

# Mental Health



## What is Mental Health?

Mental health problems are common, especially depression and anxiety, with one person in four experiencing some form of mental health problem in the course of a year. Mental health 'problems' and 'difficulties' are often the terms used to explain a person's temporary response to a distressing event in their life.



- It is estimated that approximately 450 million people worldwide have a mental health problem
- A mixture of anxiety and depression are the most common mental disorders in Britain
- Between 8-12% of the population experience depression in any one year, and that would equate to almost 30,000 employees in Tees Valley.

**'Mental health problems among staff cost business £26bn a year or £1,035 for every employee in the UK workforce.'** (Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, 2007)



People who have mental health problems may experience overwhelming difficulties that are made worse with little or no support.

Less than a quarter of people with long-term mental health problems in England are employed, the lowest rate for any group of disabled people. In addition to the impact on individuals the costs on the economy and society are enormous.

Mental health problems account for 40% of sick days each year and, on average, mental ill health affects nearly one in six employees at any one time, amounting to a sickness absence cost of £8.4bn per year. UK businesses lose £15bn in loss productivity each year due to staff working below par because of mental ill health, while staff turnover sets businesses back £2.4bn.



However, the same research found that less than one-fifth of mental ill health problems are directly associated with working conditions, suggesting that in general work is good for mental health.

### **Impact on Learning**

It is important to realise that most mental health problems are short-lived. Even when people experience more serious, long term or recurring problems, they are still able to live meaningful and satisfying lives. This may mean making some adjustments to accommodate the effects of their mental health problem.

When a mental state creates a barrier that impedes effective learning, then our aim is to reduce those barriers for learners with a recognised condition.

For people with mental health illness, 'social exclusion' is often the hardest barrier to overcome. About half of people with common mental health problems are no longer affected after 18 months.



**In a survey 89% of respondents felt they had experienced positive emotional or mental health benefits from their period of learning. Many respondents attributed their improved sense of mental well-being to the new-found confidence and enjoyment of learning.' NIACE(2000)**

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## *Support Offered*

- Confidential advice and guidance
- A supported and appropriate learning environment
- Examination and assessment arrangements
- Liaison with additional support services (e.g. counselling, youth workers and mentors)
- Co-ordination with external support agencies
- Specific arrangements for offsite visits and working.