

HOW TO BOOST YOUR TEMP WORKERS' MENTAL HEALTH



TEMPORARY STAFFING IS NOT NEW. IN FACT, IT DATES BACK TO THE 1940S, WHEN BUSINESSMAN WILLIAM KELLY USED TEMPORARY WORKERS – MOSTLY WOMEN – TO CARRY OUT ADMINISTRATION WORK. THOSE TEMPS CAME TO BE KNOWN AS 'KELLY GIRLS', A TERM THAT STUCK FOR QUITE A WHILE.

Now, of course, temp workers are widely used to allow businesses to respond to peaks and troughs and cover staffing shortages. We are writing at the time of another lockdown, and the resulting caution that will remain in business for a while, thanks to the double whammy of the pandemic and Brexit, has an upside for temporary workers.

The demand for temporary placements is likely to grow over the coming five years. And with unemployment expected to remain high in the short-term, there's likely to be a larger pool of people available for temporary work.

HOWEVER, IT'S NOT ALL GOOD NEWS

We've all been affected to a greater or lesser degree by the events of last year, and the wellbeing of employees suddenly confined to home or asked to work differently has been a concern for all employers. But temporary workers have a rather unique set of working conditions that can make them more prone than permanent staff to mental health concerns.

Firstly, they have no job security. We may all feel in that boat at the moment, but there are no job retention schemes or furlough payments for temps. And they can be terminated without notice.

Often, they are given no benefits. Those gym memberships, health insurance schemes and fuel cards are frequently reserved for the permanent workforce.

This can lead to them feeling they are not really part of the team. They don't get included, and with everyone working at home, it's easy for them to get forgotten about, leading to a feeling of being disposable. On top of that, they are often given menial tasks to do, with little support or training.

With **ACAS** research telling us that two out of five employees working at home during the first lockdown felt stressed or anxious, and half feeling isolated, it's easy to see how the added stresses that can come with temporary work add fuel to the fire. And analysis from the Institute for Public Policy Research shows that younger workers are particularly at risk, with 29% in temporary jobs more likely to experience mental health problems than their permanent colleagues.

HOW CAN THE PROBLEM BE ADDRESSED?

There are several areas that can have a disproportionate effect on temporary workers' mental health. A key area is training. Many temps feel they are left to just 'get on with it', but training is a key factor in getting the most out

of temporary staff and helping them to feel they are actually contributing.

This includes a robust onboarding process, so that your temporary workers are very clear on what they are being asked to do, as well as ongoing training to ensure they understand the systems and tools they are expected to use. Make sure each temp knows who they should go to if they have questions.

Being made to feel part of the team is important. From ensuring they are introduced to people – even if that currently has to be virtually – to inviting them to join relevant meetings and including them in social events. Their boss should ensure that they check in with the temp regularly, especially whilst we are all working remotely again.

Finally, finding a way to offer them a range of benefits will not only boost your employer image but help temporary workers to feel valued. Partnering with a third party who can deliver these for you is a straight forward way to be able to include temporary workers in additional perks that will show your appreciation of their efforts.