

Item: 3

Human Resources Sub-committee: 21 March 2023.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy.

Report by Corporate Director for Strategy, Performance and Business Solutions.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider a new policy on Mental Health and Wellbeing for staff.

2. Recommendations

The Sub-committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, although the Council has a policy on Stress Management, a wider policy on helping employees with stress and other mental health and wellbeing issues would be advantageous.

2.2.

That a draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy has been developed in line with current Health and Safety Executive standards and best practice.

It is recommended:

2.2.

That the policy on Mental Health and Wellbeing, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, be approved.

3. Background

3.1.

The current Stress Management Policy, approved in 2000, would benefit from review and updating.

3.2.

The importance of supporting employees and building a healthy workplace has been highlighted due to the global pandemic and the need for business continuity. It is nationally recognised that levels of stress and anxiety in workplaces and across society generally has increased over the past three years with concerns over COVID-19 and health risks, the cost of living crisis, and the changing nature of work all having major impacts.

3.3.

It has, therefore, been considered a priority to look at broader policy issues impacting the mental health and wellbeing of employees and provide a policy, together with guidance and tools that managers and staff can access for support. Accordingly, a draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy has been developed in line with current Health and Safety Executive (HSE) standards and best practice.

4. Policy Proposals and Guidance

4.1.

The draft Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to this report, covers both stress and mental wellbeing, and encourages a more pro-active approach. Guidance for Managers, attached as Appendices 2 and 3, cover guidance on using the policy generally, as well as a specific guide around managing stress. As these outline operational and procedural aspects in more detail, they can and will be updated as required when new resources for employees become available or procedures change, without having to necessarily revisit the Policy itself. The Wellness Action Plans (WAP), attached as Appendices 4 to 6 of this report, includes guidance on how to complete an optional Wellness Action Plan (WAP) at the start of employment, together with regular follow up discussions to ensure that stress and mental wellbeing levels are managed throughout the employment period. The WAP can also be completed where employees have an ongoing stress related health issue.

4.2.

A Stress Self-Assessment based on HSE's six key areas of work design that are associated with poor health, lower productivity and increased accident and sickness absence rates related stressors is the main tool for staff to consider and complete along with their managers. The draft policy also includes a link to the HSE Indicator Tool which helps staff identify the sources of their stress. There is also a work-related stress risk assessment which can be used with staff where relevant and will be especially useful where a manager has a number of staff presenting with stress.

4.3.

The draft policy highlights the need for managers to have an awareness of their own management and leadership style and how this can impact on stress levels within the team and highlights self-assessment tools to assist with this.

4.4.

Wellbeing resources, with a focus on mental health, are available on the Council website and links to the Council's intranet are within the draft policy. These include HSE guidance and the Wellness Action Plans.

4.5.

The draft policy highlights the importance of training for managers to ensure cases are dealt with sympathetically and fairly. Training courses for Line Managers are

available regularly, face to face and virtually, covering Managing Stress, and Mental Health Awareness plus Managing Personal Stress and the Scottish Mental Health First Aid course for all employees. Various supportive short courses are also now available on iLearn.

5. Implementation of new Policy and Procedure

5.1.

In order to assist employees and managers, Wellness Action Plans, attached as Appendices 4 to 6 of this report, are available to help consider and record any actions taken to support an employee. These have been used within the Council across a range of health issues and are found to be useful.

5.2.

Should the policy be approved, briefing sessions for managers and staff will be planned as part of the regular in-house training sessions offered by the Human Resource and Organisational Development service.

6. Trade Unions consultation

The recognised Trade Unions have been consulted in the creation of this policy and have provided feedback which has been incorporated into the Policy and/or Guidance documents.

7. Human Resources Implications

The human resource implications are contained within the body of this report.

8. Equalities Impact

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is attached as Appendix 7 to this report.

9. Corporate Governance

This report relates to the Council complying with governance and its duties as an employer and therefore does not directly support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan and the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan.

10. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this new policy and procedure. Absence due to mental ill health can be a cost to the Council. The provision of counselling to support employees where that is recommended is already provided, and the individual costs associated must be borne within existing staff budgets.

11. Legal Aspects

11.1

As an employer, the Council has a duty under Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees.

11.2.

In terms of Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the Council has a duty to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of its employees to which they are exposed whilst at work; this includes the risks of psychological as well as physical harm.

12. Contact Officers

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13. Appendices

Appendix 1: Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy.

Appendix 2: Mental Health and Wellbeing Guide for Managers.

Appendix 3: Stress Management Guide for Managers.

Appendix 4: Wellness Action Plan Guide for Line Managers.

Appendix 5: Wellness Action Plan Guide for the Workplace.

Appendix 6: Wellness Action Plan Guide for Hybrid Working.

Appendix 7: Equality Impact Assessment.



Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

February 2023

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Introduction

Here at Orkney Islands Council, we want to support our colleagues' wellbeing and this includes mental health. We know for some of us, talking about our mental health can be uncomfortable. But with research suggesting that 1 in 4 of us will experience a mental health issue every year and that 17% of us are living with a serious mental health concern, it's ever more important to talk about how we are feeling.

Just like physical health, we all have mental health. Sometimes we might experience mental health concerns that last a few weeks or months, or we might have more serious issues that are longer term. Our mental health may change over time, just like our physical health does. The purpose of this policy is to encourage you to talk about your mental health and wellbeing, to let you know what we can do to support you, and to give you information on where to go for further help.

We have a number of guides that accompany this policy including a guide to managing workplace stress and a guide on supporting employees' mental health and wellbeing.

The aims of this policy are:

- To encourage us to talk more about mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.
- For those experiencing symptoms to feel you can ask for the support you need.
- For managers to have the knowledge and confidence to know what to do if you need to provide support to a team member through this time.
- To give all colleagues information about where to access further guidance and support.

We are committed to ensuring the health and wellbeing of all employees and that we are all treated fairly and with dignity and respect at work.

We are committed to taking all reasonable steps to make sure that we:

- Listen to you if you tell us about your mental health or workplace stress.
- Keep information about your mental health confidential.
- Support you if you are experiencing symptoms related to your mental health and wellbeing, making reasonable adjustments where needed.
- Treat you with respect, not making judgements or assumptions about you because you have told us about your mental health or workplace stress symptoms.
- Treat any issues of bullying and harassment in relation to mental health or workplace stress issues seriously. See our Dignity at Work Policy for more information.

Policy statement

As an employer we have a legal duty under Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all our employees. In terms of Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and

Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the Council also has a duty to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of our employees to which they are exposed whilst at work; this includes the risks of psychological as well as physical harm. Orkney Islands Council will therefore take the necessary steps to assess the risk of work-related stress and put measures in place to reduce the risk as far as is reasonably practicable.

We recognise that stress can be work related, can arise from a person's private life or a combination of the two. Whatever the case, the impact of stress on an individual will still potentially impact on the workplace.

Scope of the policy

This policy applies to and covers all managers and employees. Third parties (including contractors, customers and visitors) are also required to comply with this policy in so far as it relates to Orkney Islands Council's commitment to providing a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation. This policy also takes account of Orkney Islands Council's obligations under the Employment Rights Act 1996, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Working Time Regulations 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

The procedures outlined within Orkney Islands Council's Sickness Absence Policy must be followed in conjunction with this Policy.

Please note this policy does not form part of any contract of employment and may be amended and reviewed in conjunction with Trade Unions at any time.

Responsibilities

The Chief Executive retains overall responsibility for Health and Safety as per the corporate Health and Safety Policy. Practical responsibility is delegated to line managers in respect of the area under their management control. Additional responsibilities in respect of Mental Health and Wellbeing are detailed below.

Corporate Directors and Head of Services are responsible for:

- Monitoring absence statistics, staff surveys and other available information on a regular basis, particularly in care settings where coping with distressing and traumatic incidents, including vacancy rates which may indicate where there are not enough people to do all of the work.
- Providing advice, support and training to managers in relation to implementation of this policy.
- Maintaining and promoting a positive working environment throughout their service.
- Ensuring sufficient resources are made available to implement this policy.

As a manager with responsibility for others, you should:

- Have an awareness of your own management and leadership style and the impact your behaviours might have on the people you manage.
- Have regular conversations with your team members and should cover health and wellbeing.

- Listen non-judgementally and provide appropriate support to your team members who are affected by mental health problems or workplace stress.
- Follow the relevant manager guidance to support team members in managing any mental health issues or workplace stress.
- Consider using the Wellness Action Plans with your team members to help proactively manage health and wellbeing. Guides can be found for line managers and employees within [Health and Wellbeing \(sharepoint.com\)](#).
- Set team members realistic targets, monitor workloads, working hours and overtime to ensure that they are managing their workload within the time available.

As an employee you should:

- Take reasonable care of your own health and wellbeing.
- Familiarise yourself with this policy and associated documentation and act in accordance with its aims and objectives.
- Plan and organise your work to meet organisational objectives.
- Behave in a manner that is conducive to the mental wellbeing of your colleagues.
- Raise issues of concern and seek assistance as appropriate from your line manager, human resources, health and safety representative, trade union, your General Practitioner or the Council's occupational health service (via a management referral).
- Engage with any support, advice and guidance that may be offered.
- Engage with any Work-related stress risk assessment your manager or service is undertaking.

Talking about mental health and wellbeing at work

If you're living with a mental health issue, we know it can be a difficult step to tell people about it. But we encourage you to talk to your manager, so they can give you the support you need. You can mention it in your next one-to-one or ask to meet with them just to talk about this.

Your manager won't judge you. They'll listen to you and talk to you about what they can do to help. You might feel it's enough for them just to be aware of what you're experiencing. Or they might need to make changes to your work or work environment to help. There is more information about reasonable adjustments in the section below. You can discuss and agree what will happen next.

They may encourage you to go to your GP for support, if you haven't already. They might also ask you if you're happy to be referred to occupational health. This is so we can get more information about how your mental health issue is likely to affect you at work, and what adjustments we can make to help.

If you tell your manager about your mental health concerns, they'll keep this confidential and won't share this information unless you say it's okay – except if we've got serious concerns for your safety or that of others.

Reducing stigma

We recognise the importance of promoting open communication to support reducing any stigma around mental health issues. We are committed to raising awareness of mental health in the workplace and continue to:

- Utilise national campaigns and activities relating to mental health and wellbeing.
- Provide online training to all employees via iLearn to raise awareness of mental health conditions.
- Provide specific training for managers on supporting people with mental health issues.

Making reasonable adjustments

There might be reasonable adjustments we can make at work to help you manage your mental health or workplace stress symptoms. These may be temporary changes or longer-term changes depending on your particular circumstances.

Your manager may do a risk assessment to understand more about how your mental health or stress symptoms might affect you at work and the adjustments you need.

Wellness Action Plans

You can use a Wellness Action Plan to identify how your mental health or stress is impacting you at work and use this to discuss any changes you might need with your manager.

