A Manual for Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing:

The Workplace

ProMenPol Project

Final 2009

ProMenPol

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Contents of this Manual

This workplace setting manual for MHP is organised in two parts.

The first part contains a general introduction to the main issues to be faced in implementing MHP in the workplace.

The second part contains a description of the main workplace issues to be faced during each of the four phases of implementation. In addition, the second part details the most relevant MHP tools from the tools database that may be used in implementing MHP for each phase of implementation. This section also contains links to the ProMenPol case studies that have been undertaken using some of the tools.

1. Introduction

The workplace is a complex setting in comparison to many others. It is a setting which is regulated by legislation in relation to health and safety, it has relationships with a range of different health related agencies and functions, it may have significant levels of conflict between employers and employees and has traditions and structures to support dialogue between competing interests. These features of the workplace make it a potentially difficult setting for the implementation of MHP.

On the other hand, the workplace has a number of supportive features which, if used properly, can considerably enhance the prospects for MHP. For example, it has a trained group of staff with knowledge and skills of some healthy related issues, it may have problems with mental health related absenteeism that act as a stimulus for MHP, it has a set of policies and structures which can accommodate MHP implementation and it is populated by a group of people who can actively engage with process on their own behalf (unlike schools for example).

These features of the workplace provide a genuine opportunity to make an impact on the mental health and wellbeing of employees. This workplace MHP manual provides a guide on how to take account of the specific characteristics of the workplace as well as indicating the common barriers to be overcome.

In addition, it also provides guidance to the ProMenPol database of tools so that tools that can support you at each stage of the implementation process are easily available to you.

2. What does MHP look like in the Workplace Setting?

Mental health promotion in the workplace, though a relatively recent phenomenon, can take many forms. At its broadest, it can consist of addressing all of the manifestations of mental health issues as they affect the workplace – prevention, promotion, treatment and rehabilitation.

- **Prevention of harm to mental health** – Under health and safety legislation, employers must prevent workplace risks from damaging the mental health status of employees. This usually consists of preventing occupational stress through reducing sources of stress at work or through improving the coping skills of employees.

- **Promoting mental health at work** – This usually takes two forms – the design of working conditions and work organisation so that they contribute to maintaining or improving mental wellbeing; and the provision of information on mental health issues (this is essentially mental health education).

- **Treatment of mental health problems** – though employers rarely become directly involved in providing treatment to employees with mental health problems, some employers do provide access to or some funding for treatment. The more common forms of treatment include occupational health services and Employee Assistance Programmes.

- **Rehabilitation of employees with mental health problems** - there is often a period of rehabilitation needed following mental health breakdown. From the employers' perspective, they may become involved in a range of Return to Work procedures that enhance the chances of the employee successfully re-integrating into the workplace.

In practice, employers may undertake any combination of these actions, though they are under health and safety obligations to undertake the prevention of occupational stress.

In the ProMenPol project, the focus is firmly on measures concerning the prevention and promotion of mental health and wellbeing. Ethical reasons prevent the project from addressing the treatment of employees with mental health problems, while rehabilitation and return to work measures are beyond the project's scope.

ProMenPol provides support through the database of tools for implementing prevention or promotion strategies, while the case studies provide examples of what mental health promotion looks like in practice.

3. Specific Factors to Take Account of in the Workplace Setting

There is a range of workplace factors that influence how MHP is implemented in the workplace setting. These are factors that must be taken account of when designing an MHP programme for your organisation. Failure to do so increases the risk of the MHP programme not proceeding at all or being marginalised with the organisation. These factors are:

- Health and safety (H&S) provisions
- Occupational stress
- Occupational safety and health provisions
- Return to work
- Anti-discrimination measures
- Participation - the importance of peers and management
- Human Resource Management
- Ethical issues

