

**\_able  
futures**



# **\_Supporting Mental Health at Work: The Employer Toolkit**

The Access to Work Mental  
Health Support Service

# Introduction

Able Futures delivers the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions and we understand how to help employers who are facing challenges with mental health at work.

In this Employer Toolkit for supporting mental health at work you'll find:

- ✓ A definition of mental health.
- ✓ An explanation of how mental health impacts employees and apprentices.
- ✓ An overview of the Able Futures service.
- ✓ 10 ways to look after your own mental wellbeing.
- ✓ Tips for talking about mental health.
- ✓ 6 steps to help you respond to a mental health crises situation.
- ✓ Information on reasonable adjustments you could consider to support employees with mental health issues.
- ✓ Promotional materials and resources available to help you communicate the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service to your employees.

# What is Mental Health?

The health of our mind is as important as the health of our body.

Physical health means the condition of our body and if we are healthy we exercise and eat a balanced diet, don't have any illnesses and won't smoke or drink too much.

Mental health means the condition of our mind and to have good mental health we understand our emotions and behaviours and feel able to cope with everyday life.

Just like our physical health, our mental health can be affected by lots of different factors including our physical health, our social situation, our living

and working environment and our genetics. And we can all be at risk of developing mental illnesses or experiencing mental health problems such as everyday worries or stress at work, anxiety, depression, or suicidality.

To live the best life we can we all need to know how to look after our mental health and how we can look out for others who might need some support. Able Futures can help you look after your own mental health at work and support employee mental health.



**“Mental health is ... a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”**

**—The World Health Organization**

# Mental health in your workplace



## 3 out of 5

employees in the UK have experienced mental health issues such as:



Stress



Anxiety



Depression



Sleep issues



Bereavement

The effects of poor employee mental health is estimated to cost employers yearly between **£33 – £42 billion**



Able Futures knows that if employers have the right tools, information and advice that they can have a huge impact on employee and apprentice mental health. Able Futures can help employers develop ways to support people's mental health when it fluctuates, help address problems if they arise and remove barriers and stigma around mental health issues to enable more employees and apprentices to have enjoyable futures at work.

We can help employers introduce mental health support to all sorts of workplaces and employees in many different roles. Whether your employees work in warehouses or from home, on a construction site or in a hospital, Able Futures can help you support employee mental wellbeing and tackle mental health issues that are affecting their time at work.

**Take these three steps today.**

## 1 Decide on your company approach

Your company should consider what approach it wants to take to building mental health awareness. Do you want to focus on supporting employees when they disclose a mental health problem, or do you want to build awareness of how to prevent mental health issues and improve mental wellbeing amongst all employees? How can you include leaders as well as staff in developing a positive culture towards supporting mental health?

To create a culture of mental wellness in your company, it is important for senior managers to make a commitment to supporting mental wellbeing in the business - and to do this they need to learn about and understand mental health. They may engage in training to understand what they can do to support their own mental health before moving on to learning about how to support colleagues and staff who may be struggling, and then promoting mental health awareness across the company.

## 2 Engage in mental health education

Once your company has decided to promote mental health awareness and support employees, Able Futures can help you learn

more about mental health and how you can support an employee with a mental health condition.

Contact us on **0800 321 3137** from 8am to 10.30pm, Monday to Friday or email [hello@able-futures.co.uk](mailto:hello@able-futures.co.uk) to discuss the employer support we offer and how our mental health professionals can work with you to deliver education and awareness sessions including Mental Health First Aid Awareness to your team.

Able Futures can help you understand what reasonable adjustments could improve mental wellbeing, how to respond to a crises, what you need to do to look after your own mental health and what help we can provide to support staff who are experiencing mental health issues. We also offer tailored advice and recommendations to resolve work-related mental health issues as well as sharing lessons and resources on mental health at work.

## 3 Ongoing management and support

After your leadership team is confident in the mental health culture it wants to promote in your company, Able Futures can give promotional materials and information about the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service we deliver to help individuals who need support for their mental health.