The adjustments we can make will depend on your circumstances, but the types of changes that might help could be:

- Having meetings with your manager more often.
- Agreeing that we'll tell you information face to face, so you can talk through how you feel about it. Alternatively, you might prefer us to send information to you in an email first, so you have time to think through how you want to talk about it. Whatever helps in your situation.
- Adjusting some of your duties.
- Providing specific equipment such as noise cancelling headphones or a light box which might help if you have Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).
- Changing your start and finish times, or when you take your breaks. This might help you avoid situations you know are going to be stressful for you.
- Agreeing for you to work somewhere else at times if you need to.
- Giving you time off to attend medical appointments.

If you think you might need a change to your working pattern to help you manage your mental health or stress, talk to your manager about this when you are creating your [Wellness Action Plan](#). In some circumstances, this request may be considered as a reasonable adjustment rather than requiring an application through the [Flexible Working Policy](#).

Your manager may suggest an occupational health referral. This is so that we can get more information about how your mental health or stress symptoms are likely to affect you at work and what adjustments can be put in place to support you.

Implementation of existing Policies

The Council has a policy on Sickness Absence management which includes absence triggers based on duration or frequency of sickness absences. Any employee absences resulting from mental health or workplace stress should be recorded as per the Sickness Absence Management policy.

It is acknowledged that mental health or stress symptoms may in some circumstances impact a person's performance at work, and therefore this should be taken into account when applying the Council's Disciplinary or Capability Policy.

Other policies that may be useful for you and your team member include:

- Health and Safety.
- Leave of Absence.
- Flexible Working.
- Supporting Menopause in the workplace.

Wellness Action Plans

Wellness Action Plans can be used to identify what helps you to manage your mental health or stress symptoms at work, what causes you to become unwell and the support you would like to receive to improve your wellbeing.

By creating a Wellness Action Plan, you can identify what works and what doesn't work for you in managing your mental health and wellbeing. It can help identify what support you might need from your manager and what you can do to support your own mental health and wellbeing.

There are templates you can use to create your Wellness Action Plan; one for [hybrid working](#) and one for the [workplace](#). You can either do this on your own and then share it with your manager or discuss it with them to put it together. Once you have shared this with your manager, they will keep it confidential and won't share it with anyone else without your permission.

It is good to meet regularly with your line manager to discuss your Wellness Action Plan and how you feel things are going. You can use your usual one-to-one, or just ask them if you want a catch up.

Other sources of support

There is lots of other support available about managing mental health, stress and wellbeing. Here are some that you may find useful:

Wellbeing Resources

Resources to support employees and further information can be found within the Wellbeing section of the [Council's Intranet](#).

Mental Health Awareness for Managers – Virtual

The aim of the course is to understand common mental health problems and how to cope with and deal with these in a positive way in your role as a manager.

Occupational Stress will be covered along with your responsibilities as a manager in dealing with this in terms of both organisational policy and under legislation.

Scottish Mental Health First Aid – Face to Face

This is a two-day course and is designed for everyone. It covers how to recognise someone in a mental health crisis, how to approach and support them and covers basic suicide intervention skills.

Managing Personal Stress – Face to Face

For all employees who are prone to stress and would like to investigate the reasons and potential solutions behind work related stress, contact Learning and Development for a place on a Managing Personal stress workshop.

iLearn health and wellbeing resources

Available to all employees to raise awareness of health and wellbeing in a workplace setting.

Trauma Informed Training – Virtual

Training sessions are available on [TURAS](#), The NHS Learning Management Centre. Contact Learning and Development for further details.

Trade Unions can be contacted for further advice and support.

Glossary

Knowing how to talk about mental health, stress and wellbeing is important for both people experiencing symptoms and those who need to provide support to a team member or colleague during this time.

Having a shared understanding of the terms and terminology that are frequently used in discussions about the mental health is key to ensuring we are all clear on what we mean and helps to reduce any potential confusion or embarrassment.

You aren't expected to be an expert on mental health conditions. Having an awareness of the common terms used when discussing mental health and wellbeing means that conversations are more likely to be supportive and better provide the right guidance and signposting where needed.

The table below provides a short guide to some of the terms and definitions that are used regarding the mental health.

Term	Definition
Mental wellbeing	A positive term that includes life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing e.g. a sense of control, having a purpose in life, a sense of belonging and positive relationships with others.
Mental illness or mental health problems	A term that refers to symptoms that meet a clinical diagnosis of mental illness or symptoms at a sub-clinical threshold which interfere with emotional, cognitive, or social function. Examples include common mental health problems such as depression, anxiety or severe and enduring mental health problems such as schizophrenia.
Work related stress	The adverse reaction some people may have to perceived excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work (HSE). Stress can contribute to a state of poor mental wellbeing and sustained over a period of time, can lead to mental or physical illness. It should be recognised that stress can be work related or can arise from a person's personal life or a combination of the two.
Mental health disability	A mental impairment which has substantial, adverse and long-term effects on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Someone with a mental health-related disability would fall under the scope of the Equality Act (2010) and reasonable adjustments should be supported in line with the relevant section in the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.



Mental Health and Wellbeing

A guide for managers

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Introduction

This guide accompanies our Mental Health and Wellbeing policy and is designed to help you assist your team members who are experiencing difficulties with their mental health or wellbeing. It includes information about the internal and external support available and offers practical advice on what you can do to assist colleagues with their mental health and wellbeing.

What to expect from this guide.

This guide aims to help you to:

- Be confident about your role in managing and supporting people with mental health symptoms.
- Understand and reduce the barriers that could potentially prevent a team member experiencing difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing from performing and / or developing to their full potential.
- Identify appropriate workplace changes or adjustments to support team members and help them thrive at work.
- Foster an inclusive working environment in which everyone is treated fairly.

Every manager should know what mental health and wellbeing is, when it happens and how it can affect people.

You play a key role in supporting your team members through good times and bad. This will help ensure that good mental health and wellbeing remains at the very heart of the Council.

Mental health can affect our thinking, emotions and behaviour, which can impact our ability to work, carry out simple daily tasks and engage in relationships.

We recognise that just like physical health, there are different levels of mental health, which can vary from person to person and at different points in a person's life.

There are different types of mental health conditions, some of which are common such as depression, stress and anxiety and some which are not such as schizophrenia or borderline personality disorder.

If team members are experiencing mental health conditions, it is important to know that support is available for you and for them.

There is often still a stigma around mental health and stress and consequently people experiencing difficulties will often try to hide their symptoms or be uncomfortable talking about them. We want everyone to understand what mental health, stress and wellbeing is and to be able to talk about it openly, without fear or embarrassment and so it is an important issue for us all, not just those experiencing the symptoms of it.

Your role as a people manager

You have an important role to play in ensuring that anyone experiencing mental health symptoms gets the same support and understanding as if they had any other health condition.

The role of managers in supporting people experiencing mental health symptoms is crucial. Effective management of team members with symptoms that are impacting on their work will help you to retain valuable skills and talent and reduce sickness absence.

Good people management is fundamental to supporting employee mental health and wellbeing, spotting early signs of ill health and initiating early intervention.

As a people manager you are typically:

- The first point of contact if a team member needs to discuss their mental health, workplace stress or wellbeing concerns or needs a change or adjustment to their work or working hours, to enable them to perform to their full potential.
- Responsible for implementing the people management policies and practices that can help someone experiencing mental health or workplace stress symptoms to feel supported and to be effective in their role.
- Responsible for managing absence and keeping in touch if someone is off work ill or because of their mental health or workplace stress symptoms, as well as supporting an effective return to work.

The level of trust you build with team members will determine the extent to which they are able to discuss topics such as mental health and workplace stress symptoms and any support or adjustments they need at work.

If there are regular and informal one-to-ones between you and your team members, this can provide an opportunity for a conversation about any changes to their health situation, including their mental health, workplace stress and wellbeing.

It is important to understand that each person's situation is unique, and their experience and symptoms of mental health, workplace stress and wellbeing will differ. Asking team members how they are on a regular basis will help to create an open culture and encourage someone to raise any concerns.

As a manager you can start by making yourself familiar with the Mental Health and Wellbeing policy. Remember that many people experiencing mental health symptoms may choose not to tell their managers and may be reluctant to disclose the real reason for any sickness absence. Sometimes performance and behaviour may change without any clear explanation. If you have concerns about a team member's wellbeing or performance, ask general questions such as 'How are you?' or 'I have noticed that you have been late to work recently, and I wondered if you are ok?'

Mental health and wellbeing is not a one-off event in someone's life and symptoms can vary from person to person and throughout a person's life. Symptoms can fluctuate and be felt to varying degrees. It is important to keep up regular conversations with your team members.

Approaching a sensitive conversation

Mental health symptoms can affect people's confidence and it can be really daunting talking to someone who has no knowledge of the mental health, so the more open, supportive and knowledgeable you are, the less embarrassed they are likely to be to talk about how their symptoms are affecting their health and work.

Awareness about mental health and wellbeing and the range of support available in the organisation will increase your own confidence in discussing the issue.

Approach conversations with empathy and try not to be embarrassed. It is important to set the right tone when opening a conversation about any sensitive issues. Here are some tips to consider:

- Make sure you are in a private space and avoid interruptions.
- Allow enough time.
- Ask simple, open, non-judgemental questions.
- Maintain good eye contact.
- Actively listen and give team members space to open up.
- Be prepared for some silences and be patient.
- Focus on the person and not the issue.
- Ensure team members know they can trust you.

Confidentiality

There are occasions when information provided by a team member experiencing a mental health problem may have to be put to third parties. These include as a result of reported bullying or misconduct or where disciplinary proceedings are undertaken. It may also be necessary for you to gain advice and support from Human Resources. In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to involve others where it is clear that a person's state of mental health may be a danger to the safety of themselves or others, unless doing so would create a risk to the safety of the individual or others. You should inform your team member when you are sharing information relating to their mental health with a third party.

Practical things you can do to help

Often, a few changes to a team member's work environment can make a big difference and a discussion with them should be useful in identifying what would help.

You may find the [Wellness Action Plan](#) a useful tool to help you think about what kind of questions to ask team members when you are speaking to them about mental health.

In your discussion you should aim to cover:

- How their mental health problem affects them on a day-to-day basis.
- What, if anything, they would like explained to their colleagues. It must be up to them if they want anyone to know but it may help their colleagues to understand any behaviour changes, periods of absence or changes in work.
- Whether there is anything in work which may be contributing to their mental health problem.
- If there is anything which would help them in their day-to-day work. There may be some obvious changes such as changing a particular piece of work they are struggling with or enabling them to have time away to seek medical or counselling support. It may simply be enough that you are aware of their mental health problem and can support them whenever possible.
- That they are a valued employee and that you will support them wherever possible through the use of Council policies and procedures which are in place to support employees with a mental health problem.
- Where the further resources are available that might help them. These can be found on the Council's intranet [Health and Wellbeing \(sharepoint.com\)](#).

The following table is not an exhaustive list but aims to provide some examples of adjustments which may be helpful for varying symptoms of general mental health problems.