Health and Safety Provisions	Three aspects of workplace health and safety are important here. Firstly, it is obligatory by law in all EU countries for employers to make adequate provisions for health and safety. The precise provisions vary somewhat from country to country, but in all cases they include a provision to ensure that workplace factors are not damaging to health and wellbeing (including mental health and wellbeing). This means that the MHP programme must take account of any activities under health and safety practice which may be designed to prevent harm to mental health. It also means that, potentially at least, any new MHP activity can contribute to the organisation meetings its health and safety obligations. A second element of health and safety provisions that are of concern to MHP relates to its practice. H&S practice varies considerably in quality in organisations, and in organisations where practice is not of high quality, MHP programmes run the danger of diverting attention from improving H&S practice. This may happen when the programme is perceived as being irrelevant to H&S. A third issue concerns the H&S structures within the organisation (e.g. health and safety committees, policies). These need to be taken account of and involved in the implementation of the MHP programme. This should be done for a number of reasons, e.g. they may have relevant skills, they are in contact with all employees and they are interested in employee health and so on. Failure to involve them may mean that a considerable barrier to the progress of the MHP programme has been set up.
Occupational Stress	Occupational stress is an issue which all workplaces are supposed to manage as part of health and safety provisions. However, many organisations are not systematic in their approach and many lack t6he knowledge and skills to effectively deal with it. In this situation, it is likely that the MHP programme will need, in part at least., to address occupational stress in the organisation.
Treatment of Mental Health Problems	Though the treatment of mental health problems is not part of the mental health promotion process, it is possible that the employer will have (or will need to have) provisions in place to deal with the situation where an employee suffers a mental health breakdown. These provisions can include EAP programmes, counselling services, occupational health services,

	either directly provided or funded indirectly by the employer. It is important for the success of the MHP programme to make links with any treatment services that are provided. These can provide a valuable insight to the nature and extent of mental health issues within the organisation.
Occupational Health Services	Like health and safety, occupational health (OH) is legislated for in all countries, though the extent of the provisions regarding OH services varies considerably throughout the EU. In some countries, all employers must have a contract with and OH service, in others only some employers must, while in others there is no obligation on the employer to contract an OH service. Where OH services are active in relation to mental health (e.g. assessment of mental wellbeing, treatment of employees with mental health problems, designing return to0 work programmes), it is important for the MHP programme to develop links with and involve OH services. They can provide important insights into workplace mental wellbeing and they can act as a resource for the project.
Anti-Discrimination	All EU countries have anti-discrimination legislation consistent with the EU Equality Directive that contains provisions against discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of health. MHP programmes must take account of this legislation where necessary. If the MHP programme targets, for example, returning employees with mental health problems to the workplace, it is likely that it must take account of this legislation and its expression in workplace level policies.
Human Resource Management	Much of the activities of MHP in the workplace may be characterised as involving HR measures (e.g. organising work, working contracts, absence management). It is therefore essential that they are involved in the MHP programme as they can act as important facilitators of the programme.
Participation	The importance of participation cannot be over-emphasised in the context of MHP. Firstly, MHP is a voluntary activity – there is no legislative requirement for employees to take part. Involving employees in the design and implementation of the MHP programme is therefore an important way of ensuring as high a participation rate as possible. Secondly, there are many potentially interested stakeholders in MHP within the organisation – these include top and middle management, health and safety personnel, occupational health personnel and human resource management personnel. Obtaining the support of these stakeholders is vital to the success and integration of the MHP programme. Thirdly, there is a need to involve all employees in order to combat any issues of stigma that may exist around the issue of mental health and wellbeing. There is often a considerable level of ignorance and fear amongst employees about mental health issues and involving them and raising awareness amongst them about mental health issues is an important method of overcoming this barrier.
Ethical Issues	There are a number of ethical issues which may arise when implementing a MHP programme. These may arise because of the fact that MHP is dealing with health issues or because it may be dealing with people with mental health problems. The main ethical issues that may need to be addressed are: ▪ Beneficence - 'do positive good' o The programme should be soundly based and the purpose should be to improve mental wellbeing

	o The programme should be preceded by a careful assessment of predictable risks in comparison with foreseeable benefits
	
	    o Adequate facilities and procedures should be in place to deal with any potential hazards
	
	   ▪ Informed consent
	
	    o Each potential subject must be adequately informed of the programme aims, methods, anticipated benefits and potential hazards and any discomfort it might entail
	
	    o Participants must be given the right to refuse to participate - all participants must be volunteers
	
	    o Documentation given to potential participants should be comprehensible
	
	    o Participants must be given the opportunity to raise issues of concern
	
	    o A comprehensible complaints procedure must be available
	
	   ▪ Confidentiality and anonymity
	
	    o The programme should conform with current data protection legislation
	
	    o All confidential details must be securely stored and only accessible to named individuals
	
	    o No individual should be able to be identified in any reports from the programme
	