# How Able Futures supports mental health at work

Able Futures delivers the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions to help people aged 16 and over who are in work but are experiencing issues that affect their mental health.

Able Futures gives employees and apprentices access to a mental health professional for up to nine months of personalised advice and guidance to help their mental health. Our Vocational Rehabilitation Consultants (VRCs) can help your staff understand and use a wide variety of tools and techniques which can support them in their journey to better mental health.

There is no cost to use this service which is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Able Futures is led by Ingeus UK and with partners across England, Scotland and Wales we deliver the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service.

## Able Futures can give employers:



A local Business Account Manager to support you in embedding mental health awareness and support



Mental Health Awareness sessions delivered by Vocational Rehabilitation Consultants



Information sessions to inform staff about support available from Able Futures



A suite of marketing and communications materials to promote the Able Futures service to your staff

# Ten ways to support your own mental health

It is tempting to think mental health problems happen only to other people but statistics show that everyone can experience mental health problems. Here are some ideas for helping your own mental health and wellbeing.

- 1 Connect with people, animals or nature. Text a friend. Call someone you haven't spoken to in a while.
- 2 Learn something new today. Use a new word. Try out a new recipe. Learn a new sport.
- 3 Be active. Walk in nature. Dance around your living room. Take the stairs.
- 4 Notice what is around you. The weather. The lovely smell of your cup of coffee. Appreciate your lunch.
- 5 Give something. A smile. A thank you. A word of encouragement. A donation to charity.
- 6 Drink more water. We need to drink at least 6 glasses of fluid a day.
- 7 Eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.
- 8 Develop a good routine before bed to ensure a good night's sleep.
- 9 Spend time engaged in a hobby you enjoy.
- 10 Keep a journal to track what you are thinking and feeling.





# \_Tips for talking about mental health

**Communicating with individual employees or apprentices who are experiencing mental health issues can feel challenging.**

Able Futures Vocational Rehabilitation Consultants are highly experienced mental health professionals who are used to supporting individuals who are struggling with their mental health, and have shared some things to think about when you're talking to people who are experiencing mental health issues.

**Nearly half of adults believe they have had a diagnosable mental health condition at some point in their lives.**

19% of men and 33% of women have had a mental health condition diagnosed by professionals but many more people who are experiencing mental health issues have not yet talked about their mental health to anyone else. So it can be helpful to think about these things to help any conversations you're having about mental health.



- ✓ Ensure you have set aside time this is not going to be interrupted.
- ✓ Let people tell you what they want to tell you. Don't probe for more information.
- ✓ Really listen to what you are being told. Do not listen in order to respond. Listen in order to hear.
- ✓ Do not offer counselling or make assumptions about what the person is feeling. Be empathic.
- ✓ Ask questions rather than make statements.
- ✓ Ask open questions rather than closed questions.
- ✓ Offer information about local support services.
- ✓ Suggest a visit to their GP.
- ✓ Don't be tempted to give advice. Know your limits.

## Try saying...

That sounds really difficult.

Is there anything I can do to help?

You are important.

I don't have any answers but I can listen.

If you want to talk, I'm here for you.

## Don't say...

You can't be depressed. You are at work and you look good.

You are what you eat. Try eating more healthy food.

Medication doesn't help. Stop taking it and you'll feel better.

Smile and walk tall.

Don't let it get you down. Take control.

Just try to think positively.

# Responding to a crisis situation

When you become aware of someone experiencing a mental health crisis, it is important to know how to respond. Able Futures mental health professionals can help you with this.

Able Futures can help you access training and support for your staff so they know what to do to support someone during a mental health crisis. There is no charge for this, or any services provided by Able Futures.

Here are some steps to take if you know someone is experiencing a mental health crisis.