Symptom	Possible adjustments
Psychological symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory difficulties • Difficulty concentrating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage team members to discuss concerns with you. • Carry out a wellness action plan. • Reduce demands if workload is identified as an issue. Provide additional time to complete tasks if needed or consider substituting with different tasks. • Offer alternative methods of communicating tasks and planning of work to assist memory. • Discuss whether an occupational health referral would be useful.
Psychological symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety • Depression • Panic attacks • Loss of confidence • Mood changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out a wellness action plan. • Support flexible working where possible. • Raise general awareness of issues around mental health and wellbeing within the team so colleagues are more likely to be supportive (do not disclose confidential information unless you have explicit consent to do so). • Signpost internally to wellbeing resources.
Fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider temporary adjustments to shift patterns or hours when doing the rota, particularly if fatigue is related to sleep disturbance. • Reduce physical tasks if possible. • Ensure regular breaks.

In some instances, it can be useful to seek occupational health advice to consider what adjustments could support a team member.

Supporting employees following a traumatic event

We recognise that, as a local authority, employees may from time-to-time experience traumatic incidents. As a result, some team members may experience some very typical symptoms in relation to some extreme circumstances and these may affect their health and ability to cope with day-to-day life.

What is psychological trauma?

The term trauma can refer to a wide range of traumatic, abusive or neglectful events or series of events (including Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma in adulthood) that are experienced as being emotionally or physically harmful or life threatening. Whether an event(s) is traumatic depends not only on our individual experience of the event, but also how it negatively impacts on our emotional, social, spiritual and physical wellbeing. We are all affected by traumatic events in different ways.

What is 'Trauma Informed' Practice?

Being 'Trauma Informed' means being able to recognise when someone may be affected by trauma, collaboratively adjusting how we work to take this into account and responding in a way that supports recovery, does no harm and recognises and supports people's resilience.

Being Trauma Informed is underpinned by the 5 R's:

1. Realising how common the experience of trauma and adversity is.
2. Recognising the different ways that trauma can affect people.
3. Responding by taking account of the ways that people can be affected by trauma to support recovery.
4. Opportunities to Resist re-traumatisation and offer a greater sense of choice and control, empowerment, collaboration and safety with everyone that you have contact with.
5. Recognising the central importance of Relationships.

For further information on trauma and trauma informed practice, please contact the Human Resources and Organisational Development Team.

Legal considerations

Treating team members experiencing mental health symptoms in the wrong way can increase the risk of claims of victimisation, harassment, direct discrimination and indirect discrimination on the grounds of disability.

Where a team member is experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition, such that their ability to perform day-to-day activities is substantially impacted, this may amount to a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act. This means that we have a legal duty to make all reasonable adjustments for the team member.

It is really important for us to treat mental health symptoms sensitively and take it seriously.

Things to avoid:

- Issuing a performance warning to a team member where the reason for the performance issues is connected to experiencing mental health symptoms could be disability discrimination.
- Issuing an absence warning to a colleague whose absence is connected to mental health symptoms could be disability discrimination.
- Failing to make reasonable adjustments for a team member experiencing mental health symptoms could be disability discrimination.

Implementation of existing Policies

The Council has a policy on Sickness Absence management which includes absence triggers based on duration or frequency of sickness absences.

Our Sickness Absence Policy sets out further details on reasonable adjustments which must be considered for employees experiencing a mental health problem which would be considered to be substantial, adverse and long-term.

What adjustments are reasonable is determined on a case-by-case basis. Reasonable adjustments can include making changes to premises, hours, duties and procedures, arranging training, acquiring or modifying equipment, and redeployment. Whether an adjustment is reasonable in a given situation will depend on issues such as its effectiveness in resolving the disadvantage to a team member with a disability, practicability, costs, associated disruption to business, and the resources available. Adjustments should be discussed with Human Resources.

You should treat any team member experiencing a mental health problem fairly, consistently and should not make them feel guilty about their condition. You should make reasonable adjustments to enable them to remain at or return to work and to perform to their full potential.

It is acknowledged that mental health symptoms may in some circumstances impact a person's performance at work, and therefore this should be taken into account when applying the Council's Disciplinary or Capability Policy.

Useful resources

As well as a variety of internal resources referred to in this guide and the associated policy, there are a number of links below that may be useful to consider and to signpost colleagues to.

Wellbeing Resources

Resources to support employees and further information can be found within the Wellbeing section of the [Council's Intranet](#).

Mental Health Awareness for Managers – Virtual

The aim of the course is to understand common mental health problems and how to cope with and deal with these in a positive way in your role as a manager.

Occupational Stress will be covered along with your responsibilities as a manager in dealing with this in terms of both organisational policy and under legislation.

Scottish Mental Health First Aid – Face to Face

This is a two-day course and is designed for everyone. It covers how to recognise someone in a mental health crisis, how to approach and support them and covers basic suicide intervention skills.

[Mentally Healthy Workplace Training](#) – iLearn

Available to all employees to raise awareness of mental health conditions in a workplace setting.

Trauma Informed Training – Virtual

Training sessions are available on [TURAS](#), the NHS Learning Management Centre. Contact Learning and Development for further details.

Trade Unions can be contacted for further advice and support.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/> – A starting point for anyone with a mental health condition.

[Remploy Disability Guide for Employers](#) - Remploy Disability Guide for employers contains practical advice for employers supporting disabled people and those with long-term health conditions in the workplace.



Managing workplace stress

A guide for managers

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Introduction

This guide accompanies our Mental Health and Wellbeing policy and is designed to help you assist your team members who are experiencing difficulties with workplace stress. It includes information about the internal and external support available and offers practical advice on what you can do to assist colleagues with their mental health and wellbeing.

What to expect from this guide.

This guide aims to help you to:

- Be confident about your role in managing and supporting people experiencing workplace stress.
- Understand and reduce the factors that could potentially impact a team member's levels of stress in the workplace.
- Seek to address any workplace stressors that impact a team member's performance and / or developing to their full potential.
- Identify appropriate workplace changes or adjustments to support team members and help them thrive at work.
- Foster an inclusive working environment in which everyone is treated fairly.

Every manager should know what workplace stress is, when it happens and how it can affect people.

Stress is someone's natural reaction to perceived excessive pressure; it is not a disease. Where pressure is short lived and not excessive, any effect is likely to be short lived and cause no harm. But if stress is excessive and goes on for some time it can lead to both physical and behavioural effects, such as raised blood pressure, headaches, dizziness, depression and even a mental health crisis.

Every person responds to pressures in different ways; an exciting challenge to one person is a worry to another. The levels of stress will vary depending on many factors such as motivation, support from managers, working relationships, work routine, colleagues, family and friends and of course personal resilience.

You play a key role in supporting your team members and should have regular conversations with them to try to identify their workplace stressors.

There is often still a stigma around workplace stress and consequently people going through it will often try to hide their symptoms or be uncomfortable talking about them. We want everyone to understand what workplace stress is and to be able to talk about it openly, without fear or embarrassment and so it is an important issue for us all, not just those experiencing the symptoms of it.

Your role as a people manager

You have an important role to play in ensuring that anyone experiencing workplace stress gets the support they need as soon as possible.

Good people management is fundamental to supporting employee health and wellbeing, spotting early signs of workplace stress and initiating early intervention. It will also help you to retain valuable skills and talent and reduce sickness absence.

As a people manager you are typically:

- The first point of contact if a team member needs to discuss their workplace stress concerns.
- Responsible for implementing the people management policies and practices that can help someone experiencing workplace stress to feel supported and to be effective in their role.
- Responsible for managing absence and keeping in touch if someone is off work ill because of their workplace stress, as well as supporting an effective return to work.

It is important to have an awareness of your own management and leadership style and the impact your behaviours might have on the team you manage.

The [HSE Stress Management competency indicator tool](#) can be used to show you how effective you are at preventing and reducing stress in your team. The hard copy tool can be accessed [here](#) should you wish to print it out rather than complete it online.

The level of trust you build with team members will determine the extent to which they are able to discuss topics such as workplace stress symptoms and any support or adjustments they need at work.

If there are regular and informal one-to-ones between you and your team members, this can provide an opportunity for a conversation about any changes to their work including identifying any stressors.

Some key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health, lower productivity and increased accident and sickness absence rates. are identified below:

- [Demands](#) – this includes issues such as workload (including too little work), work patterns and the work environment.
- [Control](#) – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
- [Support](#) – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- [Relationships](#) – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

- [Role](#) – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- [Change](#) – how local or organisational change impacts on the person's job.

It is important to understand that each person's situation is unique, and their experience and symptoms of workplace stress will differ. Asking team members how they are on a regular basis will help to create an open culture and encourage someone to raise any concerns.

Supporting a team member experiencing workplace stress

The key to managing a team member experiencing work-related stress is to take an early intervention approach to investigate and implement controls to reduce the source of pressure they are facing as far as is practicable. Open and regular communication between you and your team member is the simplest and most effective mechanism to do this.

Where your team member has specifically identified that they are experiencing work-related stress (and remain at work) then you should aim to meet with them at an early opportunity. You should explain to your team member that this initial meeting is to investigate the sources of pressure they are facing and if there is anything that can be done to prevent these pressures from building up.

You may find it useful to use the [Stress Self-Assessment](#) to help your team member identify the source of their workplace stressors. The Stress Self-Assessment can be issued in advance of the initial meeting for your team member to complete or could be used as the basis for a discussion during a meeting.

On completion of the [Stress Self-Assessment](#), you should aim to meet your team member within 7 calendar days to discuss, and where appropriate, agree any support or adjustment(s) that can be made within defined timescales. It is important to retain adequate records of any agreed actions and timescales to support any subsequent referral to Occupational Health.

As work related stress can be complex, resulting not only from pressure from work but also from a staff member's private life, it is advisable to gather some good professional advice at the earliest opportunity.

Although an early referral to Occupational Health in such circumstances may be beneficial, this should not normally be of benefit or occur prior to a meeting to try to understand the reasons for the issues and discuss reasonable actions to address them.

Where appropriate it would be beneficial to detail any support or adjustments that have already been put in place and/or those requested by an individual that have not reasonably been able to be put in place by submitting a copy of the [Stress Self-Assessment](#) alongside a referral to Occupational Health.

It is important to consider that in some circumstances your team member may perceive you to be part of the reason for their work-related stress. If this is the case, then your team member should be encouraged to discuss this where possible with you as their line manager, Human Resources or a trade union representative. If you think that this might be the case, you should discuss options with your HR Adviser. If your team member does not feel comfortable discussing specific matters with you, then they may wish to contact another manager from their service or someone from Human Resources in an attempt to resolve the issue.

For further guidance on supporting an employee experiencing work related stress please contact Human Resources.

Reducing the risk of stress by carrying out a risk assessment.

If you are aware that there are identified roles or known excessive workloads in your team, you must ensure a work-related stress risk assessment is carried out to identify and reduce workplace stressors as far as is reasonably practicable.

