

# Quick guide: Having supportive conversations about health and wellbeing at work



For business owners and managers

## Why these conversations matter

Supportive conversations help employees feel safe to discuss challenges early, meaning simple adjustments can prevent stress, absence, or performance issues. They also help employers meet legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, including confidentiality and reasonable adjustments.

## Legal reminder

- Under the Equality Act 2010, employers must not discriminate and must consider **reasonable adjustments** for disabled employees, or those with additional health needs.
- Employees decide what health information they choose to share.
- Any personal or health-related details must be kept confidential and stored appropriately.



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# Before the conversation

## Prepare with care

- Choose a private, comfortable space
- Give employee advance notice
- Consider time of day not just amount of time
- Allow enough time – don't rush
- Focus on work impact, not medical diagnosis
- Review any relevant policies (e.g., adjustments, wellbeing, sickness)

## Useful opening lines

- *"I want to check in with you and understand how we can support you at work."*
- *"We can talk about anything that's affecting your work – you only need to share what you're comfortable with."*

# During the conversation

Use a calm, open and non-judgmental approach. Consider body language and avoid distractions.

## Step-by-step conversation flow

### 1. Check-in

*"How have things been for you at work recently?"*

### 2. Explore barriers

*"Are there particular tasks, times of day, or environments that feel challenging?"*

### 3. Discuss support options

*"What changes or adjustments would help you perform at your best?"*

### 4. Agree on next steps

Outline adjustments, timelines and responsibilities.

### 5. Confirm confidentiality

Explain how their information will be stored and who will have access.

## Helpful phrases

- *"Would you prefer written communication, more breaks, or flexibility in hours?"*
- *"We can try an adjustment and review it in a few weeks."*
- *"You're in control of what you share – I'm here to help you succeed."*



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## After the conversation

- Record agreed actions (with the employee's consent)
- Put adjustments in place promptly
- Schedule a review date
- Keep information confidential and in line with data protection rules

### Do's and don'ts

#### Do

- Research what support is out there that employer and employee could access
- Listen actively and without interruption
- Ask about the impact on work, not medical details
- Offer options and involve the employee in solutions
- Follow up promptly and keep your word
- Maintain confidentiality
- Remain approachable by offering an informal prompt such as *'how are you today, anything you need?'* in passing or a one-to-one

#### Don't

- Make assumptions about their ability or performance
- Request unnecessary medical information
- Minimise or dismiss concerns
- Treat adjustments as "favours"
- Delay action or ignore agreed steps



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