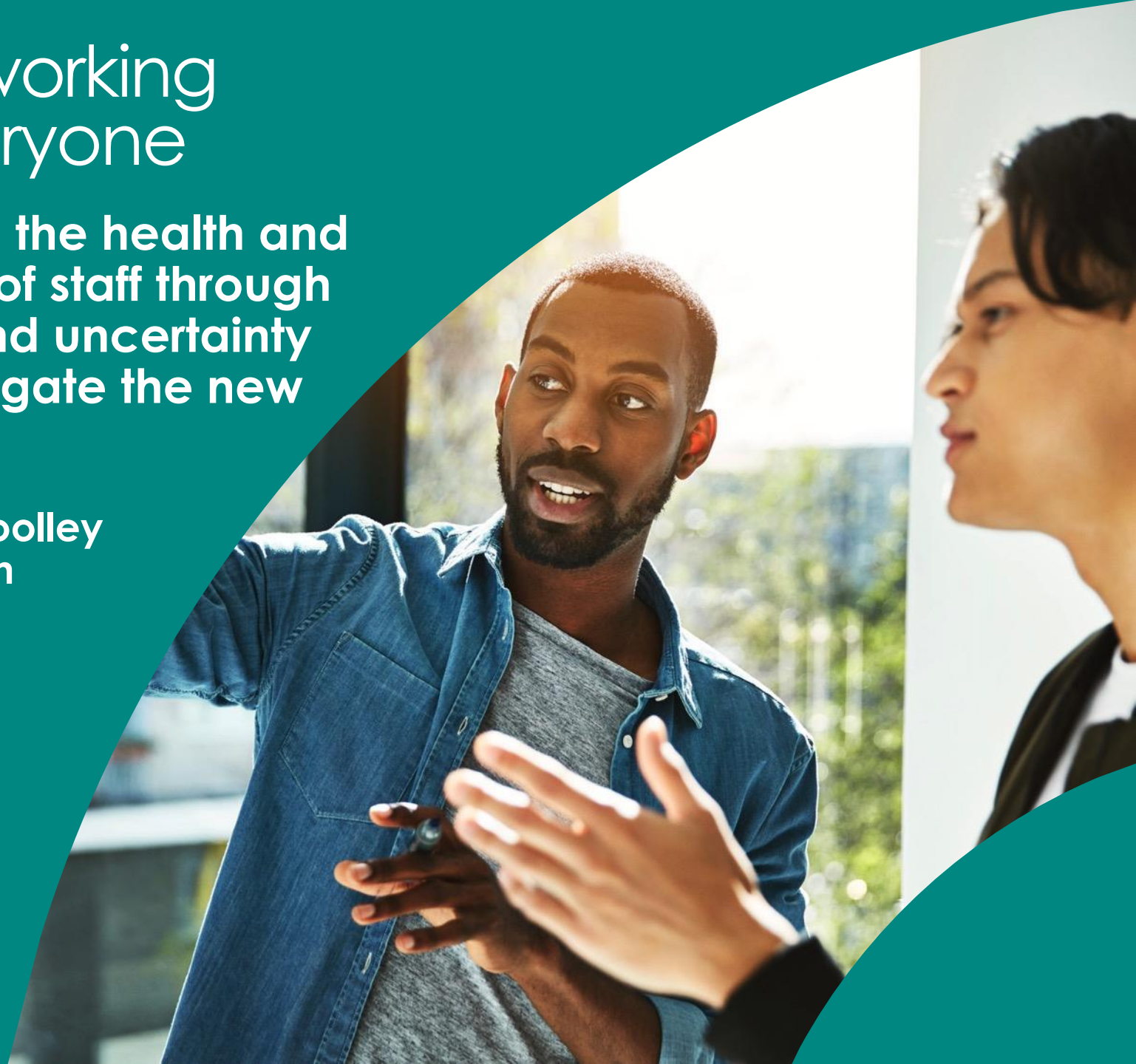


acas working
for everyone

Supporting the health and
wellbeing of staff through
change and uncertainty
as we navigate the new
normal

Francoise Woolley
Emma Slaven

8th June 2021



Who are we?



