



**Together, stronger: a collective approach to mental health.**



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# Toolkit

A wide range of issues can impact on mental health and no one person's experience of managing their mental health will be the same.

This toolkit for reps suggests collective actions to take to protect members' mental health and provide or signpost to appropriate support when needed.

We link throughout to further resources for reps and individuals.

# What is mental health?



Mental health is the way we think and feel and our ability to deal with ups and downs.

It can fluctuate as circumstances change and as you move through different stages in your life. Everyone has mental health.

Just as we consider our physical health, we should pay attention to protecting our mental health.

# Mental distress

Distress describes times when pressures are too much, whether due to circumstances or a mental health problem like depression.

## Causes of mental distress

- Some are work related
- Many are not but can impact on life at work

This toolkit also informs reps about wider issues that employers can do more to support.

Journalism and communications industries are known for creating a high emotional load and pressurised work conditions.

We resist the 'resilience' agenda that is often used by employers to individualise mental health concerns.

Mental health is a trade union issue and there is much we can do to support our members.

# Mental health resources



An excellent journalism specific resource to start with and share on:

[How to support mental health at work \(MHF\)](#)

[How unions can support your mental health \(MIND\)](#)

The Headlines Network guides and videos on

- Managing our mental health
- Supporting our colleagues

# Role of workplace reps

Ensure employers are upholding their duty of care and have appropriate policies in place to support workers on a range of issues that can impact on mental health.

- **H&S reps** - risk assessments, statutory rights
- **Union Learning Reps** - to help raise awareness, organise training
- **Equality reps** - help to break down stigma and work in an intersectional way.

# Role of reps

- **Raise awareness** of mental health issues
- Help create a **supportive environment**, including talking openly about mental health and wellbeing
- Tackle and **challenge stigma** about mental health
- **Represent** members on workplace issues
- **Negotiate** workplace policies and procedures
- Provide **advice** and guidance, including signposting
- **Monitor** and review workplace actions on mental health issues



# Employers' duties

Employers have a duty of care to do all they reasonably can to protect employees' health, safety and wellbeing, including mental health.

- making sure the working environment is safe
- protecting staff from discrimination
- carrying out risk assessments

[ACAS guidance](#) on employers duties.

# Employers duties (GB)

## Duties are shaped by legislation and regulations

- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of H&S at work regulations 1999
- The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992
- RIDDOR 2013
- The control of substances hazardous to health regulations 2002
- Equality Act 2010

# Training for reps and members



- **Trade union reps' training courses**
  - Including H&S reps & Equality reps
  - To understand rights and how to use legislation to support and represent members, come on our reps' training! Info on the [NUJ website](#).
- **Courses to improve skills, confidence & networks**
  - NUJ Training Wales [skills courses](#)
  - NUJ Training Scotland [skills courses](#)

# Guidance and resources



- To join our networks, email [tuttraining@nuj.org.uk](mailto:tuttraining@nuj.org.uk)
  - NUJ reps' briefing meetings
  - NUJ H&S reps network
  - NUJ ED&I network
- [Health & Safety Executive key documents](#)
- [TUC H&S](#) research and guidance
- [EHRC guidance](#) on rights at work
- NUJ Safety toolkit inc tackling online abuse

# Organising to support MH

- **Collective bargaining on;**
  - Policies - H&S, working from home, flexible working
  - Equality, diversity and inclusion
  - Disability - Long Covid, Reasonable Adjustments, Disability leave
  - Grievance & disciplinary procedures
  - Redundancy
  - Pay, transparency and fair terms and conditions

# Organising - key actions

- **Risk assessments & survey of members**
  - What issues are important to members?
- **Identify key policies**
  - Are any missing? Are some falling short?
  - Is relevant training and monitoring in place?
- Identify collective and individual issues
- Take concerns to employer and suggest courses of action
- TUC - harmful work-related stress and enforcement

# Supporting NUJ members



- **Advice and representation**
  - Grievances, disciplinarys
  - 'Restructuring' and redundancies
- **Workplace risk assessments**
  - Including workload, targets and other stressors
  - Reasonable adjustments for disabled workers
  - Wider equalities issues/discrimination
  - Bullying, harassment
- Seek to include freelance members where possible

# NUJ structures



- There are many ways to have your voice heard
  - Equality Council and NEC equality reps
  - Black Members Council and NEC rep
  - Disabled Members Council and NEC rep
  - 60+ Council
  - LGBT+ network
  - Health & Safety Committee
  - Branch and Chapel equality reps
  - Branch welfare rep
  - Delegates' Meeting



# Freelances



We encourage members to engage with their branches and for branches to actively support freelance members.

- [NUJ London Freelance Branch](#)
- [NUJ Edinburgh Freelance Branch](#)
- [Dublin Freelance Branch](#)
- [Rory Peck Trust](#)
- DART Centre Europe - [Self care and peer support](#)

# Social inequalities



Inequality and discrimination in society and the workplace are key areas for trade union action and activity.

Trade unions need to work to address the causes and factors that negatively influence mental health in the workplace and beyond.

# Social model of disability



This is a way of understanding disability which looks at how society is organised and the social and institutional barriers which restrict disabled people's opportunities.

The social model argues that a person may have an impairment or condition, but they are disabled by barriers they face in society, which restricts their access and rights. We seek to remove the barriers that exclude disabled people.

# Social model of mental health



People who live with mental distress do not have “abnormal” brains – distress arises when brains carry out their natural functions for dealing with trauma.

As a trade union, we fight for greater equality at work and campaign against injustices members face in other areas of their lives. Talking openly about mental health helps to destigmatise it.

# Rights under the Equality Act



"You're disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities."