The [Work-related Stress Risk Assessment](#) has been developed as a step-by-step guide to support you to carry out a stress risk assessment and identify what steps can be taken to reduce the identified stressors.

It is crucial that employees' views are taken into consideration while carrying out a stress risk assessment. To evidence this, it is recommended that the final assessment is 'signed off' by employees or a representative group of employees. This risk assessment should be reviewed and updated at regular intervals and retained alongside other risk assessments.

This risk assessment aims to identify tasks in which there may be a potential to affect employees stress levels, such as dealing with the public, working within tight deadlines or other factors which may cause stress such as heavy workloads or staff shortages.

When completing a stress risk assessment, primary, secondary and tertiary control measures should be considered; primary interventions attempt to eliminate the sources of stress by focusing on changing the physical or socio-political environment to match individual needs; secondary interventions should focus on helping individuals manage stress without trying to eliminate or modify workplace stressors; and tertiary prevention strategies seek to assist individuals who are experiencing on-going problems emanating either from the work environment or their work lives.

For example:

A customer facing employee who regularly deals with customer complaints may be at risk of higher level of stress than employees who do not have regular contact with the public:

Possible primary control measures:

- Customers are asked to make complaints via an online complaints form on MyOrkney. which removes the customer facing aspect of this role.
- Customers can also be asked to make complaints in writing which removes the customer facing aspect of this role.
- All customer facing employees dealing with customer complaints are made aware of the Council's Policy on Unacceptable Actions and Challenging Behaviour by Service Users and Complainants.
- A mechanism to report threatening or violent behaviours is introduced so any trends can be tracked, investigated and reduced in the future.
- The underlying reason for the complaint is resolved resulting in a reduction of complaints.

Possible secondary control measures:

- Additional training on dealing with challenging customers is provided.
- Additional training on customer service is provided.

- A designated area away from members of the public to allow them to have an undisturbed break.
- Additional 1:1s with line manager.
- Shadowing arranged with more experienced colleagues.

Possible tertiary control measures (only if the stress cannot be eliminated or controlled):

- Employees are sign posted to training on mindful thinking techniques which may assist them to relax in stressful situations.
- Employees are sign posted to the Managing Personal Stress sessions.
- Employees are sign posted to counselling support.
- Employees are given additional 1:1s so that they understand that they have a caring and supportive line manager.

Further advice and support on carrying out a stress risk assessment can be found on the Council's Intranet [Health and Wellbeing \(sharepoint.com\)](#) and also on the [HSE Website](#) or seek advice from Health and Safety or Human Resources.

Please note, an employee or group of employees can request that a risk assessment is carried out by either their line manager, or whereby their line manager is the perceived cause of stress, by another manager within their service. Employees should first seek support from a manager from within their service.

Monitoring

To ensure standards are maintained, and improved where necessary, Orkney Islands Council will undertake ongoing monitoring of the organisation's overall performance.

It will also be the responsibility of each manager to monitor the employees under their supervision for symptoms of stress or other mental health problems and where appropriate provide them with early support, as far as is reasonable and/or possible.

What might you notice?	What could you do?
<i>An increase in unexplained absence or sick leave.</i>	Start by having a quiet word and ask them if everything is okay and if there is anything that you as their manager can do to support them. If your employee doesn't identify an issue then let them know that you are concerned about changes you have noticed recently and assure them that you are there to support them where possible, however it is also important to raise concerns regarding performance/attendance or conduct where necessary.
<i>Poor performance, Poor timekeeping or Poor decision making uncommunicative or moody behaviour.</i>	If work related stress is identified as an issue then explain that you have a responsibility to investigate the reasons for this by carrying out an individual stress risk assessment (see section below).

What might you notice?	What could you do?
	<p>If another mental health problem is identified as an issue e.g. depression/anxiety then ask them what could be done to support them in the workplace.</p> <p>Advise them of the free counselling services available to them which they may find useful.</p> <p>Make small adjustments as appropriate to help them in the short term e.g. removing a particular task allowing them time to catch up with other work.</p> <p>Keep a record of unusual behaviour/changes which may help you with any future Occupational Health referrals.</p> <p>If your employee's attendance or performance does not improve then consider a referral to the Council's Occupational Health provider.</p>

Useful resources

As well as a variety of internal resources referred to in this guide and the associated policy, there are a number of links below that may be useful to consider and to signpost colleagues to.

Wellbeing Resources

Resources to support employees and further information can be found within the Wellbeing section of the [Council's Intranet](#).

Managing Personal Stress – Face to Face

For all employees who are prone to stress and would like to investigate the reasons and potential solutions behind work related stress, contact Learning and Development for a place on a Managing Personal stress workshop.

iLearn resources including Dealing with stress, Relaxation and mindfulness.

Trade Unions can be contacted for further advice and support.

Work-related Stress Risk Assessment

Under Orkney Islands Council's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy where there is a risk of work-related stress as a line manager, you must carry out a risk assessment to identify and, where possible, control the risk of work related stress within your team.

A Work-related Stress Risk Assessment can either be carried out for a specific team or for a group of employees with the same job profile.

The 3 key steps required to carry out a Work-related Stress Risk Assessment are:

- Gathering data.
- Consider what should be achieved.
- Implement a Risk Assessment.

A Work-related Stress Risk Assessment can be carried out directly by you as a line manager or impartially by another manager from within the service.

Step 1 – Gather data:

The HSE Management Standards Indicator tool questionnaire is designed to help identify areas of work related pressures. The document can be printed off and provided to all employees; a representative sample group of employees; or used as a guide for discussion at a team meeting.

It is important to consider what other data may assist you, for example, exit interviews or employee absence history.

You can find the questionnaire by clicking on the following link: [HSE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS INDICATOR TOOL](#)

Step 2 - Consider what should be happening / states to be achieved:

Having an awareness of your own management and leadership style and the impact your behaviours might have on your teams is useful to consider here.

The completion of the [HSE Stress Management competency indicator tool](#) will show you how effective you are at preventing and reducing stress in your team.

It will be useful to consider whether the following are typical within your team:

- Team members are provided with adequate and achievable demands in relation to agreed hours of work.
- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands.
- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of team members.
- Team members' concerns about their work environment are addressed.
- Where possible, team members have control over their pace of work.
- Team members are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work.
- Where possible, team members are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work.
- Team members are encouraged to develop their skills.
- Team members have a say over when breaks can be taken.
- Team members are consulted over their work patterns.
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage team members to support their colleagues.
- Team members know what support is available and how and when to access it including:
 - Where to go with health and safety concerns.
 - Where to find Orkney Islands Council's HR policies and procedures.
 - Where to go to with work concerns.
- Team members know how to access the required resources to do their job.
- Team members receive regular and constructive feedback.
- Positive behaviours are promoted to avoid conflict and ensure fairness.

- Team members share information relevant to work.
- Unacceptable behaviour is dealt with appropriately.
- Team members are encouraged to report incidents of unacceptable behaviour.
- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon team members are compatible.
- The organisation provides information to enable team members to understand their role and responsibilities.
- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon team members are clear.
- Systems are in place to enable team members to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.
- Systems are in place to provide team members with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes.
- The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for team members to influence proposals.
- Team members are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, team members are given training to support any changes in their jobs.
- Team members are aware of timetables for changes.
- Team members have access to relevant support during changes.

Step 3 – Implement the Risk Assessment:

When deciding what actions are needed it is important to be realistic and to try and identify hotspots or priority areas to focus on first. It is important that team members, or their representatives, are involved in discussion at this stage as they may be best placed to suggest achievable and practical solutions.

The following risk assessment should be completed based on the outcome of the HSE Management Standards Indicator tool.

Work-related Stress Risk Assessment.

Team/Group/Job Role:

Date:

This document should be reviewed on an annual basis.

Type of Stressor.	Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category.	Existing workplace precautions already in place.	Further action to be taken.	Action owner.	Review Date.
Demands: Such as Workload, Work patterns, Work environment.					
Control how much say a person has in the way they do their work.					
Support					

Type of Stressor.	Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category.	Existing workplace precautions already in place.	Further action to be taken.	Action owner.	Review Date.
includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.					
Relationships includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.					
Role whether people understand their role within the					

Type of Stressor.	Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category.	Existing workplace precautions already in place.	Further action to be taken.	Action owner.	Review Date.
<p>organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.</p>					
<p>Change</p> <p>how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.</p>					

Manager signature:

Date:

Employee signature (where appropriate):

Date:

Review Date:

EXAMPLE

Work-related Stress Risk Assessment.

Team/Group/Job Role:

Date:

This document should be reviewed on an annual basis.

Type of Stressor.	Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category.	Existing workplace precautions already in place.	Further action to be taken.	Action owner.	Review Date.
<p>Demands Such as Workload, Work patterns Work environment.</p>	<p>Group identified the issue of too much work. This was being made much worse by regularly being interrupted by telephone calls.</p>	<p>Monthly 1:1 where workload forms part of the discussion. Team member working hours are monitored and addressed if regularly losing hours every month.</p>	<p>Deliver bespoke training to team members on managing workload – discussion will be required with Learning and development to determine whether this can be delivered in-house or bought in. Undertake a 'stop' 'start' 'continue'</p>	<p>Manager</p>	<p>3 months</p>

Type of Stressor.	Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category.	Existing workplace precautions already in place.	Further action to be taken.	Action owner.	Review Date.
			<p>activity to look at what tasks can be stopped/started or required to be continued. Try to remove unnecessary tasks.</p> <p>Team members encouraged to divert their mobile phones to voicemail for up to 1.5 hrs a day allowing them to complete other tasks undisturbed.</p>		
Control how much say a person has in the way they do their work.	Not identified as a particular issue.	Monthly 1:1's	N/A		

Type of Stressor.	Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category.	Existing workplace precautions already in place.	Further action to be taken.	Action owner.	Review Date.
	Team members generally felt they had a say over their work and how it was carried out.	Quarterly team meetings.			
Support includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.	Team members felt well supported by management however they felt that at times they could not ask colleagues for support due to them also having too much work. It was also difficult to turn to admin for support due to them being	Quarterly team meetings. Monthly 1:1's	Team away day to focus on developing solutions to improve communication between team. Stop, start continue activity as above. Discussion with admin manager	Team Manager All employees Team manager to review after 6 months. Team manager	6 months 6 months 6 months

Type of Stressor.	Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category.	Existing workplace precautions already in place.	Further action to be taken.	Action owner.	Review Date.
	part of a separate team.		to determine if any way two teams could work together during busy periods of work.		
Relationships includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.	Some team members identified some tension between colleagues.	Team meetings held every quarter.	Run a 'team away day' once a year involving team building activities. Make clear Orkney Islands Council's stance about bullying and harassment via a newsletter and webinar delivered by HR and OD's policies in practice team.	Team Manager Team manager Review issues regularly at 1:1's	6 months Review issues at 1:1's

Type of Stressor.	Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category.	Existing workplace precautions already in place.	Further action to be taken.	Action owner.	Review Date.
<p>Role Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.</p>	<p>Team members understand their role within their team however did not see how it fits with other teams within their service. Identified that they could work better together on particular issues.</p>	<p>Discussed regularly at 1:1's and team briefs.</p> <p>Wellbeing and Council Newsletters issued regularly via email – pinned on notice board for non-computer users.</p>	<p>Discuss with improvement team whether they could support with a Kaizen for improvement event to investigate how two teams can work better together to deliver service efficiently.</p> <p>Undertake a small 'back to the floor' event with appropriate teams to learn how teams work and how they can interact appropriately in the future.</p>	<p>Senior Practitioner</p> <p>Manager to agree with other teams.</p>	

Type of Stressor.	Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category.	Existing workplace precautions already in place.	Further action to be taken.	Action owner.	Review Date.
<p>Change How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.</p>	<p>Identified there to be very little appreciation of health and safety implications when change happened.</p> <p>The amount of change was identified as an issue.</p>	<p>Change to workload discussed regularly at quarterly team meetings.</p> <p>Regular 1:1's</p>	<p>Health and safety to become a standing item at all team meetings.</p> <p>Escalate the issue to senior management team to determine if additional resources could be put on or whether projects could be staggered.</p>	<p>Chairperson (rotated)</p> <p>Manager</p>	<p>6 months</p>

Stress - Self Assessment

Please note, this is intended to be used where a team member has identified stress to be caused, wholly or in part, by work.

