

Protecting against the longer effects of Covid

With news of a vaccination providing a glimmer of hope to the world, it is believed that we could be nearing a turning point for the pandemic that has gripped the globe.

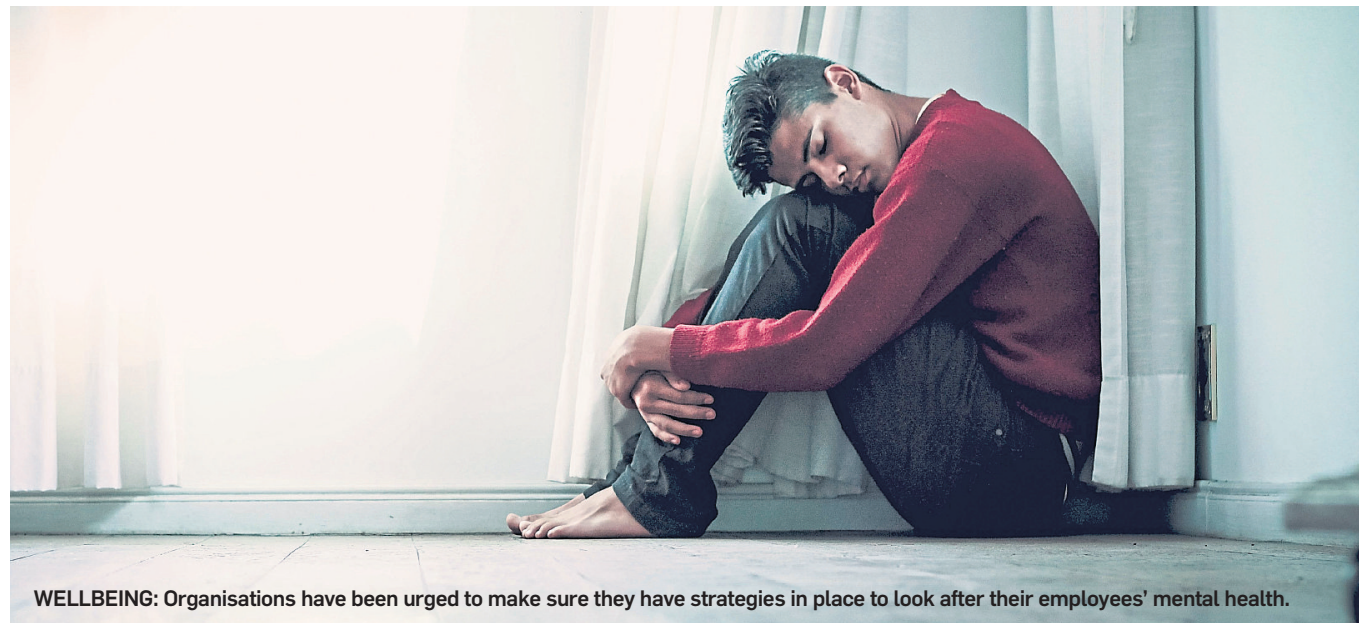
However, even now, nearly nine months after the UK first went into lockdown, scientists are discovering some of the longer-term effects – and not just for those who have been infected.

Alongside the physical complaints of “long-Covid”, another issue which may have lasting repercussions and not just affect those who have tested positive, is mental health problems.

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), one in four people already experience some form of mental illness, with around 0.6 million suffering from work-related stress, anxiety or depression.

Carolyn Taylor, International SOS's head of mental health, resilience and wellbeing, has urged organisations to make sure they have robust strategies in place to look after their employees' mental health and wellbeing.

Covid-19 restrictions such as self-isolation, increased feelings of anxiousness and mounting stress as our home and work-life balance has merged can



WELLBEING: Organisations have been urged to make sure they have strategies in place to look after their employees' mental health.

all have far-reaching implications on how we are feeling. Adopting any form of early intervention is vital in protecting people.

Thankfully, a focus on good mental health practices is becoming increasingly common in the workplace, notably helping staff manage and cope with the day-to-day pressures at work and home.

In addition, the introduction and implementation of wellbeing officers or mental health first-aiders is also proving popular.

Appointed co-workers

can look out for symptoms and signs that colleagues may be suffering. They are often coached in soft skills, such as listening techniques, which can be very effective to support struggling colleagues, while also providing signposting services that can be used for follow-up professional support.

There are some easy ways to help deal proactively and reactively with mental health issues. These can include:

- Developing an action plan to change attitudes
- Creating a mental health policy to set out values

- Training managers and ensuring they champion awareness and fight stigma

- Tackling work-related causes of mental ill-health
- Educating the workforce
- Keeping communication high on the agenda.

International SOS can support all of these by offering, for example: Wellbeing assessments and stress audits; accredited mental health first-aid training and mental health awareness training; employee assistance programmes and post-trauma support, as well as helpful exercises and activities including

stress mapping and educational webinars.

In addition to the above, good habits including regular sleep, exercise, eating well and balancing time between activities that give a sense of achievement, as well as activities that are fun or relaxing, can all be hugely beneficial for managing your own mental health.

And it's not just employees who can benefit.

Investing in the health and wellbeing of your workforce can increase loyalty and reduce staff turnover as well as

improving productivity and longevity.

Please also remember that during the Covid-19 pandemic, health and social care services are still there for you, so it's important to ask for help and not suffer alone.

■ For anyone interested in finding out more about International SOS's healthcare solutions and how the company can support your mental health please contact Claire Westbrook-Keir, International SOS client relationships director: claire.westbrook@internationalsos.com

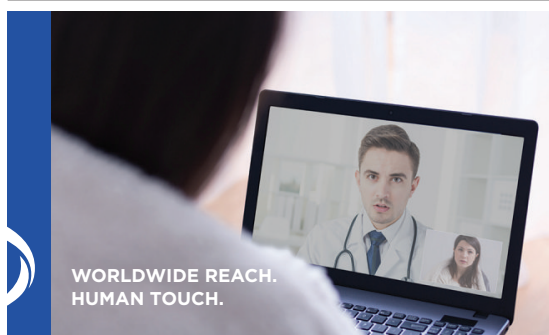
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