- You have the right not to be discriminated against.
- You have the right to reasonable adjustments to remove disadvantage that you face in the workplace.

[EHRC guidance](#) on and [TUC guidance](#) on rights at work.

# Access to Work



Access to Work is a Government funded initiative that provides workplace assessments and funding to put reasonable adjustments in place for disabled workers. This can include mental health.

It is also available for freelancers (subject to eligibility).

- [Access to Work \(GB\)](#)
- [Access to Work \(NI\)](#)
- [Work support in Ireland](#)

# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder



PTSD can occur from any trauma, not just in conflict zones. Trauma can result from dealing with graphic footage, online abuse or workplace bullying.

To help journalists minimise the risks they encounter from conflict zones to the cyber battlefield – the NUJ launched Storysmart, a suite of online training modules.

There are steps that we can all take to minimise the risks of PTSD resulting from our work or other traumatic experiences.

We can also become trauma aware in how we report on sensitive issues.

Trauma Reporting Training - workplaces and freelances  
Rory Peck Trust Trauma informed training for freelances.



# Wider issues

## These factors can also impact on our mental health

- Menopause and other women's health issues
- Long Covid/disability
- Neurodivergence
- Caring
- Domestic abuse
- Substance misuse
- Gambling
- Bereavement

# Menopause in the workplace



The menopause is a part of most womens' lives and the lives of many trans men, non-binary people, and members of intersex communities, and marks of the end of the reproductive cycle. There is still a way to go to ensure that policies and support are in place.

- TUC Menopause Toolkit for reps

# Long Covid/chronic illness

- Long Covid Support Group presentation
  - This resource explains what Long Covid is, the link to brain fog, poor mental health and PTSD.
  - Signposting to further resources and recommendations.
  - Covid safety, NUJ factsheet
- Supporting members with hidden impairments in the workplace, TUC Toolkit.

# Neurodiversity



Differences in a way that a person processes information and learns is termed as neurodivergence, and includes autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and other related differences.

UCU guide for reps - [Neurodiversity in the workplace](#)

- Living in a world which is not built for neurodivergent people can affect mental health.
- People with neurodivergent conditions are more likely to have mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety.
- **Reasonable adjustments** may support neurodivergent members to reach their potential at work - guidance from ACAS.

# Caring responsibilities

More and more working people are becoming carers for friends and family with little help or support so they struggle with combining work and caring duties.

- TUC toolkit for reps - [support for carers](#)
- [Employers for Carers](#) - guidance and helpline
- Carers UK - [working carers guide](#)

# Domestic abuse



Domestic abuse can have a huge impact on an individual's working life, absences and performance. Abuse can spill into the workplace.

Reps can call for robust domestic abuse policies. This is an intersectional issue and branches need to consider how to support freelance members too.

- TUC - support for DA victims in the workplace

# Domestic abuse helplines



**Wales:** Live Fear Free helpline

**Scotland:** Women's Aid Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage helpline

**Ireland:** Women's Aid Helpline

**Northern Ireland:** Domestic and Sexual Abuse helpline

**UK:** Refuge has a free 24-hour National Domestic Abuse helpline 0808 2000 247

Financial support line for victims of domestic abuse



# Bereavement

Many people will have experienced bereavement during the pandemic. Reps can work with employers to put support in places such as time off, pastoral care and financial support. The loss of close colleagues can also impact on work.

- Cruse bereavement support and guidance (UK)
- Bereavement support services (Ireland)

# Suicide



Suicide is the leading cause of death in under-35s.

Members may be affected by the suicide of a colleague or loved one or experience thoughts of suicide themselves.

- **PAPYRUS**, prevention of young suicide - [Hopeline and resources](#)
- Suicide bereavement [support resources](#)

# Drugs and alcohol advice



Good drug and alcohol policies enable employers to support staff who need help, and protect colleagues and clients.

- [TUC guidance for reps \(pdf\)](#)
- [Worksmart website](#)
- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#)
- [Drink Aware](#)
- [Narcotics Anonymous](#)

# Eating disorders

People with eating disorders often make great effort to avoid their illness being noticed at work. Work-related stress can often exacerbate the issue.

- Supporting a colleague with an eating disorder
- Beat Eating Disorders helplines

# Problem gambling

Unions have a key role in supporting members through their mental health journey and signposting them to appropriate support, whilst also creating a workplace culture that's supportive and understanding.

- [TUC Problem Gambling toolkit](#)
- [Gambling support](#)

# Financial support and advice



Financial difficulties can have a significant impact on mental health. We encourage members to get in touch with the NUJ if they need support.

- NUJ reduced subs, 1% rule
- NUJ Extra
  
- The Journalists' Charity
- Citizens' Advice (UK)
- Citizens' Information (Ireland)

# Mental health resources



- [NUJ](#)
- [TUC](#)
- [Mind](#)
- [Samaritans](#)
- [NHS England](#)
- [Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Time to Change](#)
- Mental Health First Aid training is available from a variety of providers

# Reporting on mental health



As journalists and communications professionals we can help to reduce stigma and challenge stereotypes by reporting sensitively on mental health issues.

- [NUJ\\_reporting\\_guidelines](#)
- [UNESCO - Safety\\_of\\_Journalists\\_Covering\\_Trauma\\_and\\_Distress - 'Do No Harm'](#)



- Suicide reporting toolkit for journalists
- Resources for journalists on handling sensitive stories
- Reporting on suicide - PAPYRUS media guidelines and resources
- Reporting on mental health - Samaritans media guidelines

# What else could we include?



- Please let us know if you are aware of useful resources for us to share or if you find any broken links.
- Are there further topics to include that you would find useful to know more about?

**Please email [campaigns@nuj.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@nuj.org.uk) with any feedback or ideas for the toolkit.**