



information sheet

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Well-Being for Immigration Practitioners

This information sheet discusses the issues that immigration practitioners face in maintaining effective well-being and considers practical things that can be done to boost well-being within the workplace.

Why This Is Important

There are many reasons that this an important area for both employees and employers to address. Simply put, our working conditions, the nature of our work and the environment that we work in can have massive impacts on both individual health, and also on productivity and performance.

- 14.7% of people experience mental health problems in the workplace.
- Amongst the full-time employed, women (19.8%) are approximately twice as likely as men (10.9%) to have a common mental health problem.
- Some 12.7% of all sickness absence days taken in the UK can be attributed to mental health conditions.

A simple thing, like increasing the availability of mental health support in the workplace could save businesses in the UK some £8 billion per annum.

Immigration law practitioners must also be alive to the risk they run of vicarious trauma. The nature of immigration practice is such that lawyers are exposed to vulnerable groups who are much more likely to experience poor mental health than the local population.

- Asylum seekers are 5 times more likely to have mental health needs than the general population, and over 61% of them will experience serious mental distress.
- PTSD is much more common amongst Black and Minority Ethnic ('BAME') women, and are significantly less likely to report or seek help for trauma.
- People who have survived domestic violence are much more likely to suffer mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, PTSD and substance abuse.

- As of 2014, 80% of homeless people in England reported that they have mental health issues, and 45% had been diagnosed with a mental health condition.

The above are all issues that immigration lawyers are routinely exposed to, and it would be naïve to think that this has no impact upon the representatives of these vulnerable groups.

Resources

Thankfully, there are plenty of options for immigration practitioners who are struggling to cope, or feel that they will struggle to cope in the near future.

Available resources for help for individuals include:

- a) LawCare – who promote a legal community that values and supports good mental health (<https://www.lawcare.org.uk/>).
- b) Mind – who provide a range of information and support (<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/>)
- c) Speak to your GP who can refer on to a counsellor
- d) If you need to talk to someone more immediately, the BACP offer a list of qualified therapists (<https://www.bacp.co.uk/search/Therapists>).
- e) Claiming Space – a community of young lawyers offering training on burnout, vicarious trauma and client care (<https://www.claiming.space/>)

Available resources for help for employers include:

- a) The Law Society – who offer training and support for those wishing to become mental health first-aiders (<http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/accreditation/mental-health/training-and-publications/>)
- b) Mindapples - <http://mindapples.org/>
- c) Law Care (see above)
- d) Mind (see above)

What ILPA Is Doing

- a) Well-being Working Group - where ILPA can help, alongside the its members, to identify mental health priorities and practical training sessions.
- b) Trainings – LawCare and Freedom from Torture

What You Can Do Now

1. Five Ways to Well-Being



2. Tea and Talk

Within your workplaces, a small and easy to implement scheme can include 'Tea and Talk'. All it takes is to buy some biscuits, brew up some tea and take the time to talk and connect with your colleagues (<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/get-involved/tea-and-talk>).

3. Talk To A Young Person You Know

Mental health and emotional issues can often develop during adolescence and social media, academic pressure, bullying, family units breaking down and an increased number of children in the care system have all been recognised as contributing factors to the rise in mental health issues in younger people. Although it can seem difficult to speak to young people about mental health issues it can be as easy as starting with a 10-minute conversation. Where possible the conversation should take place in a quiet, neutral place away from the area that may be a contributing factor to the young person's circumstances. It is important to give your full attention and listen without interruption and to pay attention to the young person's words, tone of voice and body language as these will all provide clues as to how s/he is feeling. In return, your body language should be open and non-confrontational to help foster acceptance and willingness to listen. A top tip is to sit down even if the young person is standing as it will make you seem less intimidating.

Further Reading

For more statistics regarding mental health, please visit:

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics>

For more information regarding training as a mental health first aider, and other tips, please visit: <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/training-consultancy/>