	Further information on the PromenPol Ethical Vision can be found at:
	
	http://www.mentalhealthpromotion.net/resources/promenpol_ethical_vision-2.pdf

4. Steps for Implementing Mental Health Promotion in the Workplace

4.1 Phase 1: Making Preparations

Main Issues	Building Collaboration	MHP in the workplace is a voluntary activity. The more you van get the major stakeholders to buy in to the project, the easier it will be to implement and the better the outcomes. ▪ Assemble the business case for the project ▪ Build support for the project with the main stakeholders. These include Occupational health and safety personnel, Senior management, Line management, HR personnel, staff representatives (trade unions). ▪ Ensure the project is supported visibly by top management and workers representatives ▪ Identify potential members of the project team
	Communication	Good communications are a key success factor in project management. They can only be achieved with good and early planning. ▪ Establish what groups and which persons need to be communicated with about the project ▪ Develop a communications plan for the project which includes materials, communications channels to be used and a schedule
	Scoping the Project	Many workplace health projects are let down by an unclear definition of what they should be doing. Establishing the boundaries and possibilities for the project early on sharpens its definition and prevents misunderstandings during implementation. This project definition should be revisited following the needs analysis activity. ▪ Establish the scope of the project, i.e. what areas it will operate in, what time and resources are available, how it should fit in with other workplace health initiatives. ▪ Establish what kinds of MHP interventions are possible ▪ Establish reporting relationships for the project ▪ Investigate other workplace health activities that may have an impact on mental wellbeing, e.g. health and safety, stress programmes, work organisation programmes, quality of working life programmes. ▪ Establish where the proposed MHP programmes fist in to existing activities ▪ Establish a working picture of mental health promotion needs from data on existing activities
	Developing the Project Team	The key to successful project teams is to ensure that they work efficiently, are representative and are strongly led. In addition, there should be clear roles for participants. Avoid very large teams where there is not enough work to go around.

		- Select members for the project team - Ensure representation of the major stakeholder groups - Develop a preliminary project plan to cover the early stages of the MHP process - Assign roles to the members of the project team, e.g. project manager, communications and reporting, liaison with external stakeholders (where envisaged), data analyst. - Manage any ethical issues that apply
	Getting Agreement	Managing expectations is a major part of any project as is ensuring commitment. The best way to achieve both of these aims is to: - Develop an agreement between the project team and company management which covers the main points of the project plan - Communicate the agreement to all of the major stakeholders
Useful Tools		(Search the database for suitable tools)
Useful Links		(Check out the field trials for examples)

4.2 Phase 2: Needs Analysis and Planning

Main Issues	Needs Analysis	A thorough needs analysis provides the basis for the MHP project. It should take account of information that already exists within the organisation (e.g. health and safety, occupational health, absenteeism) and it should collect new data on specific mental health promotion needs. It provides the basis for setting priorities within the project plan. - Involve the project team in the development of the needs analysis instrument (e.g. questionnaire, interview schedule, focus group instrument) - Field test the instrument for acceptability and practicality - Ensure high standards of anonymity and confidentiality - Communicate the results of the needs analysis to all employees
	Setting Targets	This activity needs to take account of the constraints of the project and the likelihood of being able to meet targets. Targets should be achievable, measurable and agreed. - Set targets in terms of how the process of implementation should proceed and in terms of its expected outcomes - Include targets expressed in both organisational and wellbeing terms
	Selecting MHP Tools	Selecting the right tools for the project is essential to its success. You may need tools to support any activity of the process of implementation, e.g. project management, needs analysis instruments, job design guidelines, work organisation guidelines. - Ensure as far as possible that the tools selected are of a high standard - Ensure that the expertise needed to operate the tools is available to the project - Seek advice from professionals or people who have previously used the tools
	Project Planning	Developing a project plan is an important means of ensuring that the project is run professionally and that it is taken seriously within the organisation. - Confirm the project plan with the management of the organisation - Communicate the main elements of the project plan

		▪ Ensure that planned activities are consistent with OSH and H&S policy and HR policy and practice ▪ Confirm that the programme activities and procedures are consistent with ethical standards
Useful Tools		(Search the database for suitable tools)
Useful Links		(Check out the field trials for examples)

