

WORKPLACE SUPPORT • ARTICLE 1

WHY WORKPLACE SUPPORT MATTERS

A COMPASSIONATE EXPLORATION

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Work is much more than simply earning a living. For many people it provides structure, routine, purpose, identity, achievement and opportunities for personal growth. Positive working environments can improve confidence, increase self-esteem and contribute significantly to both physical and mental wellbeing.

However, work can also become a source of stress, anxiety and emotional exhaustion when employees face barriers that prevent them from performing at their best. These barriers are often invisible. A person may appear to be coping on the outside while privately struggling with overwhelming anxiety, sensory overload, executive functioning difficulties, chronic pain, fatigue or the emotional impact of depression.

A supportive workplace recognises that every employee is different. People learn differently, communicate differently, process information differently and respond to stress differently. Rather than expecting everyone to fit into the same mould, inclusive workplaces recognise these differences and create environments where individuals have the opportunity to succeed.

Support in the workplace is not about lowering expectations or giving someone an unfair advantage. Instead, it is about removing unnecessary obstacles that prevent people from demonstrating their abilities.

Why Workplace Support Is Important

Research consistently shows that employees who feel supported experience better wellbeing, greater job satisfaction and higher levels of engagement.

When people feel psychologically safe they are more likely to:

- Share ideas and contribute to discussions.

- Ask questions when they need clarification.

- Admit mistakes early before problems escalate.

- Seek help when workloads become unmanageable.

- Feel motivated and committed to their role.

- Develop confidence within their team.

In contrast, employees who feel judged or unsupported often spend enormous amounts of emotional energy masking their struggles. Rather than focusing on their work, they may worry about making mistakes, hiding symptoms or appearing incapable.

Over time this constant pressure can contribute to stress, anxiety, burnout and sickness absence.

Hidden Challenges at Work

Many workplace challenges cannot be seen.

An employee may be experiencing:

- Anxiety before every meeting.

- ADHD-related difficulties with organisation and prioritising tasks.

- Autism-related sensory overload from lighting, noise or busy office environments.

- Depression affecting motivation and concentration.

- Chronic fatigue limiting energy levels throughout the day.

- PTSD leading to heightened alertness or difficulty feeling safe.

- Dyslexia making written information more time-consuming to process.

Long-term health conditions causing pain or fluctuating symptoms.

Because these experiences are often invisible, colleagues may misunderstand what they see.

Someone may be labelled as:

Lazy

Disorganised

Unmotivated

Quiet

Difficult

Forgetful

Poor at communication

In reality, the individual may be working twice as hard simply to manage the workplace environment.

Understanding this difference is one of the first steps towards creating truly inclusive workplaces.

Every Person Is Different

Two employees with the same diagnosis may require completely different support.

For example, two people with ADHD may experience very different challenges.

One may struggle with time management but thrive in fast-paced environments.

Another may become overwhelmed by interruptions yet produce exceptional work when allowed uninterrupted periods of focus.

Similarly, two autistic employees may have completely different sensory needs, communication styles and working preferences.

Support should therefore never be based solely on diagnosis.

Instead, employers should ask:

What helps you work at your best?

What barriers are you experiencing?

What changes might make your role easier?

How can we support you to succeed?

These conversations help create personalised support that is both practical and meaningful.

The Benefits of a Supportive Workplace

Supporting employees is not only beneficial for the individual - it also benefits the entire organisation.

When staff feel valued they are more likely to remain with the organisation, reducing recruitment costs and retaining valuable skills and experience.

Supportive workplaces often experience:

Higher employee engagement.

Better staff retention.

Lower sickness absence.

Increased productivity.

Greater innovation.

Improved teamwork.

Better communication.

Stronger morale.

Higher customer satisfaction.

A more positive workplace culture.

Employees who feel understood often become more confident, resilient and willing to contribute ideas that improve services and outcomes.

Creating a Culture of Support

Building a supportive workplace does not always require major financial investment.

Often the most meaningful changes involve culture rather than cost.

Managers can make a significant difference by:

Listening without judgement.

Encouraging open conversations.

Checking in regularly with staff.

Being flexible where possible.

Providing clear expectations.

Recognising achievements.

Respecting confidentiality.

Responding compassionately when difficulties arise.

Small acts of understanding can have a lasting impact.

An employee who feels heard is far more likely to ask for support early, before difficulties become overwhelming.

Moving Beyond Awareness

Many organisations now recognise the importance of mental health, disability and neurodiversity. However, awareness alone is not enough.

Real inclusion happens when workplaces move beyond simply acknowledging differences and actively create environments where everyone has an equal opportunity to thrive.

This involves challenging assumptions, removing unnecessary barriers and recognising that success does not always look the same for everyone.

Supporting employees is an investment rather than a cost. When people are given the opportunity to work in ways that reflect their strengths and needs, they are more likely to flourish, contribute fully and remain engaged in their work.

Key Takeaway

A supportive workplace is one where people do not have to hide who they are in order to succeed. By recognising individual differences, encouraging open communication and removing unnecessary barriers, employers create environments where people can work with confidence, wellbeing and dignity. Inclusive workplaces are not only better for employees - they are stronger, healthier and more successful organisations for everyone.

A gentle reminder

This resource offers general information and reflection. It is not a diagnosis or a substitute for individual medical or therapeutic care. If you are worried about your safety or someone else's, seek urgent professional support.

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