The following questionnaire aims to focus on possible sources of work-related stress. The information you provide here will help you and your manager identify support mechanisms or reasonable adjustments which can be made to reduce the pressures you face in your work. It is unlikely that your manager will be able to take away all the pressure you face within your working day but will agree adjustments where possible.

Your first point of contact should always be your line manager however if you feel you are under stress created by your work but for whatever reason feel unable to discuss this with your line manager you should contact another manager from within your service or contact Human Resources.

Please complete the following questions that apply to you as honestly as you feel you can and return this to your line manager as agreed with them.

Cause of stress	Question	Is it a problem for you? <i>Use this space to detail what the problem is. If it is not a problem leave it blank</i>	What can you do about it? What would help you?	What can Line Management do about it? Can we make any adjustments?
Demands	<p>Do you feel that you have to work very fast or have unachievable deadlines?</p> <p>Are you able to take sufficient breaks?</p> <p>Do you feel pressured to work long hours?</p> <p>Do you feel you have the right resources to undertake the work required from you?</p>			

Cause of stress	Question	Is it a problem for you? <i>Use this space to detail what the problem is. If it is not a problem leave it blank</i>	What can you do about it? What would help you?	What can Line Management do about it? Can we make any adjustments?
Control	<p>Do you feel you have some sort of say over the way you work?</p> <p>Do you feel you have a say in how fast you work?</p>			
Support (Manager)	<p>Do you get enough supportive feedback on the work you do?</p> <p>Do you feel you could rely on your manager to help you with a work problem?</p>			

Cause of stress	Question	Is it a problem for you? <i>Use this space to detail what the problem is. If it is not a problem leave it blank</i>	What can you do about it? What would help you?	What can Line Management do about it? Can we make any adjustments?
	<p>Do you feel you can ask for support through emotionally demanding work?</p> <p>Do you have the opportunity to speak to your manager at team briefs or 1:1's?</p>			
Support (Peers)	<p>Do you feel your colleagues would help you if work became difficult?</p> <p>Do you get the respect at work you deserve from your colleagues?</p>			

Cause of stress	Question	Is it a problem for you? <i>Use this space to detail what the problem is. If it is not a problem leave it blank</i>	What can you do about it? What would help you?	What can Line Management do about it? Can we make any adjustments?
Relationships	<p>Are you personally harassed, in the form of unkind words or behaviour from members of the public or from work colleagues?</p> <p>Do you feel there is friction or anger between colleagues?</p>			
Role	<p>Are you clear about what is expected of you at work?</p> <p>Do you know how to go about getting your job done? <i>e.g. Do you think you have the right skills and training?</i></p>			

Cause of stress	Question	Is it a problem for you? <i>Use this space to detail what the problem is. If it is not a problem leave it blank</i>	What can you do about it? What would help you?	What can Line Management do about it? Can we make any adjustments?
Change	Do you have enough opportunities to question managers about change at work? When changes are made at work, are you clear about how they would work out in practice?			
Other issues	Is there anything else that is a source of stress for you, at work or at home that may contribute to work related stress?			

These questions focus on work related stress, however, there may be factors outside work, for example in your family life, which may have contributed to or added to the pressures at work. These may have made it harder to cope with demands at work that you would normally be able to cope with. You may want to share these issues with your manager – they may be able to help at work and make adjustments, for example, being more flexible or just being sympathetic to the pressures you are under.

Self Assessment Questionnaire – Action Plan

This action plan can be completed by your manager who will discuss with you if any adjustments can be taken to try to reduce the pressures you are facing. You should have the opportunity to meet with your manager to agree some of the adjustments and the timescales that can be put in place.

Identified source of stress	Is it possible to make an adjustment	Timescale
<p><i>e.g. Team member finds it difficult to answer customer complaints as they feel they don't have enough knowledge to provide them with an answer.</i></p>	<p><i>e.g. Team member will not be required to answer the telephone over the next 4 weeks and will shadow more experienced colleague while they respond to customer complaints.</i></p> <p><i>The team have agreed to produce a list of FAQ to support new members of staff in answering customer complaints</i></p>	<p><i>e.g. This arrangement will be reviewed in 4 weeks.</i></p> <p><i>4 weeks</i></p>

If your team member answers yes to questions “Are you unable to take sufficient breaks?” and “Do you feel pressurised to work long hours?” Line managers must consider the Working Time Regulations and if you require any further advice or guidance on this please contact Human Resources.

Manager signature:

Employee Signature:

Date:

Date:

This document should be retained by the line manager.



Appendix 4

Wellness Action Plan

Guide for
Line Managers





Helpful definitions

For the purpose of clarity, when we refer to 'mental health' in this guide we are using it in the broadest possible sense. Some useful definitions to terms used in this guide can be found below.

Mental health

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. How we feel can vary from good mental wellbeing to difficult feelings and emotions, to severe mental health problems.

Mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is the ability to cope with the day-to-day stresses of life, work productively, interact positively with others and realise our own potential. When we talk about wellbeing, we are referring to mental wellbeing.

Poor mental health

Poor mental health is when we are struggling with low mood, stress or anxiety. This might mean we're also coping with feeling restless, confused, short tempered, upset or preoccupied. We all go through periods of experiencing poor mental health – mental health is a spectrum of moods and experiences, and we all have times when we feel better or worse.

Mental health problems

We all have times when we struggle with our mental health. A mental health problem is when difficult experiences or feelings go on for a long time and affect our ability to enjoy and live our lives in the way we want. You might receive a specific diagnosis from your doctor, or just feel more generally that you are experiencing a prolonged period of poor mental health.

Common mental health problems

These include depression, anxiety, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). These make up the majority of the problems that lead to one in four people experiencing a mental health problem in any given year. Symptoms can range from the comparatively mild to very severe.

Severe mental health problems

These include conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder which are less common. They can have very varied symptoms and affect your everyday life to different degrees, and may require more complex and/or long-term treatments.

Work-related stress

Work-related stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them at work. Stress, including work-related stress, can be a significant cause of illness. It is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as increased capacity for error. Stress is not a medical diagnosis, but severe stress that continues for a long time may lead to a diagnosis of depression or anxiety, or other mental health problems.

Burnout

Burnout isn't technically a diagnosis, but instead refers to a collection of symptoms. You may feel exhausted, have little motivation for your job, feel irritable or anxious and you may see a dip in your work performance.



What is a Wellness Action Plan?

Given the high levels of stress and poor mental health we are seeing in the workplace, there is a growing demand for innovative and proactive ways of managing our mental health at work.

Guide for Line Managers What is a Wellness Action Plan?

The Wellness Action Plan is inspired by Mary Ellen Copeland's Wellness Recovery Action Plan® (WRAP®): an evidence-based system used worldwide by people to manage their mental health.

Wellness Action Plans are a personalised, practical tool we can all use – whether we have a mental health problem or not – to help us identify what keeps us well at work, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem at work should you be experiencing one.

As a manager, encouraging your team members to draw up a Wellness Action Plan gives them ownership of the practical steps needed to help them stay well at work or manage a mental health problem.

By giving your team an opportunity to draw up a Wellness Action Plan, they will be able to plan in advance and gain an awareness of what works and what doesn't work for them. A Wellness Action Plan can help your people to develop approaches to support their mental wellbeing.

It also opens up a dialogue between you and your team member, to help you better understand their needs and experiences and therefore better support their wellbeing. This in turn can lead to greater productivity, better performance and increased job satisfaction.

By regularly reviewing the agreed, practical steps in the Wellness Action Plan, you can support your team member to adapt it to reflect their experiences or new approaches they find helpful. By allowing the individual to take ownership of the process and of the Wellness Action Plan itself, you will be empowering them to feel more in control.

Wellness Action Plans are also particularly helpful during the return to work process, as they provide a structure for conversations around what support will help your team member and what workplace adjustments might be useful to discuss and consider.





**Supporting
your team
members
to develop
a Wellness
Action Plan**

How to get your team started with a Wellness Action Plan

Mind provides [three Wellness Action Plan templates](#) and associated guides for your team members to make use of depending on their predominant way of working. We have guides for:

- People working in a workplace
- People working remotely
- People who are hybrid working

Start by sharing our guides with your team and encouraging them to protect time in their calendar to reflect on what keeps them well at work and complete the appropriate Wellness Action plan template.

Completing a Wellness Action Plan can take some time, particularly if it is the first time a team member has ever been asked to consider what keeps them well at work, so look to schedule some time to discuss their completed Wellness Action Plan template at least a week after sharing the guides to allow time for a person to properly reflect on the questions being posed.

Discussing a Wellness Action Plan

While the Wellness Action Plan itself will provide a structure to your discussion with your team member, it's important to create an environment in which they feel safe and comfortable to share the details they've prepared. Consider the following in preparing for your conversation:

Choose an appropriate place

- When discussing mental health and wellbeing, it's important to make people feel comfortable so that they feel able to have an open and honest conversation. If holding your discussion in the workplace, find a private and quiet space.
- If your team member is working remotely, be sure to provide appropriate notice of the meeting so they can find an appropriate space to have the discussion. A person working from home may not feel comfortable having a conversation about mental health if sharing a working space with a partner or other members of their household.
- Sometimes a neutral space outside of the workplace like a coffee shop can help a team member to feel at ease. Depending on the location of any remote workers in your team, consider whether it might be possible to hold the meeting in person in a mutually agreeable location.