- 1 Stay calm.
- 2 Listen to what the person is telling you. Do not try to cheer them up. If they seem suicidal ask them directly. You will not put the idea into their head.
- 3 Ask them what help they need.
- 4 Ask them if there is someone they want you to contact.
- 5 Encourage them to seek appropriate professional support.
- 6 If you believe they are in danger of hurting themselves or others speak to emergency services.

# Reasonable adjustments

Supporting staff is not only beneficial for individuals with mental health issues, it makes good business sense. Able Futures Vocational Rehabilitation Consultants are experienced in working with employers and staff to find adjustments that work for everyone.

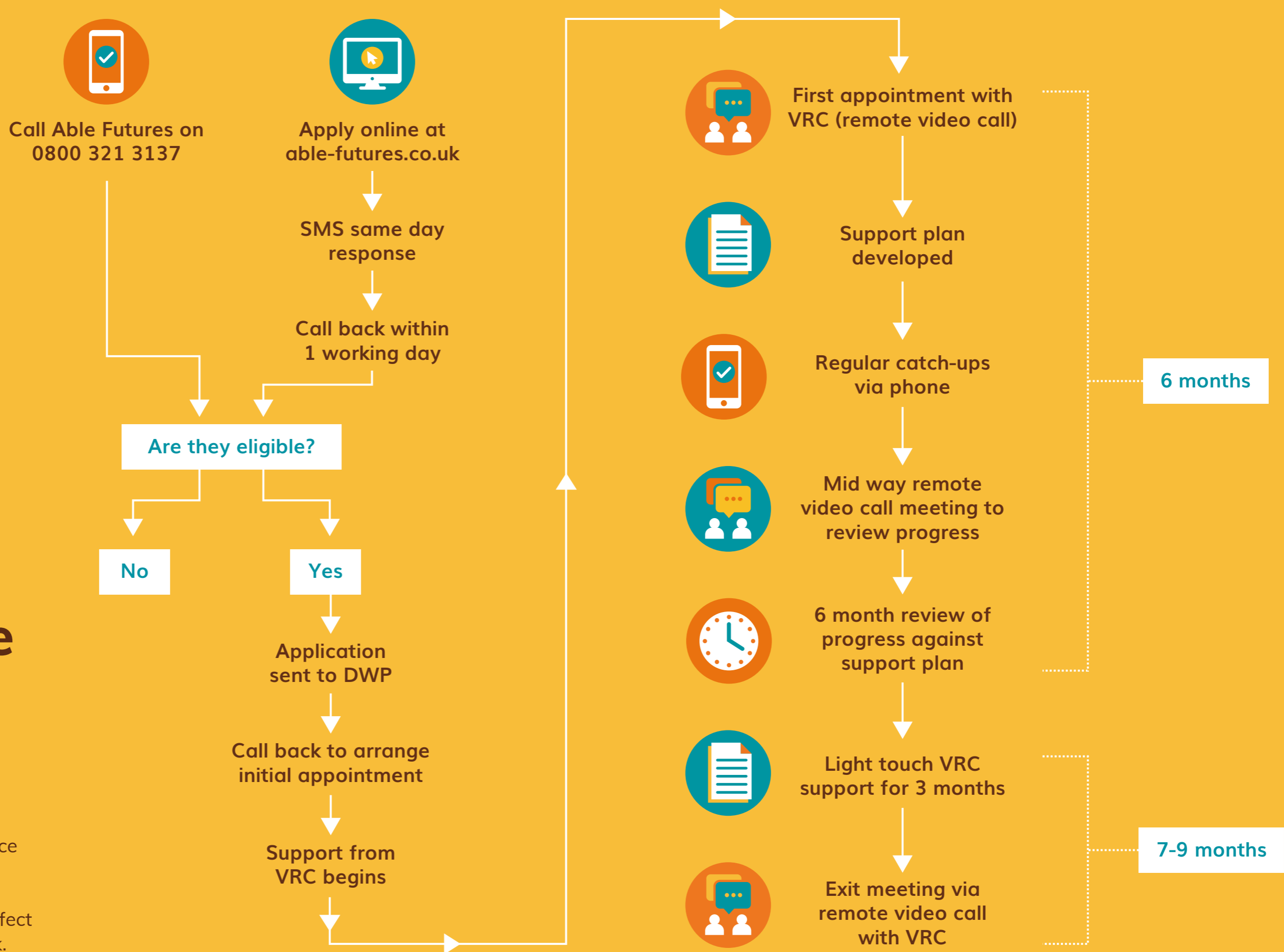
Here are some examples of things you might offer when supporting a member of staff with mental health difficulties.

