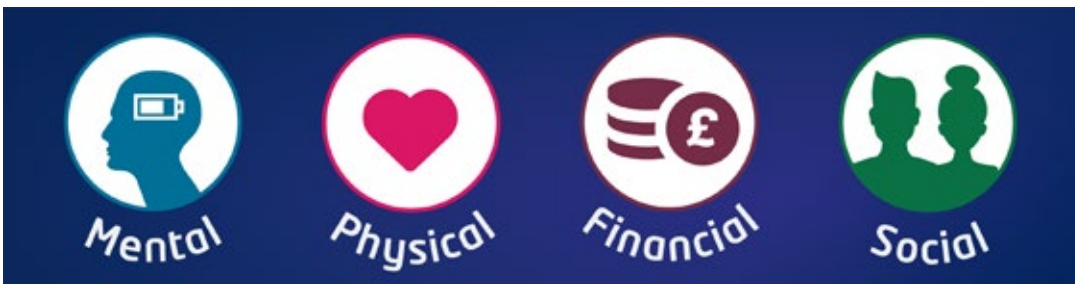


Making Mental Wellbeing part of our conversations



Taking an interest in the mental wellbeing of your team, if it's not something you're used to or have particularly experienced yourself, can feel uncomfortable. Remember the first time you positively challenged someone about an unsafe act? It probably felt pretty strange, but we now consider that to be normal. The more you speak to your team about mental wellbeing, the more normal it will feel.



Where to start? Some ideas for one-to-one conversations

- If you've never spoken to someone about how they are feeling, then practice with a colleague.
- Make sure you both have time for a conversation;
 - Five minutes before your due in a meeting is not the best time!
 - If you are tight on time, arrange to follow up at a time that suits you both
 - Be clear about how long you have available to listen on this occasion
 - Don't allow yourself to be distracted, consider turning your phone off.
- If you think the individual may wish to speak in private, consider finding a space where you can both be comfortable and you're unlikely to be disturbed.
- Ask them open questions (i.e. questions that can't be answered with just 'yes' or 'no'). Think about questions starting with who, where, why, when and how.
- Listen to what they say - this is the most important, you are not there to solve, agree or express how you would feel. You are there to listen and let them share!
- Recognise that expressions of feelings, including outbursts and tears, can be a healthy thing that need to be handled sensitively and appropriately.
- Encourage them to take ownership of their own situation and to think about what they can do, to get help or regular support;
 - Details of support organisations that they may wish to access are available in the 'Mental Wellbeing support reference guide'
 - Ensure they are aware of colleagues who are able to support in your absence, such as the mental health champions or other managers.
- Try to finish by recapping the conversation and thank them for being open with you.
- Afterwards, take some time to reflect on the conversation;
 - How did this make me feel? Am I ok with what was shared?
 - Do I need any further support or advice?
 - If yes to the above, speak to a colleague or a mental wellbeing champion or seek support from one of the support organisations referred to above.



What about confidentiality?

Your team member is trusting you with something that matters to them and, in most instances, it is appropriate for the conversation between the two of you. You can seek advice from your manager and/or People Services without needing to divulge who said what.

There are a few situations when you shouldn't agree to keep a confidence and should divulge the details of the individual and what you've been told:

- If someone expresses an intention to harm themselves or another.
- If someone tells you that they have done something illegal.
- If someone tells you something that could cause harm to Electricity North West, including its customers, property and reputation.
- If you are struggling with what you have been told.

If you cannot keep what you've been told confidential, then you should tell the team member that this is the case, explain why and what you intend to do with what you've been told. Check that they understand this and how they feel about this.

In the unlikely event you have reason to believe the team member intends to do serious harm to themselves or anyone else imminently, ask them to remain where they are (or encourage them to remove themselves to somewhere safe); ask a colleague to stay with/near them and seek urgent help either from your SLT member, Depot Manager or the emergency services. Any such instances should be escalated to your SLT member and People Services at the earliest opportunity. If in doubt, seek advice from your SLT member, Depot Manager or People Services.

You should tell the minimum number of people to protect the team member, yourself, anyone else involved and Electricity North West. In the first instance, seek advice from your line manager / SLT and/or People Services.



Ideas for conversation starters

It's important to check in with team members regularly. Here are some suggestions for how you can start these conversations. The more you do this, the more confident you will feel and you will build rapport with your team that will make it easier for people to open up if they are struggling.

- How are you doing at the moment?
 - If they say 'fine', ask again: how are you really doing at the moment?
- How's the family?
 - How are the kids getting on? How have the kids managed with returning to school?
 - Your [insert relative] was unwell. How are they doing now?
 - How are the pets?
- What did you get up to at the weekend?
- How did you feel about that [insert relevant sport/team] result last night?

- What have you got planned to celebrate Christmas/Eid/Birthday? How are you feeling about that? (Big celebrations can be both a really positive and a really challenging time for people).
- What did you think about [insert recent work event]?

If you think someone may be struggling with their wellbeing, you may wish to use some more specific questions. Here are some examples:

- I haven't seen or heard from you much lately, how are you doing?
- You've seemed a bit [quiet/distracted/frustrated - use whatever adjective is appropriate] recently and I was wondering if you're ok?
- Life's pretty tough at the moment, how can I support you? (Be honest about your own limitations and make sure you agree what you will do).
- Things have changed a lot recently due to [insert reason], how are you feeling about it?
- You don't seem quite yourself. Is there anything else you would like to discuss today?



Things to avoid

- Interrupting when they're sharing.
- Dismissing what they share.
- Assuming you know what they're feeling;
 - Even if you've had a similar experience, you may have responded to it differently.
- Feeling like you have to 'fix everything'.
- Judging.
- Saying they need to 'man up'; 'get a grip'; etc.
- Presuming that you know what might be concerning them.
- Looking or answering your phone.
- Telling them it will be alright they just need time.
- Agreeing with how terrible it is, or their opinion on the subject.
- Suggesting solutions, other than contacting services for support.