Prevent or resolve disputes between employers and their workforce



Settle complaints about employee rights



Provide information, advice and training



Encourage people to work together more effectively



**Over 15,000
helpline calls in
March 2020**

**1.46 million
website visits
in January 2021**





Acas framework for
positive mental
health at work



Our shared goal is:
positive wellbeing
and
productive workplaces

**Remote
working**

Employers

are visibly
committed to
positive
mental health

Managers

are informed and
open to
conversations
with their staff

**Shared
goal**

Individuals

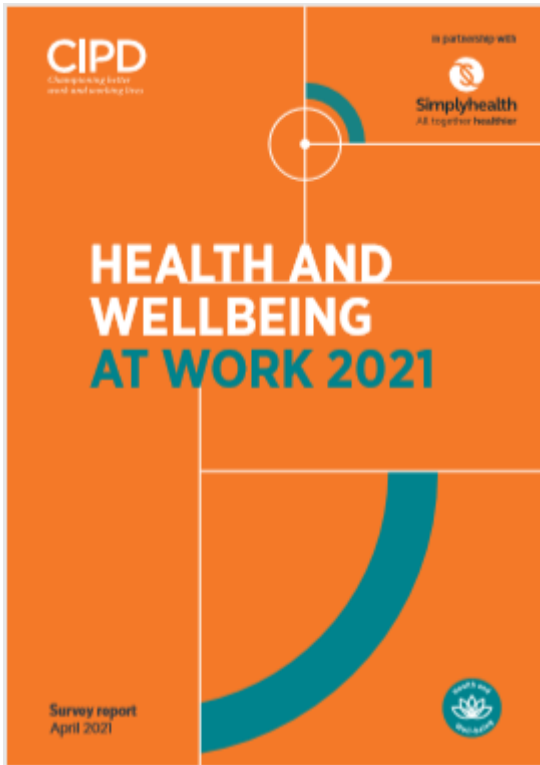
are self-aware and
ask for help when
needed

**Return to
work**

**Health
and Safety**

**Business
challenges**

The importance of a mental health and wellbeing strategy



Fall in proportion who report their organisation is 'much more reactive than proactive' (27%, down from 41% last year)

BUT.....

Nearly half (46%) organisations still lack a formal strategy or approach and tend to act on an ad hoc basis with health and wellbeing

Pressure and Stress

We all need and, to a degree, thrive on *pressure*:

