

Mental health awareness has had an increasing profile in the energy sector over recent years. Perhaps now, more than ever, maintaining good mental health is particularly challenging, with fears of redundancy, furloughing and family ill-health all posing a potential distraction from safe operations.

Having the ability to spot the signs and symptoms associated with deteriorating mental health, and possessing the knowledge and confidence to provide the opportunity for those affected to talk openly about their thoughts, is crucial in supporting positive mental health and, consequently, safety.

Much like our approach to COVID-19, where we recognised the guidance from Government was too generic for our industry, Step Change in Safety has developed a certified mental health awareness course to meet the needs of the energy sector.

Specifically aimed at providing support to those most in need at the worksite, our “Awareness of First Aid for Mental Health for Energy Workers” bespoke training course has been specifically adapted to retain the complete syllabus of mental health first aid training but with the added advantage of being industry-specific for the energy worker, and includes discussion, case studies and energy-industry specific examples.

The new course is conducted by Brett Townsley, the award-winning Innovations Director at Omniscient Safety Innovations Ltd., a veteran-owned organisation which focuses on introducing mental health solutions to prevent and reduce the likelihood of the UK's largest contributor to lost work days, work-related stress, depression and anxiety.

Poor mental health is not new, and neither are absenteeism, illness, accidents and burn-out, however as we have undergone a shared trauma during lockdown, people and organisations have been reminded of the significant impact poor mental health can have on us all.

As we leave isolation and return to work, the collective mental health of the UK's workforce will be unsettled at best. The impact of sustained periods of isolation, extreme levels of anxiety and stress coupled with significant changes to our lives, whether that be the passing of loved ones, job losses, financial insecurity and the new social distancing restrictions will mean that organisations who wish to survive and thrive in this post COVID-19 environment will need to adapt to the needs of their workforce.

With current estimated figures of at least 1 in 4 people presenting with a mental health problem, it is of significant concern that many employee programs operate at crisis or struggling stages, when an employee is experiencing extreme difficulty in functioning normally.

Commenting on the new course, Brett Townsley said “Mental health affects everyone in many ways, and in some cases, it takes people to very dark places and they lose all hope. That is simply unacceptable.

“As human beings we have a duty of care for each other, so do businesses and by applying preventive systemic solutions we can reduce the negative impacts from the workplace that cause stress, anxiety, and depression. We work with organisations to identify emotional hazards and apply solutions to prevent issues while creating structures that promote creative, cohesive cultures reducing accidents, absenteeism and costs, while improving productivity, wellbeing and morale. This course will give businesses in the Energy Sector a greater understanding of mental health in the workplace.”

Each training course consists of two, one-hour Zoom sessions (ie. both dates) supporting materials, handbook and a one-to-one knowledge-check session. As a remote course, no travel or accommodation costs will be incurred, and it can be completed both onshore and offshore.