Listen and don't make assumptions

- It can be difficult for people to share information relating to their mental health. The Wellness Action Plan template will hopefully have provided your team member time and structure to order their thoughts and articulate their feelings in a way they're comfortable.
- Provide your team member the space to talk through their Wellness Action Plan in their own words in their own time. Listen and be respectful.
- Support your team member to explore the support they need
- We are all experts on our own mental health and the support or adjustments we may need. Don't make assumptions about what may or may not be of support to your team member and try not to influence them by offering your own suggestions unless it is sought.
- Workplace adjustments for poor mental health don't need to be costly or require significant changes. They can be simple. See our section on workplace adjustments for further information.

Carry out regular reviews

- A Wellness Action Plan is most effective when treated as a live, flexible document, so a regular feedback loop with your team member to discuss and assess what is working and what isn't is an important part of the process.
- Look to protect time to review wellbeing and your team member's Wellness Action Plan as part of regular catch-ups or one to ones and make any necessary changes or capture any learnings.
- If your team members are comfortable and happy to do so, you might consider the benefit of a session with your wider team to discuss any key considerations for ways of working together that are useful to share. Understanding one another's communication preferences for example can ensure the team work in a way that supports everyone to perform at their best. Some team members might be happy to share their written Wellness Action Plan in entirety, you might consider where might be best to save these documents to enable appropriate restricted access to the immediate team. But do remember: team members should be supported to only share as much as they are comfortable.



A note on confidentiality

Your team member owns their Wellness Action Plan. It should be written by the individual, expressing their own personal choices, experiences and needs.

The Wellness Action Plan should only be held confidentially between you and your team member and only read or shared with their permission.

If you are encouraging a team member to fill out a Wellness Action Plan as a result of being unwell, you might wish to ask whether they consent for a copy of it to be held with HR, alongside similar documentation such as an Occupational Health report or a Return to Work plan.

It should be up to the team member to determine whether they are happy for it to be held by HR or kept confidential between them and yourself as their manager.

In order to fulfil your duty of care to keep your staff members safe at work, you will be obliged to break confidentiality if they are experiencing a crisis. If you become aware that someone is at serious risk of harm, whether this is the employee or someone else, you should call the emergency services. When beginning a discussion about a Wellness Action Plan, it is best to ensure they understand the circumstances under which you might be required to share information they disclose.



Workplace Adjustments

As a result of completing a Wellness Action Plan, you might decide along with your team member that some workplace adjustments are needed in order to support them.

Guide for Line Managers Workplace Adjustments

Adjustments for mental health are often simple and it is best practice to offer support to all staff, whether or not they have a formal diagnosis or a disability according to the legal definition in the Equality Act 2010. Where a team member meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, further information regarding an employer's legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments can be found in the legal obligation section below.

Adjustments

Below are some types of adjustments that may help mitigate mental health symptoms and the impact on your team member's performance at work. They are not prescriptive, but people with lived experience of a mental health problem have found some or all of these useful.

It is important to be guided by the needs of your team member, however, this list could act as a prompt for you to explore symptoms and support needs together.

Changes to how team members perform their role:

- Flexible hours or change to start or finish times; change of workspace, for example quieter, more or fewer people around, dividing screens
- Working from home at certain times or on certain days in a given period
- Changes to break times
- Provision of quiet rooms
- Light-box or seat with more natural light
- Agreement to give a team member time off for appointments related to their mental health, such as therapy and counselling

Changes to the role itself (temporary or permanent):

- Temporarily changing duties, for example changing the balance of desk work and customer-facing work, reducing caseloads, changing shift patterns
- Reallocation of some tasks or amendments to the team member's job description or duties

Extra support:

- Redeployment to a more suitable role
- Increased supervision or support from manager, buddy or mentor
- Extra help with managing and negotiating workload
- Debriefing sessions after difficult calls, customers or tasks
- Mediation can help if there are difficulties between colleagues
- Access to a mental health support group or disability network group
- Identifying a 'safe space' in the workplace where the person can have some time out or access support
- Provision of information to promote self-care
- Encouraging to participate in activities that support good mental health such as exercise, meditation or eating healthily
- Providing regular opportunities to discuss, review and reflect on people's positive achievements – this can help people to build up positive self-esteem and develop skills to manage better their triggers for poor mental health

Legal obligation

Under the Equality Act 2010, there is a legal duty on employers to make reasonable adjustments for employees with a disability to enable that person to continue with their duties without being at a disadvantage compared to others.

What is 'reasonable' will depend on the individual circumstances of the team member and their role in your team. Adjustments should be considered on a case-by-case basis, but factors you might find helpful to consider include:

- The effectiveness of the adjustment in preventing the disadvantage
- The practicability of making the adjustment
- The extent to which making the adjustment would impact on service delivery
- Financial and other costs
- The potential impact on other colleagues

If you are in a position of assessing a proposed adjustment from an employee with a disability captured by the Equality Act 2010, you should make clear the considerations that will be taken into account in reviewing whether an adjustment is reasonable and practicable to implement.

However, as above, we recommend employers do not follow a rigid approach to workplace adjustments. Adjustments for mental health are often simple and it is best practice to offer support to all staff, whether or not they have a formal diagnosis or a disability according to the legal definition.

Allowing staff flexibility in how and when they perform their role, in line with business needs, can reap rewards in terms of loyalty, increased productivity and reduced absence, and can help normalise mental health and disability in the workplace.

Mental health and the Equality Act

A team member doesn't have to have a particular mental health condition to be legally protected under the Equality Act and entitled to reasonable workplace adjustments. What they do need to demonstrate is that their mental health problem is considered a disability.

'Disability' has a special legal meaning under the Equality Act, which is broader than the usual way we might understand the word. The Equality Act says you have a disability if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial, adverse, and long-term effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Long term can be considered an impairment that has lasted at least 12 months, is likely to last 12 months, or (if your mental health problem has improved) that it is likely to recur.

If a team member's mental health problem meets this definition of a disability, they will be entitled to the protections covered by the Act - including the legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments.



**Supporting
your own
wellbeing**

Guide for Line Managers Supporting your own wellbeing

Don't forget that your wellbeing as a manager is just as important as that of your team.

You cannot fill from an empty cup - to be an effective manager and leader who can support others, you need to be managing your own mental health and wellbeing.

Developing a Wellness Action Plan of your own with your manager can be a helpful way of keeping track of what keeps you well and ensuring you're looking after your own needs too.

For tips on how to promote your own wellbeing and proactively support your mental health at work have a look at our [tips for staying well at work](#) and information on the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#), available on the Mind website.

Boundaries

Setting, maintaining and managing boundaries is key for any line manager. Boundaries need to be there to keep people safe and this is especially important when supporting team members who are experiencing poor mental health.

As a line manager it's important to consider the following:

- Be clear about the time that you are able to provide in supporting a team member's mental wellbeing. For example, you can ensure that 121s and team debriefings have a set start and finish time and that these are clearly communicated in advance
- Be clear about your own skills and abilities in supporting team members and communicate these clearly at the start of any discussion around mental health and wellbeing so that boundaries are not over-stepped. Don't be afraid to reinforce or remind those that you are supporting of these throughout if needed
- Be clear in explaining next steps and managing expectations. Do not make promises you cannot keep
- Build your awareness of the organisation's policies, guidelines and resources that are available to you and the team
- Remember that you can also ask for help in supporting your team. If you need help, speak with your manager or consider approaching your HR team or wellbeing lead in your organisation



**Sources of
support for you
and your team**

Mind Infoline

Telephone: 0300 123 3393

Email: info@mind.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines

Mind provides confidential mental health information services. With support and understanding, Mind enables people to make informed choices.

The Infoline gives information on types of mental distress, where to get help, drug treatments, alternative therapies and advocacy.

The line is open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays).

Samaritans

Telephone: 116 123

Whatever you're going through, Samaritans are there to listen – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Samaritans offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way about whatever's getting to you. They won't judge or tell you what to do, they'll listen to you.

Mind Legal line

Telephone: 0300 466 6463

Email: legal@mind.org.uk

Mind's Legal line provides legal information and general advice on mental health related law. We can provide information about:

being detained under the Mental Health Act (sectioning)

- mental capacity
- community care
- discrimination and equality.

The line is open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays).

Shout, text support

Text: SHOUT to 85258

Shout is a free, confidential 24/7 text messaging support service for anyone who is struggling to cope. The service is anonymous and won't appear on any phone bill.

Side by Side, Mind's online community

[Side by Side](#), is a supportive online community where you can feel at home talking about your mental health and connect with others who understand what you are going through. We all know what it's like to struggle sometimes, but now there's a safe place to listen, share and be heard.

Whether you're feeling good right now, or having a hard time, it's a safe place to share experiences and listen to others. The community is available to all, 24/7. Side by Side is moderated daily from 8.30am to midnight.

CALM helpline

Telephone: 0800 58 58 58

The CALM helpline is there for anyone who needs to talk confidentially about a tough time they are experiencing. Calls are taken by trained staff who are there to listen, support, inform and signpost you to further information. The helpline is open from 5pm to midnight every day, 365 days a year.



We're Mind, the mental health charity. We're here to fight for mental health. For support. For respect. For you.

We provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. We campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

mind.org.uk

 **MindCharity**

 **mindforbettermentalhealth**

 **mindcharity**

 **mind_2**

Mind, 2 Redman Place, London E20 1JQ

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Wellness Action Plan

Guide for people
working in a workplace





Helpful definitions

For the purpose of clarity, when we refer to ‘mental health’ in this guide we are using it in the broadest possible sense.

Some useful definitions to terms used in this guide can be found below.

Mental health

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. How we feel can vary from good mental wellbeing to difficult feelings and emotions, to severe mental health problems.

Mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is the ability to cope with the day-to-day stresses of life, work productively, interact positively with others and realise our own potential. When we talk about wellbeing we are referring to mental wellbeing.

Poor mental health

Poor mental health is when we are struggling with low mood, stress or anxiety. This might mean we're also coping with feeling restless, confused, short tempered, upset or preoccupied. We all go through periods of experiencing poor mental health – mental health is a spectrum of moods and experiences and we all have times when we feel better or worse.

Mental health problems

We all have times when we struggle with our mental health. A mental health problem is when difficult experiences or feelings go on for a long time and affect our ability to enjoy and live our lives in the way we want. You might receive a specific diagnosis from your doctor, or just feel more generally that you are experiencing a prolonged period of poor mental health.

Common mental health problems

These include depression, anxiety, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). These make up the majority of the problems that lead to one in four people experiencing a mental health problem in any given year. Symptoms can range from the comparatively mild to very severe.

Severe mental health problems

These include conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder which are less common. They can have very varied symptoms and affect your everyday life to different degrees, and may require more complex and/or long-term treatments.

Work-related stress

Work-related stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them at work. Stress, including work-related stress, can be a significant cause of illness. It is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as increased capacity for error. Stress is not a medical diagnosis, but severe stress that continues for a long time may lead to a diagnosis of depression or anxiety, or other mental health problems.

Burnout

Burnout isn't technically a diagnosis, but instead refers to a collection of symptoms. You may feel exhausted, have little motivation for your job, feel irritable or anxious and you may see a dip in your work performance.



What is a Wellness Action Plan?