4.3 Phase 3: Implementation

Main Issues	Assigning Responsibility	Good project management involves making clear plans for action and assigning the necessary resources and responsibilities for implementation of activities. There will have been a general project plan developed earlier, but there is also a need to develop a specific plan for each element of the implementation programme (there may be many activities taking place). ▪ Assign resources, personnel and a schedule to each of the project activities ▪ Make use of existing resources where possible (e.g. health and safety, OSH) – this keeps costs down and it helps integrate the programme into normal organisational practice ▪ Ensure that there are clear lines of reporting on the activities that take place
	Carrying out Plans	Implementing specific activities needs to be done in a professional manner. You should consider some of the following options when doing so: ▪ Ensure adequate communications about activities is carried out – use existing channels where possible, but also ensure that specific publicity activities are undertaken ▪ Ensure that monitoring information is collected ▪ Give feedback on the progress of activities ▪ Be flexible in implementation of activities – change activities that are not working optimally
	Targets for the Actions	Effective targeting of activities relates to both communications, i.e. reaching target groups and to setting targets for the outcomes of each MHP activity. Having identified the target groups for the project activities, you should: ▪ Ensure that the communications system is able to effectively reach all of the target group ▪ Consider using multiple methods to reach the target group ▪ Use the communications channels that are commonly used by the target group ▪ Consider any special barriers that may exist for the target group, e.g. access to electronic communications, working off site or at unusual times,

		levels of literacy When targeting the process and outcomes of the programme activities, you should: - Be realistic – achieving desired outcomes typically takes a lot of time - Set targets so that they can easily be measured - Set targets for the short, medium and long term - Set targets that make use of existing organisational indicators (e.g. absenteeism, stress indicators, accidents and illness)
	Providing Feedback	The importance of providing feedback to participants is clear – it encourages participation and it helps to maintain momentum for the project. Feedback also involves obtaining feedback from participants in the MHP activities. When considering feedback, you should: - Use existing feedback channels where possible - Ensure that the target groups for the project receive feedback – generalised feedback is not adequate - Obtain information from participants on the progress of the project activities
Useful Tools		(Search the database for suitable tools)
Useful Links		(Check out the field trials for examples)

4.4 Phase 4: Follow up and evaluation

Main Issues	Monitoring	A protocol and procedure for monitoring the progress of the MHP project needs to established early in the project lifetime. This should be done at the same time as the project plan is written as this allows for a comprehensive and proactive monitoring process to be undertaken. Feedback from the monitoring process should be planned so that information is available during the programme which can be used to redirect programme activities, should that be needed. The monitoring protocol should contain the following elements: - Target indicators, e.g. absenteeism, accident, health status, productivity, participation rates, employee satisfaction, costs of the programme - A schedule of monitoring activities - A data analysis plan - Feedback mechanisms and schedules - Take care to include both qualitative and quantitative indicators
	Evaluating	Evaluation refers to the process of analysing the data from the monitoring process and using to address questions such as has the process worked, has it worked efficiently, has it improved the health of employees and so on. Areas of specific interest in evaluation include: Cost-benefit and cost-efficiency assessment – do the benefits of the programme outweigh its costs, could the programme be run in a better

		way, could another programme be more successful? ▪ Impact assessment – what are immediate impacts of the programme in terms of, for example, attitudes of employees, awareness of employees, satisfaction with the programme? ▪ Outcome assessment – what are the longer term outcomes of the project in terms of, for example, absenteeism levels, productivity, health status? ▪ Process assessment – how did the MHP process of implementation work in terms of for example, the numbers participating, levels of satisfaction with the process and levels of awareness of the programme?
	Ensuring Continuous Progress	One of the goals of any MHP programme must be to improve the programme and as far as is possible, ensure that the programme continues beyond its original lifetime. Evaluation data is essential for ensuring that continuous progress is made. Issues which are specific to the workplace which need to be taken into account include: ▪ Ensure that lines of reporting are clear ▪ Ensure that there is feedback is provided early enough to influence the progress of the programme ▪ Ensure that all stakeholders are involved appropriately ▪ Ensure that the programme has an impact on workplace policy and that budgets for the programme continue
Useful Tools		(Search the database for suitable tools)
Useful Links		(Check out the field trials for examples)