to reconsider the mental health support on offer in your workplace.
- Be clear that you are committed to making very real improvements whatever the starting point.
- Seek employee feedback with a range of informal and formal mechanisms to understand where your gaps exist.
- Identify and remove organisational barriers preventing line managers from effectively managing and supporting colleagues with mental health issues.
- Identify risks to employee mental wellbeing in your workplace. Take action to change culture, policy, and organisational design.

Empower line managers

The report recommends empowering line managers with recommendations;

- Give managers the support they need to manage their own wellbeing, with appropriate resources and training. Help them free up time in their day to manage employee mental health.
- Regularly promote to line managers the support at their disposal to foster good mental health. Improve the confidence and capability of managers to have conversations about mental health.
- Train as many line managers as possible in their duty of care in relation to mental health, enable their mental health literacy, equip them to notice changes in their team members and support their continuous skill development to lead conversations about mental health.
- Introduce training about performance and mental health, emphasising the importance of making appropriate, reasonable adjustments.
- Empower managers to develop skill sets within their teams, to ensure there is first aid provision for mental health.
- Encourage line managers to seek support when managing a colleague with mental health issues, from HR, Occupational Health, an EAP or their own line manager.
- Be clear about what reasonable adjustments can be made in the workplace to support an employee with mental health issues. Discussions about performance must take into account any mental health issues, just as they would take into account physical health issues.
- Introduce the concept of 'everyday wellbeing' as a core part of all one-to-one and/or personal development conversations. This will help to normalise conversations around mental wellbeing between staff.
- Use Business in the Community's Leading on Mental Wellbeing: transforming the role of line managers' report to embed wellbeing across the organisation.

Confront the culture of silence

- Instill an understanding that everyone has a state of mental health, just as they do physical health. Use awareness campaigns to communicate this message, such as Time to Talk Day, Mental Health Awareness Week and World Mental Health Day.
- Normalise the conversation around mental health. Appoint volunteer wellbeing champions, who can lead by example, raise awareness and share information to promote positive messaging about mental health.

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- Work with change-makers, including key leaders, HR and other specialists, and wellbeing champions. Give them the knowledge and confidence to promote an open climate where conversations about mental health are accepted as normal.

Always respond to employees with appropriate and effective support

- Prevention is better than cure. Create a work environment that promotes mental wellbeing. Business in the Community's Workwell Model, the HSE Management Standards and the NICE Workplace Health Management Standards will guide you.
- Give employees a clear and positive wellbeing offering, starting at induction, and reinforced on a regular basis, including resources to support employee resilience and mental wellbeing.
- Ask employees to help create and adapt solutions to their mental health support needs, including reasonable adjustments and Wellness Action Plans.
- Ensure every employee has access to (and knows where to find) appropriate support to stay well and to help manage mental ill health. Issue regular reminders.
- HR and any additional specialist support functions must proactively engage with employees, so that they feel they have a safe space to discuss mental health.
- Employers should follow best practice in handling any issues concerning performance, including taking account of any short or long-term mental health issues that may impact on performance.

Support people to stay at work or return to work

- Be ready to take steps to enable people to remain in work when possible, and take a phased approach to return to work after a period of ill health.
- Be aware of comorbidity of mental and physical health issues, and take a whole systems approach which supports reasonable adjustments for physical and mental wellbeing.
- Know your legal obligations to consider reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act (2010).
- Always seek the full agreement of an employee for any reasonable adjustment.

Adjustments might include:

1) Alterations to premises
2) Revised working hours
3) Transfer to a different position (temporary or permanent)
4) Allocating some duties to another person to lighten the workload
5) Allowing absence for treatment or rehabilitation
6) Opportunity to work from home
7) Extra training

Reinforce mental health support for groups who feel excluded

- Our survey shows that young people and BAME employees are at a particular disadvantage at work. Employers should address barriers that exist in their own organisations.
- Be explicit about the responsibility of line managers towards younger employees and BAME employees.
- Ensure all line managers are able to respond effectively, regardless of gender.
- Use induction courses to emphasise the importance of mental health and wellbeing with the organisation, and to signpost ways in which support is provided.
- Embed mental health and wellbeing into apprenticeship schemes, and give apprentices opportunities to contribute to policies around health and wellbeing.

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References to resources: Specific recommendations for small- and medium-sized organisations

- Encourage employees to get enough rest. Make sure they go home at a reasonable time and take holidays. Don't expect them to take work emails at all hours.
- Mistakes happen, especially when employees are new or inexperienced. Give honest and objective feedback, and help employees learn from their mistakes.
- Build a culture that recognises, appreciates and rewards achievements.
- Build a good support system, including workplaces where knowledge and good working practices can be shared. Mentor new and recent employees, and agree workloads, priorities and deadlines. Give constructive feedback and share problems.
- Encourage healthy eating and regular physical activity. Provide fresh fruit and fresh water, to discourage consumption of unhealthy snacks and sugary drinks.
- Organise regular out-of-work activities in which the whole team can take part. Encourage volunteering and consider supporting a local charity.
- Create a pleasant work environment, with plenty of natural light and good ventilation where possible. Create pathways so employees can leave their workstations and walk around, and common/shared spaces.
- Help employees understand and accept that there are some things they just cannot change. Acceptance is key. A good deal of anxiety arises from trying to change things beyond our control. Recognising that is essential to good mental health.
- Encourage employees to identify areas they find difficult and take responsibility for coming up with a plan to tackle these areas. Help them to implement their plan.

Attachment:

See attached copy of the BITC Mental Health At Work Report 2017 (Executive Summary)

Yours sincerely

Dave Joyce
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