Inclusion & Diversity.

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The BIMA Tech and Inclusion Report (2019) found out that mental health, stress and anxiety are challenges within the industry and for marginalised groups, such as the neurodiverse, the figures are deeply upsetting with incidences of anxiety and depression appearing much higher at 84%. The report also revealed that 40% of Afro-Caribbean and those of mixed heritage, 31% of Asian and South East Asian and 35% of women have reported experiencing discrimination. Whilst we make efforts to bring people from diverse backgrounds into the industry, we are also driving them away.

These insights compel us to action and for the first time provide a clear sign-post on what to do next.

Introducing the BIMA Inclusion & Diversity toolkit – a playbook made up of a number of guides to get you started. Each guide, focuses on a different aspect of Inclusion & Diversity and is backed up with compelling research, outlining why you should tackle this topic within your organisation. The guides provides essential ‘What you need to know’ information and ‘How to get started’. They give practical assistance to get you going on your I&D journey, the rest is down to you!

Due to the intersectional nature of a person’s identity (how the combination of their gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, disability etc impacts their experience of discrimination and/or privilege in the workplace) we would recommend that you take a broad view of diversity by reviewing a number of the guides in this toolkit (rather than viewing each guide as a siloed topic).

I’d like to thank all of the BIMA Inclusion & Diversity Council team and their networks in realising this vital toolkit resource for all BIMA members. The guides will be reviewed and updated annually but if you’d like to make suggestions for improvements please reach out to diversity@bima.co.uk.

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How to get Started

The business case for Inclusion & Diversity is, by now, hopefully well understood. Like any change management programme we recommend organisations take a strategic approach to inclusion and diversity in order to drive the desired outcomes. We recommend the desire for change is discussed with those who set the culture, primarily your leadership team, but also employees across the business. Like all business imperatives, you should establish a clear view of the current state (through primary and secondary research) before establishing a vision for the change you want to see and the priorities that are right for your business along with the key performance indicators (what you will measure) over time. Inclusion & diversity is a long game but it is proven to drive both employee engagement, innovation and performance so having a long term plan is not only the right thing to do but also makes good business sense!

Emotional Wellbeing

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Inclusion & Diversity Toolkit: Emotional Wellbeing

A Business case for Mental Health

The office of national statistics found that the most common reason for sickness absence in the UK is mental health, costing approximately 2.4 billion a year and the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates the global economy loses $1 trillion a year through a reduction in productivity caused by depression and anxiety.

Good working conditions, culture and policies can positively impact emotional wellbeing. Stress and anxiety can also be exacerbated by negative and hostile work environments. Companies can get ROI from investing in enhanced support for employees emotional wellbeing. The WHO has found that for every $1 put into enhanced treatments and support mental health by a company, they will get roughly $4 back in productivity and a reduction in sickness absence.

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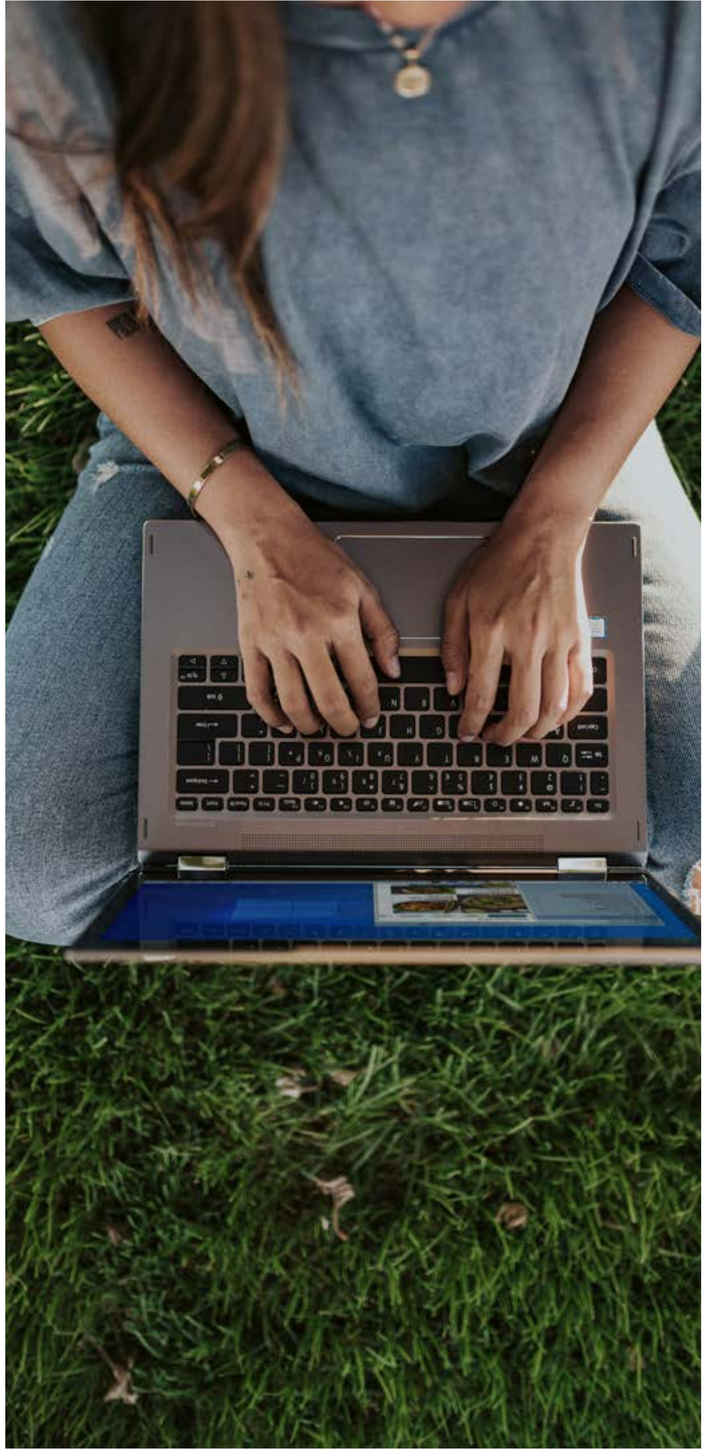
What you need to know