Given the high levels of stress and poor mental health we are seeing in UK workers, there is a growing demand for innovative and proactive ways of managing our mental health at work.

Guide for people working in a workplace What is a Wellness Action Plan?

The Wellness Action Plan is inspired by Mary Ellen Copeland's Wellness Recovery Action Plan® (WRAP®): an evidence-based system used worldwide by people to manage their mental health.

Wellness Action Plans are a personalised, practical tool we can all use – whether we have a mental health problem or not – to help us identify what keeps us well at work, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem at work should you be experiencing one.

It also opens up a dialogue with your manager or supervisor, in order for them to better understand your needs and experiences and ultimately better support your mental health, which in turn leads to greater productivity, better performance and increased job satisfaction.

We all have mental health just as we all have physical health, and this Wellness Action Plan has been designed to support us all to manage our mental health, wherever we are on the spectrum.

Wellness Action Plans are also particularly helpful during the return to work process, as they provide a structure for conversations around what support will help you and what workplace adjustments might be useful to discuss and consider with your manager.





**Using a
Wellness
Action Plan**

How to get started with a Wellness Action Plan

Plan some time in to fill in your Wellness Action Plan and think about the current pressures you're facing, the impact they're having on your mental health and wellbeing and what you can put in place to deal with these.

Being situated with your colleagues in a workplace can support social connection and aid collaborative activities, but it can present unique challenges. You might wish to reflect on the extent to which it enables you flexibility to carry out responsibilities you might have outside of work, the extent to which you can concentrate on work in a busy or loud environment and the extent to which it might be more difficult to communicate with colleagues across other teams or departments if they're working remotely.

It's useful to think about what support your manager can put in place to support you and discuss these topics with those in your household if working from home.

Once you've completed your Wellness Action Plan, it's helpful to review it monthly. This can help you log any learning or helpful practices from the previous month. It's also beneficial to understanding your triggers and to make sure you're adapting to any changes in your work arrangements as we continue to emerge from the pandemic. Things can change daily so it's important to keep on top of identifying what keeps you well and check the things you've put in place are working.

Ways of working

Following the emergence of the coronavirus, a number of organisations have been working in new ways with an increased number of employees working remotely, across a greater range of locations and with increasing levels of flexibility. These new ways of working can present new challenges as well as opportunities for improvement. Many of these may be unique to specific business units or teams or to particular roles within a business.

As you and your organisation begin to recognise these challenges and understand how best to address these, you may find it useful to update your Wellness Action Plan to reflect these changes.

Sharing your Wellness Action Plan

A Wellness Action Plan can be a useful self-reflective tool, but if you think it would be helpful, you can share your completed Wellness Action Plan with your manager to support conversations about your wellbeing.

Your manager can help identify when you may be becoming unwell or help you put things in place to help you stay well. You could also share it with colleagues to promote openness and understanding so you can work effectively with each other and offer support.



A note on confidentiality

You own your Wellness Action Plan. It should only be read and shared with your permission.

If you are filling out a Wellness Action Plan as a result of being unwell, your manager may ask whether you consent for a copy of it to be held with HR, along with any other information about your wellbeing, such as an Occupational Health report or a Return to Work plan. It should be up to you whether you are happy for it to be held by HR or kept confidential between yourself and your manager. If in doubt, check your company policy on this.



**Top tips for
staying well
at work**

Identify your triggers

We're all different. What affects someone else's mental wellbeing won't necessarily affect yours in the same way. Whether it's challenges in work or the current circumstance we all find ourselves in, we all have times where we feel stressed, upset or find it difficult to cope. Working out what triggers poor mental health for you can help you anticipate problems and find solutions. Whether it's taking in too much negative news and media regarding the current circumstance or a heavy workload. Finding out your triggers can help.

Take time for yourself

Spending time on yourself is essential for your wellbeing, and helps you be more resilient. It's vital to prioritise your own needs sometimes, rather than the demands of your work. Ignoring your needs can lead to stress and burn-out. Take short breaks throughout the day as well as at least half-an-hour to get some food. A short break can help you feel recharged and refreshed. It can also give you a different perspective on any work problems.

Be kind to yourself

It's important to be kind to yourself and remember it's okay to not be okay. We may feel different from one day to the next as situations change so it's important to be kind to yourself.

Connect with colleagues

Evidence suggests that feeling close to and valued by other people is a basic human need. Good relationships are important to our wellbeing. Explore the social opportunities that might be available through your employer such as fitness classes or book clubs. Joining lunch and learn sessions or striking up conversations with colleagues over a coffee in the break room can also be great ways to build professional relationships.

Celebrate the small successes

We all want to contribute and make a difference to the things we work on, we want to feel accomplished and that we've achieved something. So it's important to celebrate the successes, big and small. Some days that might mean a great piece of work, other days it could mean doing housework or making the bed. Try to identify one small thing each day that you can accomplish.

Quick tip: Set boundaries

It can feel easy to bring work home, especially if you've had experience of working remotely. Consider how you communicate clear boundaries with colleagues through making clear your working hours using your diary or email signature and investigate how you can properly manage work notifications to your digital devices outside of working hours.

Quick tip:

Get the basics right

Quality sleep, a good diet and proper hydration can make all the difference to your work day. Be sure to keep yourself well hydrated throughout the day and if struggling with sleep consider consulting Mind's guidance.

Ask for help

If you feel your workload is spiralling out of control, take the opportunity to discuss it with your manager or supervisor. Discuss what work you should prioritise and reflect on what is possible to negotiate in terms of timelines and deadlines as well as the scope or scale of the work to be completed. If you're encountering a bottleneck related to other teams, departments or staff, discuss what support your manager might be able to provide in addressing some of these issues.

Learn to say no

It can be easy to take on more work than you can manage, but over time this can lead to stress and burnout. Try to protect your mental health by politely saying no to extra demands when you've not got capacity. If you feel unable to decline additional work, be sure to clarify with your manager what existing work should be deprioritised or dropped to accommodate it within your workday.



Wellness Action Plan template

A Wellness Action Plan reminds us what we need to do to stay well at work – whether working from a physical workplace or remotely – and details what we can do to look after our own mental health and wellbeing.

It also helps us develop an awareness of our working style, stress triggers and responses, and enables us to communicate these with our manager and colleagues.

How you work

What are your current and intended working arrangements?

You might wish to highlight any flexibility you've agreed with your manager, for example working hours.

Are there any characteristics of your individual working style that you'd like to make your manager or colleagues aware of?

For example a preference for face to face conversations or digital communications when being allocated work including negotiation on deadlines before they are set, a need for adequate time to prepare prior to meetings or creative tasks, having access to a mentor/buddy for questions you might not want to contact your manager about, having a written plan of work in place which can be reviewed and amended regularly, clear quality criteria for work outputs if you have a tendency to over-work a task, tendency to have particularly high or low energy in the morning or in the afternoon.

Staying mentally healthy at work

What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?

For example, taking an adequate lunch break away from your workspace, getting some exercise before or after work or in your lunch break, natural light at your workspace, opportunities to get to know colleagues.

Are there any situations or behaviours that can trigger poor mental health for you whilst working?

For example, conflict at work, organisational change, tight deadlines, something not going to plan, difficulties in contacting colleagues whilst they are working remotely.

What can you, your manager or colleagues put in place to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work and minimise these triggers?

For example, regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments.

Experiencing poor mental health at work

How might experiencing poor mental health impact on your work?

For example, you may find it difficult to make decisions, struggle to prioritise work tasks, difficulty with concentration, drowsiness, confusion, headaches.

Are there any early warning signs that might be noticed by your manager or colleagues when you are starting to experience poor mental health?

Experiencing poor mental health at work

What actions would you like to be taken if any of these early warning signs of poor mental health are noticed by your manager or colleagues?

For example, talk to you discreetly about it, contact someone that you have asked to be contacted.

Is there anything additional you would like to share that would support your mental health at work?



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Wellness Action Plan

Guide for people who
are hybrid working

A photograph of a person with glasses and a dark shirt smiling on a laptop screen. A thick, green, chalk-like circle is drawn around the person on the screen. In the foreground, a hand is visible, gesturing towards the screen. An open book is on the desk next to the laptop.

Appendix 6



Helpful definitions

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It also opens up a dialogue with your manager or supervisor, in order for them to better understand your needs and experiences and ultimately better support your mental health, which in turn leads to greater productivity, better performance and increased job satisfaction.

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Using a Wellness Action Plan

How to get started with a Wellness Action Plan

Plan some time in to fill in your Wellness Action Plan and think about the current pressures you're facing, the impact they're having on your mental health and wellbeing and what you can put in place to deal with these.

Hybrid working, in addition to a great range of benefits, can present unique challenges. You might wish to reflect on the extent to which difficulties communicating with colleagues across other teams or departments operating to different work patterns, difficulties juggling other personal commitments around hybrid work patterns and establishing clear home and work-life boundaries are sources of poor mental health and wellbeing for you.

It's useful to think about what support your manager can put in place to support you and discuss these topics with those in your household if working from home.

Once you've completed your Wellness Action Plan, it's helpful to review it monthly. This can help you log any learning or helpful practices from the previous month. It's also beneficial to understanding your triggers and to make sure you're adapting to any changes in your work arrangements as we continue to emerge from the pandemic. Things can change daily so it's important to keep on top of identifying what keeps you well and check the things you've put in place are working.

Ways of working

Following the emergence of the coronavirus, a number of organisations have been working in new ways with an increased number of employees working remotely, across a greater range of locations and with increasing levels of flexibility. These new ways of working can present new challenges as well as opportunities for improvement. Many of these may be unique to specific business units or teams or to particular roles within a business.

As you and your organisation begin to recognise these challenges and understand how best to address these, you may find it useful to update your Wellness Action Plan to reflect these changes.

Sharing your Wellness Action Plan

A Wellness Action Plan can be a useful self-reflective tool, but if you think it would be helpful, you can share your completed Wellness Action Plan with your manager to support conversations about your wellbeing.

If you're working from home, it might also be beneficial to share with a family member or friend in your household if that's possible.

Your manager and the people in your household can help identify when you may be becoming unwell or help you put things in place to help you stay well. You could also share it with colleagues to promote openness and understanding so you can work effectively with each other and offer support.



A note on confidentiality

You own your Wellness Action Plan. It should only be read and shared with your permission.

If you are filling out a Wellness Action Plan as a result of being unwell, your manager may ask whether you consent for a copy of it to be held with HR, along with any other information about your wellbeing, such as an Occupational Health report or a Return to Work plan. It should be up to you whether you are happy for it to be held by HR or kept confidential between yourself and your manager. If in doubt, check your company policy on this.



**Top tips for
staying well
at work**

Identify your triggers

We're all different. What affects someone else's mental wellbeing won't necessarily affect yours in the same way. Whether it's challenges in work or the current circumstance we all find ourselves in, we all have times where we feel stressed, upset or find it difficult to cope. Working out what triggers poor mental health for you can help you anticipate problems and find solutions. Whether it's taking in too much negative news and media regarding the current circumstance or a heavy workload. Finding out your triggers can help.

