Building psychological safety at work – a practical guide for employers

To help leaders and managers create environments where employees feel safe to speak up, disclose needs and raise concerns.

What psychological safety is (and isn't)

- Clear explanation in plain language
- Why it matters for health, wellbeing and performance
- Common myths clarified

Common barriers to building trust

- Time and resource pressures
- Fear of legal or performance implications
- Informal management structures
- Past experiences affecting confidence

Conversation prompts and language examples

Examples of supportive language, such as:

- *"What would help you do your best work?"*
- *"Is there anything making work harder at the moment?"*
- *"Let's look at what adjustments might help."*

Warning signs of low psychological safety

- Employees avoiding conversations
- Increased sickness absence or stress
- Silence in meetings
- Issues are only raised when they escalate
- High turnover or disengagement

Actions leaders can take immediately

- Model openness and curiosity
- Encourage questions and feedback
- Address issues early
- Apply fairness and consistency
- Review and adapt leadership behaviours regularly

West Yorkshire Combined Authority | Tracy Brabin Mayor of West Yorkshire

Healthy Working Life