- ✓ Offer flexible working where appropriate.
- ✓ Provide support and training for the individual and for colleagues.
- ✓ Allow time for medical appointments.
- ✓ Spread the usual break time over the day rather than in one block.
- ✓ Provide break-away spaces.
- ✓ Rearrange work stations. For instance, some people find sitting with their back to the door really stressful.
- ✓ Support with prioritising workload and provide supervision.
- ✓ Provide job coaching or mentoring schemes.
- ✓ Consider a phased return to work after a period of absence.
- ✓ Develop individual support plans.



# The Able Futures Process

Able Futures gives nine months advice and guidance from a mental health specialist to anyone experiencing issues that affect their mental health at work.



# Marketing materials and resources for employers

Able Futures gives employers information on mental health and resources to promote the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service to employees and apprentices.

Your local Business Account Manager will help you embed mental health awareness and support in your business by providing information sessions about the support Able Futures can provide and a suite of marketing materials available in English and Welsh language versions.



Videos, articles and presentations

## Case studies

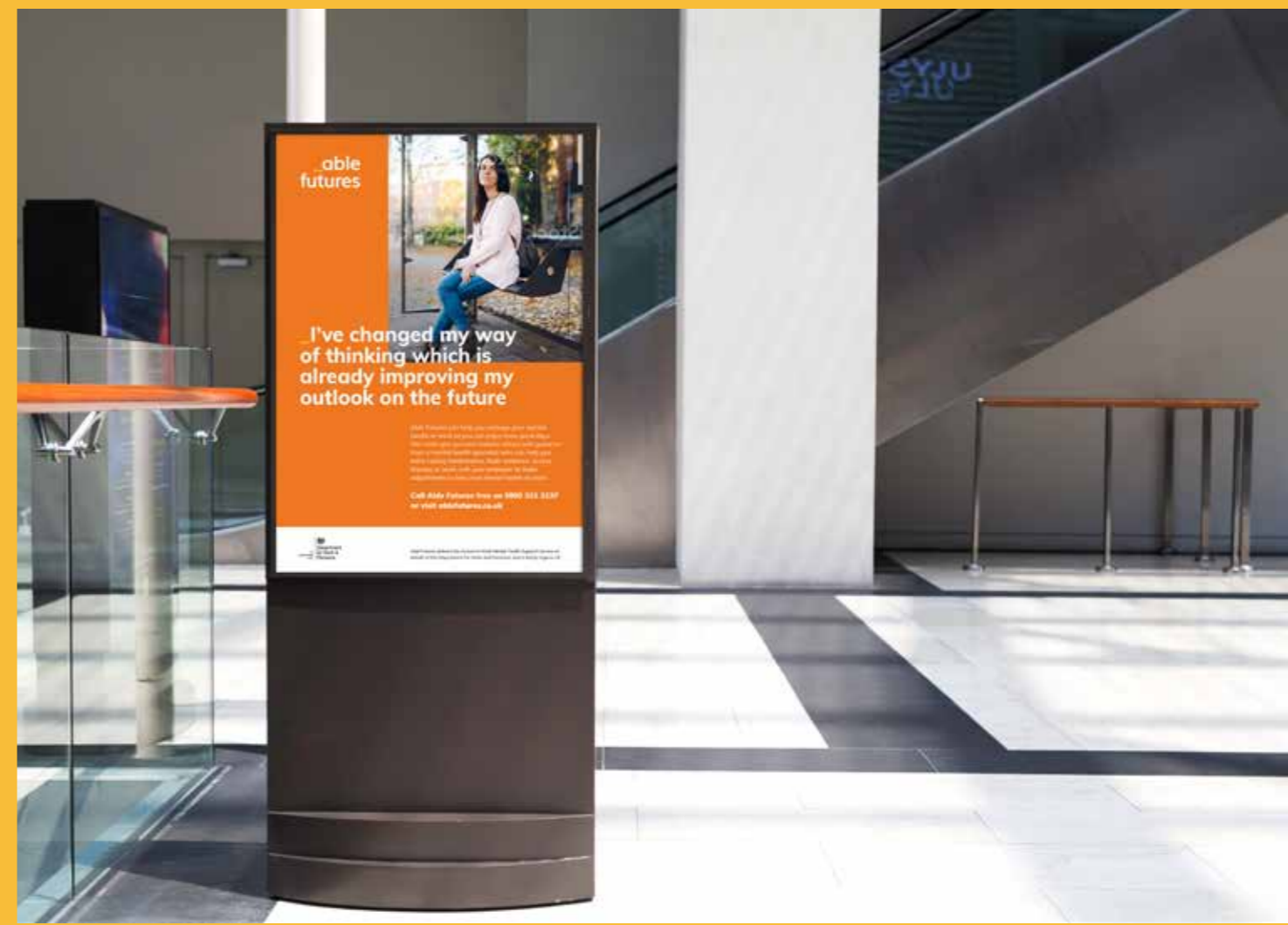
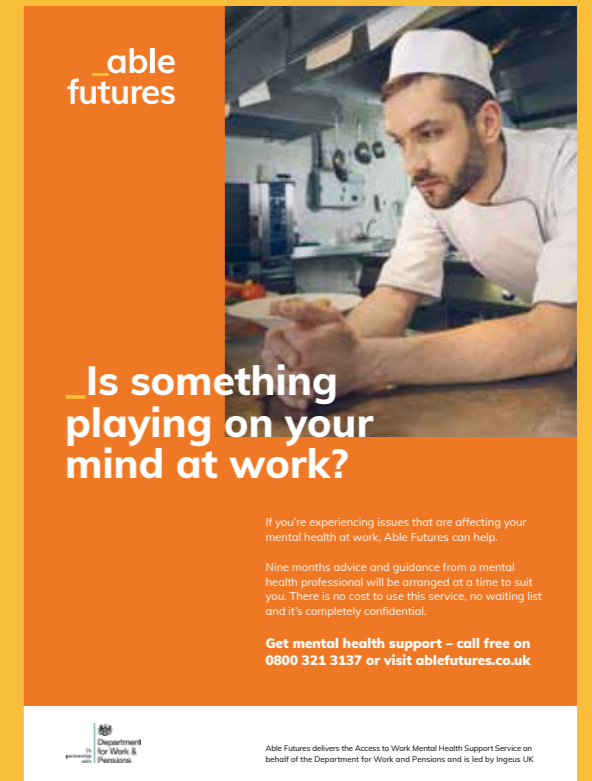
**“With Able Futures services we are able to help staff to stay in their role whilst helping them with their struggles and difficulties.”**

Rachel Moss, Safety & Compliance Officer, M&Y Maintenance

**“Able Futures has become a critical part of our toolkit when supporting staff with their mental health.”**

Sam Munkley, Head of HR, Seashell Trust

## Leaflets and Posters





# **\_Help your staff enjoy #MoreGoodDays and sustainable futures**

If you or anyone in  
your workplace  
requires mental health  
support contact  
Able Futures

Freephone 0800 321 3137  
8am to 10.30pm Monday to Friday

[hello@able-futures.co.uk](mailto:hello@able-futures.co.uk)  
[www.able-futures.co.uk](http://www.able-futures.co.uk)