Take time for yourself

Spending time on yourself is essential for your wellbeing, and helps you be more resilient. It's vital to prioritise your own needs sometimes, rather than the demands of your work. Ignoring your needs can lead to stress and burnout. Take short breaks throughout the day as well as at least half-an-hour to get some food. A short break can help you feel recharged and refreshed. It can also give you a different perspective on any work problems.

Quick tip: Simple self-care

Not having to get formally dressed for work can be great. But if you feel low, putting on some nice clothes or having a five-minute grooming session is an easy boost for your self-esteem that can help you feel work-ready.

Be kind to yourself

It's important to be kind to yourself and remember it's okay to not be okay. We may feel different from one day to the next as situations change so it's important to be kind to yourself.

Quick tip: Create a home workstation

It's important to try create boundaries if your home is your office. Having a dedicated area of the house or your room to work from can help delineate your work time from your leisure time. If you're unable to create a dedicated workspace, try ensure you create boundaries through packing away your work equipment at the end of your work day.

Connect with others

Working remotely can be a lonely job. Evidence suggests that feeling close to and valued by other people is a basic human need. Good relationships are important to our wellbeing. Try joining morning or evening online exercise classes, joining virtual interest groups or even starting your own.

Celebrate the small successes

We all want to contribute and make a difference to the things we work on, we want to feel accomplished and that we've achieved something. So it's important to celebrate the successes, big and small. Some days that might mean a great piece of work, other days it could mean doing housework or making the bed. Try to identify one small thing each day that you can accomplish.

Quick tip: Get the basics right

Quality sleep, a good diet and proper hydration can make all the difference to your work day. Be sure to keep yourself well hydrated throughout the day and if struggling with sleep consider consulting [Mind's guidance](#).



Wellness Action Plan template

A Wellness Action Plan reminds us what we need to do to stay well at work – whether working from a physical workplace or remotely – and details what we can do to look after our own mental health and wellbeing.

It also helps us develop an awareness of our working style, stress triggers and responses, and enables us to communicate these with our manager, colleagues and others in our household.

How you work

What are your current and intended working arrangements?

You might wish to detail the days you plan to work in your workplace and those working remotely, in addition to details of your remote workspace, for example whether working in a shared workspace, bedroom or communal home space. You might also wish to highlight any flexibility you've agreed with your manager, for example working hours.

Workplace

Remote workspace

Are there any characteristics of your individual working style that you'd like to make your manager or colleagues aware of?

For example a preference for face to face conversations or digital communications when being allocated work including negotiation on deadlines before they are set, a need for adequate time to prepare prior to meetings or creative tasks, having access to a mentor/buddy for questions you might not want to contact your manager about, having a written plan of work in place which can be reviewed and amended regularly, clear quality criteria for work outputs if you have a tendency to over-work a task, tendency to have particularly high or low energy in the morning or in the afternoon.

Staying mentally healthy at work

What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?

For example, taking an adequate lunch break away from your workspace, getting some exercise before or after work or in your lunch break, natural light at your workspace, opportunities to get to know colleagues. You may wish to make a distinction between the activities you undertake whilst working remotely compared to when in the workplace e.g. participating in workplace-based fitness class at the end of the work day and visiting the gym on your lunch break whilst working from home.

Workplace

Remote workspace

Are there any situations or behaviours that can trigger poor mental health for you whilst working?

For example, conflict at work, organisational change, tight deadlines, something not going to plan, difficulties in contacting colleagues whilst working remotely.

Workplace

Remote workspace

Staying mentally healthy at work

What can you, your manager or colleagues put in place to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work and minimise these triggers?

For example, regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments.

Workplace

Remote workspace



Experiencing poor mental health at work

How might experiencing poor mental health impact on your work?

For example, you may find it difficult to make decisions, struggle to prioritise work tasks, difficulty with concentration, drowsiness, confusion, headaches.

Are there any early warning signs that might be noticed by others when you are starting to experience poor mental health?

Managers and colleagues whilst working in the workplace

Managers and colleagues whilst working remotely

Any person living in your household whilst working from home

Experiencing poor mental health at work

What actions would you like to be taken if any of these early warning signs of poor mental health are noticed by others?

For example, talk to you discreetly about it, contact someone that you have asked to be contacted.

Managers and colleagues whilst working in the workplace

Managers and colleagues whilst working remotely

Any person living in your household whilst working from home

Is there anything additional you would like to share that would support your mental health at work?



We're Mind, the mental health charity. We're here to fight for mental health. For support. For respect. For you.

We provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. We campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

mind.org.uk

 **MindCharity**

 **mindforbettermentalhealth**

 **mindcharity**

 **mind_2**

Mind, 2 Redman Place, London E20 1JQ

Mind is a registered charity in England (no. 219830) and a registered company (no. 424348) in England and Wales.



Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is to improve the work of Orkney Islands Council by making sure it promotes equality and does not discriminate. This assessment records the likely impact of any changes to a function, policy or plan by anticipating the consequences, and making sure that any negative impacts are eliminated or minimised and positive impacts are maximised.

1. Identification of Function, Policy or Plan	
Name of function / policy / plan to be assessed.	Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
Service / service area responsible.	HR and OD
Name of person carrying out the assessment and contact details.	Andrew Groundwater
Date of assessment.	1 March 2023
Is the function / policy / plan new or existing? (Please indicate also if the service is to be deleted, reduced or changed significantly).	Revised policy to replace the Stress at Work policy.

2. Initial Screening	
What are the intended outcomes of the function / policy / plan?	To provide an updated policy position on supporting our people with mental health and wellbeing including workplace stress. To raise awareness and continue to further support employees in the workplace.
Is the function / policy / plan strategically important?	No.
State who is, or may be affected by this function / policy / plan, and how.	All employees and prospective employees.

<p>How have stakeholders been involved in the development of this function / policy / plan?</p>	<p>Engagement through Trade Unions as representatives of employees.</p>
<p>Is there any existing data and / or research relating to equalities issues in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. consultations, national surveys, performance data, complaints, service user feedback, academic / consultants' reports, benchmarking (see equalities resources on OIC information portal).</p>	<p>Nationally, 1 in 4 people are likely to experience mental health problems.</p> <p>Many mental health problems can be covered under the Equality Act where it has a long-term effect on a person's normal day-to-day activity.</p> <p>Evidence shows that there are many determinants in our lives which influence our mental health and determinants of mental health interact with inequalities in society, putting some people at a far higher risk or poor mental health than others.</p> <p>For example, people who identify as LGBT+ have higher rates of common mental health problems and lower wellbeing than heterosexual people, and the gap is greater for older adults (over 55 years) and those under 35 than during middle age.</p> <p>Women are ten times as likely as men to have experienced extensive physical and sexual abuse during their lives and of those who have, 36% have attempted suicide, 22% have self-harmed and 21% have been homeless.</p> <p>Deaf people are twice as likely to experience mental health difficulties and over 80% of adults with autism have at least one mental health condition.</p> <p>National evidence also shows that access to mental health support is not equally distributed across the population. Groups facing particularly high levels of mental health also often experience the greatest difficulty in accessing services.</p> <p>https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/publications/mental-health-inequalities-factsheet</p>
<p>Is there any existing evidence relating to socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in this policy area? Please summarise. E.g. For people living in poverty or for people of low income. See The Fairer Scotland Duty Guidance for Public Bodies for further information.</p>	<p>(Please complete this section for proposals relating to strategic decisions).</p> <p>Evidence shows that some groups of people have far poorer mental health than others, often reflecting social disadvantage. In many cases, those same groups of people have less access to effective and relevant support for their mental health, and when they do get support, their experiences and outcomes are often poorer.</p> <p>Poverty, deprivation and economic inequality can all have significant and detrimental impact on mental and physical health and rates of depression, serious mental illness and suicide are evidenced to worsen with increased poverty.</p> <p>https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/publications/briefing-58-poverty-economic-inequality-and-mental-health</p>

Could the function / policy have a differential impact on any of the following equality areas?	(Please provide any evidence – positive impacts / benefits, negative impacts and reasons). The overall aim of this policy is to further improve support for all employees regarding mental health and wellbeing and to provide a clear route for accessing advice, guidance and tools to support the promotion of good mental health and wellbeing as well as specific support for those experiencing symptoms of particular mental health problems.
1. Race: this includes ethnic or national groups, colour and nationality.	This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups. It is evidenced that some ethnic groups can experience higher rates of some mental health conditions and can also face greater disadvantage in accessing support for mental health problems.
2. Sex: a man or a woman.	This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups. It is evidenced that there can be differences in outcomes relating to mental health and wellbeing based on sex.
3. Sexual Orientation: whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups. It is evidenced that there can be higher rates of some mental health problems and lower wellbeing for people who identify as LGBT+ in comparison to heterosexual people.
4. Gender Reassignment: the process of transitioning from one gender to another.	This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups. It is evidenced that there can be higher rates of some mental health problems and lower wellbeing for people who identify as trans in comparison to those who do not.
5. Pregnancy and maternity.	This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups. Specific mental health and wellbeing problems can impact people who are pregnant or are on maternity.
6. Age: people of different ages.	This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups. Evidence shows that there are differences in outcomes for different age groups experiencing symptoms and accessing support relating to mental health problems.
7. Religion or beliefs or none (atheists).	This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups.
8. Caring responsibilities.	This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups. Evidence shows that there can be differences in mental health outcomes for those with additional caring responsibilities.
9. Care experienced.	This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups. Evidence shows that there can be differences in mental health outcomes for those who are care experienced.
10. Marriage and	This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups.

Civil Partnerships.	
11. Disability: people with disabilities (whether registered or not).	(Includes physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, mental health) This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups. Evidence shows there are differences in outcomes for people with disabilities experiencing symptoms and accessing support relating to mental health problems.
12. Socio-economic disadvantage.	This policy aims to have a positive impact for all groups. Evidence shows there are differences in outcomes for people who experience socio-economic disadvantage and who are experiencing symptoms and accessing support relating to mental health problems.

3. Impact Assessment

Does the analysis above identify any differential impacts which need to be addressed?	No specific negative impacts identified.
How could you minimise or remove any potential negative impacts?	N/A
Do you have enough information to make a judgement? If no, what information do you require?	N/A

4. Conclusions and Planned Action

Is further work required?	No.
What action is to be taken?	Implementation of the policy will be monitored for effectiveness.
Who will undertake it?	HR and OD team.
When will it be done?	Ongoing through available statistics reporting and other feedback.
How will it be monitored? (e.g. through service plans).	Through usual evaluation and review of policies within HR and OD service.

Signature: [REDACTED]

Date: 08/03/2023

Name: ALISON M SKEA

(BLOCK CAPITALS).

Please sign and date this form, keep one copy and send a copy to HR and Performance. A Word version should also be emailed to HR and Performance at hrsupport@orkney.gov.uk