- it gives us energy
- helps with performance and inspires confidence

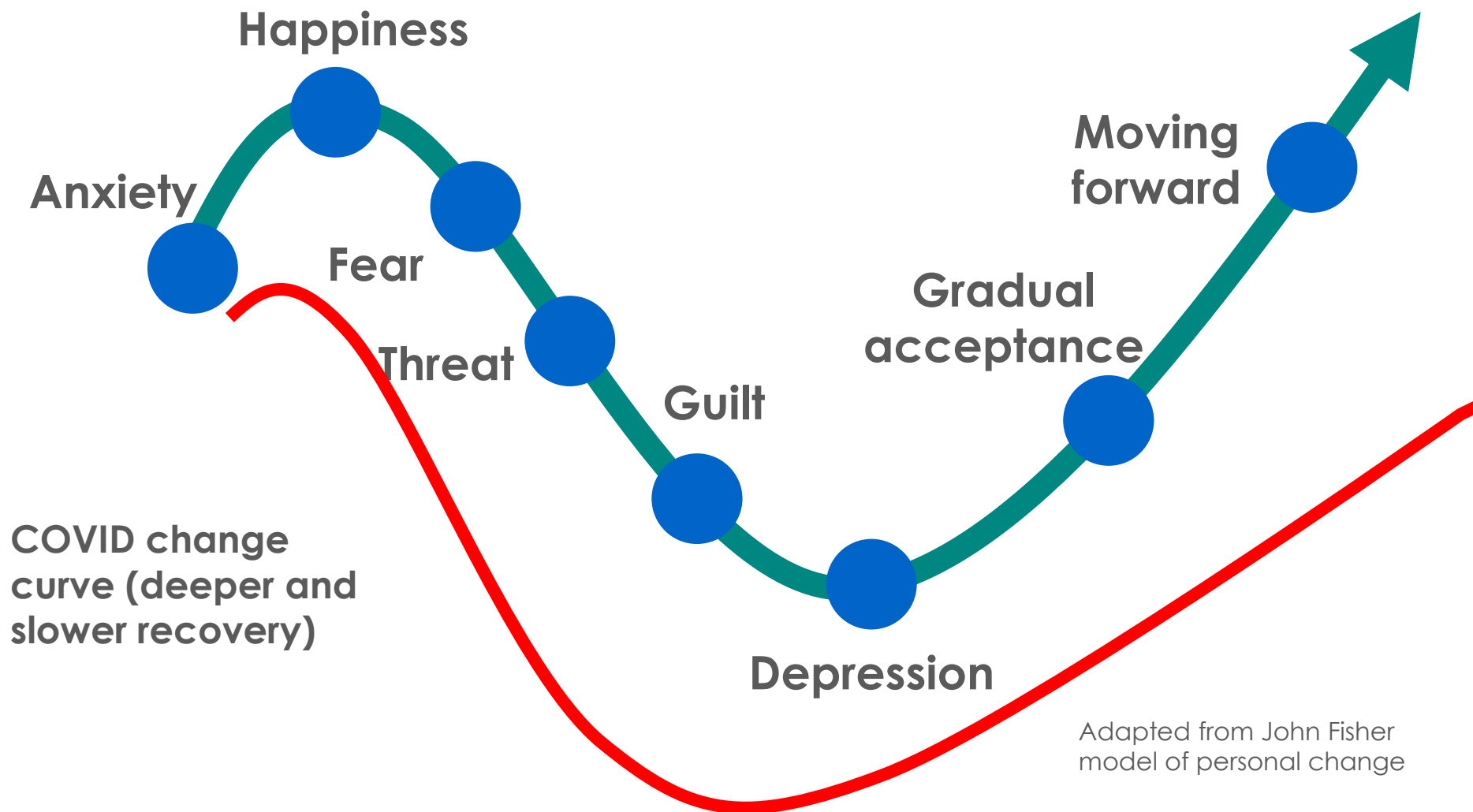
But **excessive pressure can lead to stress.**

When stress becomes excessive and/or persistent it can lead to other mental health issues such as anxiety and depression



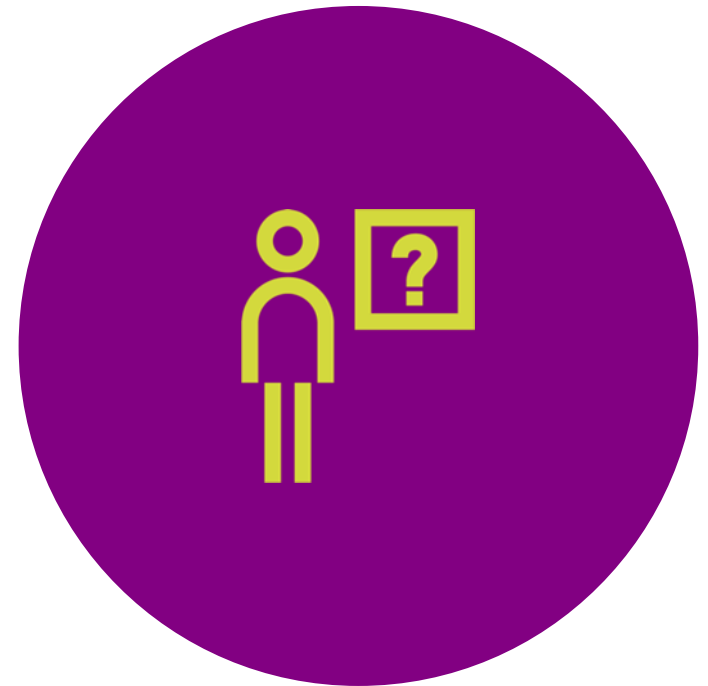


The psychological impact of change



Pitfalls of managing change from our experience...