Mind says that around one in four people will suffer from mental health problems at any one time and that mental health should be treated much like physical health. There are many types of mental health problems, and they can be caused by a lot of different things. Some organisations try to remove the stigma of talking about mental health by referring to wellbeing as a whole or talking about emotional and physical wellbeing.

The BIMA Tech and Inclusion Report 2019 found that over 50% of those working in tech had suffered from anxiety or depression, and 13% of respondents said they are constantly stressed with symptoms such as headaches, sleeplessness, indigestion and anxiety attacks.

How you compensate your employees also impacts their emotional wellbeing. Financial worries cause significant impact on employee productivity and absenteeism. Tower Watson found that those self-reporting financial stress and worry took almost double the amount of sickness time (41% more), were 30% less productive and 20% less engaged.

The BIMA report also highlighted that those in susceptible groups, (I.e those with long-term health impairment, are neurodivergent or recent anxiety or depression) are more likely to feel stressed by their work (four out of 5).



How to get Started

The BIMA Report advises that organisations should take mental health as seriously as physical health, and consider investing in roles such as Mental Health First Aiders.

Mind provides guidance on a three-step approach for businesses to support their employee’s emotional wellbeing.

01. Raise Awareness & Promote wellbeing

There are a number of ways to do this, including some themed days and weeks run through various charities, like Time to Talk and Mind. Getting your senior leaders on board and helping them to see the business case and importance of emotional wellbeing is really critical here. Creating a positive working culture and prioritising worklife balance are also key, and getting behaviour role modelled by your senior team is very effective.

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02.Preventative measures | Tackling the cause of mental health problems

Start to listen to how your employees are feeling. You can use third parties to help collect data in a sensitive and confidential way. Look at your policies, and see if there are changes you can make to things like your sickness policy to expand it to cover “wellness days”. Give training for managers and employees alike in ways to communicate with each other around mental health, and be good mental health allies.

03. Be supportive | Supporting employees who are experiencing mental health problems

Mental health first aiders are a very visible way to signpost to employees that you are prioritising mental health, but will need investment in to training. Having an EAP system and reminding people to engage with it regularly is helpful. Knowing when to engage with occupational health, and having a confidential counselling or therapy service available to employees is a must. Make sure all of your HR and people managers are trained to deal with any requests they get and can spot signs that someone may need to have a conversation.

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Key Takeaways

Make mental health synonymous with physical health

Help to normalise the conversation, much like someone would discuss their bad night's sleep or a broken leg. Make sure your policies support this, i.e wellness days instead of sickness days.

Emotional wellbeing is unique

From a low day to diagnosed disorders, emotional wellbeing is unique each of us. Make sure you have formal and informal communication routes and safe spaces that cater to everyone's needs and that you don't make assumptions about a person's situation, how they're feeling, or why. Open, two-way unbiased communication is key.

Employee assistance programmes (EAP) & professional help

If you're at the beginning of your awareness journey, make sure you sign post-professional support for employees to use after any talks or initiatives

Avoid telling people how to feel

When you're starting to talk more openly about mental health, be sure to give people tools to ask how people are doing respectfully. Avoid making assumptions about how a person might be feeling, or inadvertently creating an environment that encourages others to project their own opinions or emotions on to another person.

Matching behaviours with initiatives

If you're raising awareness and evolving your policies to be more supportive, make sure you also focus on changing behaviours. This includes the language used by managers in return to work interviews, understanding implicit bias and basics like good meeting etiquette to avoid creating a toxic environment.

1. Signpost to other sources of information

https://www.mind.org.uk/
https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/
https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/
https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/get-involved/time-talk-day

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Thank you.