

# Acas Urges UK Businesses To Tackle Mental Health In The Downturn



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Acas, the employment relations service, is encouraging UK businesses and managers to prepare for the longer term effects of the recession and implement policies and procedures to help cope with mental health issues in the workplace.

In a recently published policy discussion paper, Acas looks at some of the lessons that can be learnt from tackling workplace stress. It advises business and managers to look at how they can anticipate and identify mental health problems in the workplace and what steps should be taken to respond to them.

Figures show that mental health problems cost UK organisations around £26 billion each year\*. The latest figures also reveal that the total number of unemployed has now reached 2.47



million\*\*, which could have a further adverse impact on employees' wellbeing.

Ed Sweeney, Acas Chairman, said: "The economy may hopefully have seen the worst of the recession but the impact on workplaces will be felt far into the future.

"Implementing procedures to effectively deal with mental health issues in the workplace has strong benefits for individuals and organisations. Early intervention can play a critical part in reducing the problem of ill health at work and this 'prevention over cure' approach will ultimately help businesses and employees save time, stress and money."

Measuring the impact of the recession on employees' mental wellbeing can be difficult as the stigma associated with mental health creates barriers to measuring the true extent of the problem.

Acas is urging organisations and managers to implement effective policies and procedures to help managers deal with the long term impacts of the downturn and safeguard the health and wellbeing of employees. This might include:

- [workplace training](#) - to raise awareness of stress and mental health so that line managers, in particular, can tell if an employee is suffering from additional or excessive pressures

- Good interpersonal skills - to help nurture trusting relationships with staff who may be anxious about disclosing their mental health problems

- A supportive organisational structure - that guides managers by providing clear policies and procedures for managing mental health

-ENDS-

Note to editors:

\* The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health: Policy Paper 8 , December 2007

\*\* Office for National Statistics, September 2009

**About [Acas](#):**

Acas' aim is to improve organisations and working life through [better employment](#) relations. It provides information, advice, training and a range of services working with employers and employees to prevent or resolve problems and improve performance. It is an independent statutory body governed by a

Council consisting of the Acas Chair and employer, trade union and independent members.

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