- Poor communication
- Rushing through the process
- Lack of information, including timescales, expectations
- Absence of transparency
- No consultation or lack of genuine consultation
- Groups of workers being forgotten in consultation e.g in redundancy (furlough, maternity, sick leave)
- Not having a visible presence where questions can be answered



How do you build trust?

- Good communication
- Joint working with unions/staff reps
- Transparency - The more you share about plans, reasons for proposals, be open to staff concerns the better
- Doing this remotely requires a need to be creative when sharing documents, (FAQ's, intranet, emails, online meetings)
- Highlight available support from the outset



Case study – restructure to increase efficiencies and reduce costs



- Engaged staff and unions early in the process
- Listened to staff including their reservations
- Acas facilitated focus groups to assist in obtaining views
- Gave clear time lines
- Acas-led training for managers - leading through change, coaching skills, difficult conversations,
- Drop in sessions for staff with wellbeing leads and EAP
- Regular team meetings to discuss concerns/feedback suggestions
- LM/HR considered the resources they have for training and mentoring when roles change

What do you want your organisation to look like at the end of this?

Support through restructure and redundancy



The diagram consists of three solid-colored circles arranged horizontally. The first circle on the left is teal and contains the word 'Tellers'. The middle circle is magenta and contains the word 'Leavers'. The third circle on the right is purple and contains the word 'Remainers'. All text is in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Tellers

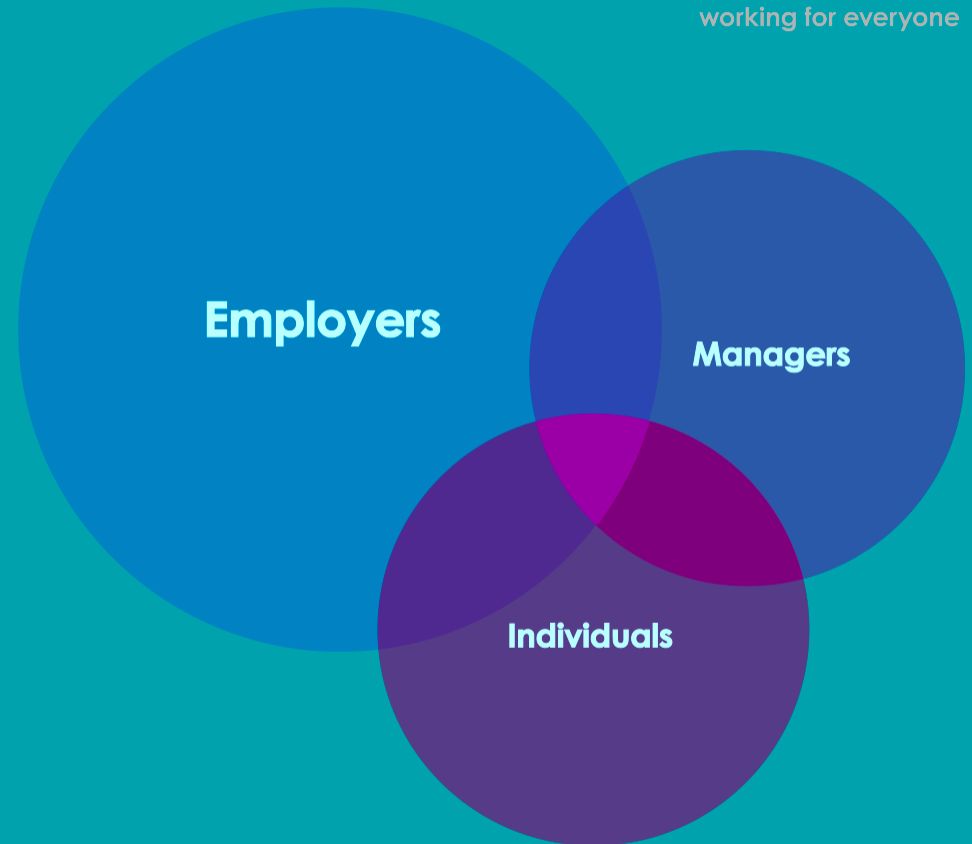
Leavers

Remainers

Acas framework for positive mental health at work

Employers

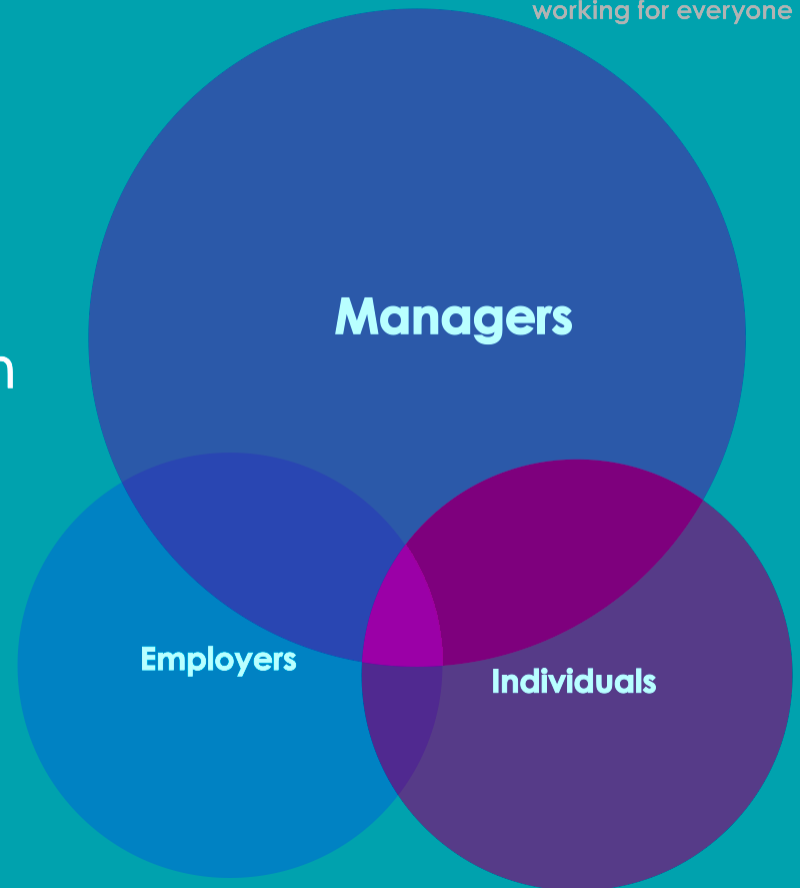
- Lead and embed a wellbeing strategy
- Reduce stigma
- Tackle the causes of workplace stress
- Support and train managers
- Understand the impact personal issues can have on mental wellbeing



Acas framework for positive mental health at work

Managers

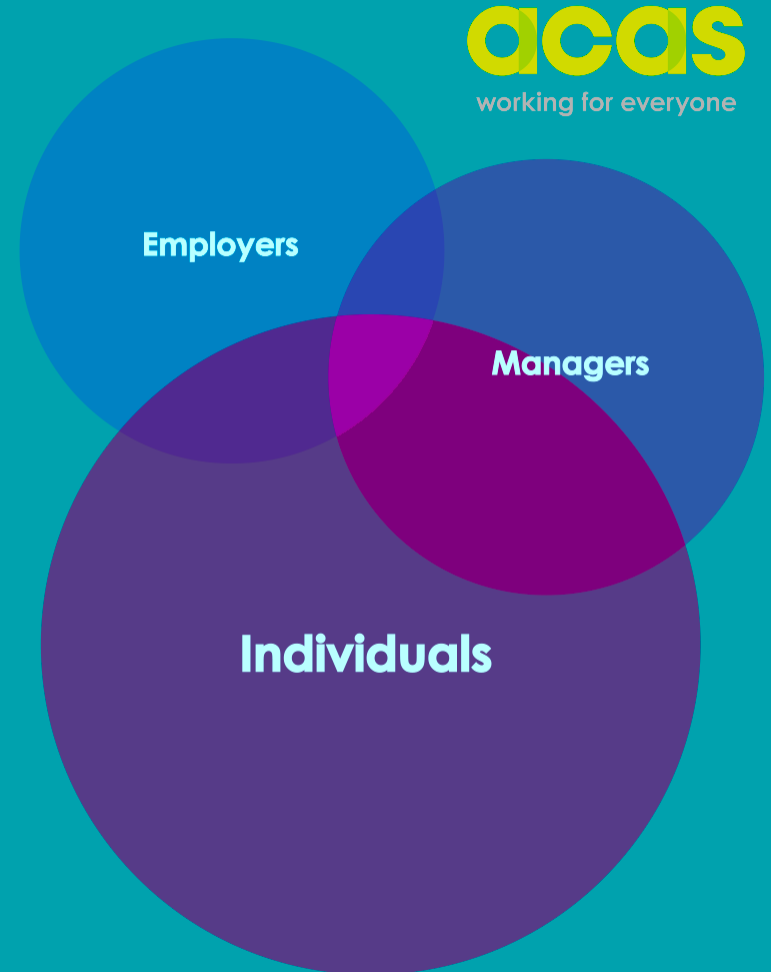
- Build rapport with staff
- Plan work with 'people' in mind
- Have confidence and knowledge in managing mental health
- Handle difficult conversations effectively
- Support work-life balance



Acas framework for positive mental health at work

Individuals

- Look after their own wellbeing
- Use positive coping strategies
- Identify personal stress triggers
- Engage with line managers
- Take notice and support colleagues



What works for workplace mental health



Breaking up excessive sitting with light activity

Buddying at onboarding

Flexible working policies

Employee autonomy

Financial wellbeing interventions

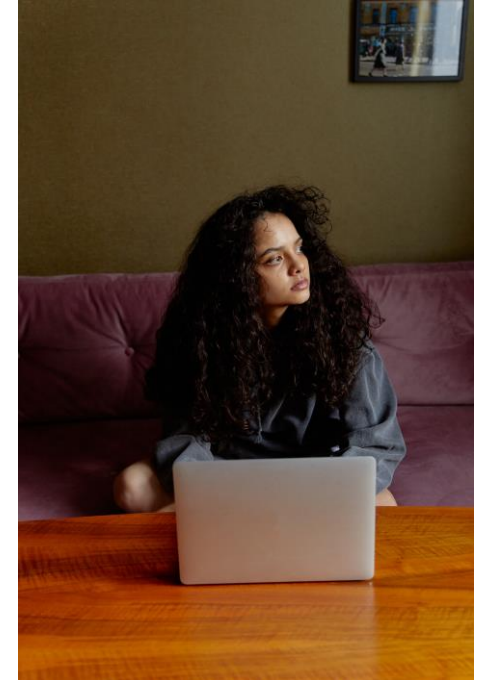
Influencing factors

- Clear leadership/management support
- Train managers
- Ensure it fits into the wider policy context

Case Study 1 – return to work

- Hansa started her job during the pandemic
- She has been working from home since the beginning
- From July, she has to go back to work although the number of days she needs to spend in the office is unclear
- She is feeling anxious about going into the office for several reasons including:
 - the commute
 - balancing childcare
 - being surrounded by people again

What would you do as her employer/manager?



Case Study 2 – return to work

Chris is being very awkward about returning to the office and in particular the new hot-desking arrangements. He has a reputation for being a bit awkward.

What would do you do?

You decide to raise this with him to find out what his concerns are. He now says it's because he has obsessive compulsive disorder.

What do you do now?



Communicating with individuals and teams about stress and mental health

- Be aware of those who may have additional challenges
- Look out for changes in behaviour
- Respond to what you see; early intervention is key
- Ask about their [coping mechanisms](#)
- Have purposeful conversations
- Signpost to [specific support](#)
- Confirm confidentiality guidelines
- Put in place [workplace/reasonable adjustments](#) (if appropriate)
- Use the [HSE talking toolkit](#) to identify areas of work-related stress
- Ask them to complete a [wellness action plan](#) and go through this with them

Contact details



Francoise Woolley

Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing

fwoolley@acas.org.uk

Emma Slaven

Mental Health and Wellbeing Senior Business Partner

eslaven@acas.org.uk



Helpline 0300 123 1100



Website [acas.org.uk](https://www.acas.org.uk)

Any Questions?

