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Cymru (AaGIC)
Health Education and
Improvement Wales (HEIW)

Health Education and Improvement Wales

Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace Policy

Policy Owner: Director of Workforce & OD

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1. Introduction

HEIW is committed to promoting and protecting the mental wellbeing of its workforce and recognises the importance for individuals' physical health, social wellbeing and productivity.

HEIW acknowledges that many factors can influence the mental wellbeing of individual employees. Understanding and addressing the factors which affect people's mental wellbeing at work can have a wide range of benefits, both for individuals and the organisation. Mental wellbeing in the workplace is relevant to all employees and everyone can contribute to improved mental wellbeing at work.

Addressing workplace mental wellbeing can help strengthen the protective factors of employment, reduce risk factors for mental ill health and improve general health. It can also help promote the employment of people who have experienced mental ill health and provide timely support.

We recognise:

- That we have a duty to understand the needs and impacts of mental wellbeing on those who share 'protected characteristics' and those who do not as identified in appendix 1 Integrated Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and have appropriate measures in place for their support;
- The link between home and the workplace and the need to create balanced working lives;
- That the causes or contributors of stress may often lie outside the workplace;
- Whilst some people will acknowledge their experience of mental health in a frank and open way, others fear that stigma will jeopardise any opportunity to gain employment or development
- Given appropriate support, most people who have experienced mental ill health continue to work successfully as do many with ongoing issues.

[The NHS Wales Health and Wellbeing Charter \(pdf\)](#) developed in 2014 outlines how NHS organisations must create a culture of care for all staff and how NHS organisations can achieve this aim by promoting health and wellbeing initiatives and providing access to support mechanisms. Two further Health and Wellbeing products have been developed by NHS Wales staff [Our Wellbeing Matters \(pdf\)](#) and [Manager Wellbeing Matters](#) which signposts staff and managers to information and resources.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to support employees at all levels in understanding mental wellbeing in the workplace, the need to challenge stigma and to create a inclusive, happy and healthy workplace. This workplace mental wellbeing policy covers the following key aspects:

Promotion of mental wellbeing through:

- providing information and raising awareness
- providing opportunities for employees to look after their mental wellbeing
- promoting policies and practices that promote wellbeing

Developing skills for managers and supervisors to:

- understand the mental wellbeing needs of employees in line with the principles of [Compassionate Leadership](#)
- support them in developing the skills needed to have effective and sensitive conversations
- have the confidence to make decisions in the best interest for everyone, including access to facilitated support, information and Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- promote the mental wellbeing of employees and understand [what mental health problems are](#).

Providing support to employees through:

- providing an inclusive work environment that promotes and supports mental wellbeing for all
- offering assistance, advice, support and signposting for people who are experiencing a mental health episode while in employment
- support for employees returning to work after a period of absence

Helping people get back to work after a period of absence through:

- inclusive recruitment practices
- making reasonable / tailored adjustments
- treating, recognising and respecting employees as individuals with their own needs and circumstances
- retaining employees who experience mental wellbeing episodes whilst in employment

3. Scope

Mental health issues can affect anyone, regardless of their position in the organisation. This policy applies equally to all employees of HEIW, secondees and those with temporary contracts.

The implementation of this policy will be supported by the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, HEIW management development programme and key policies including: Health and Safety Policy, Managing Attendance at Work Policy, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy, Dignity at Work, Flexible Working Policy, Agile Working Policy, Carers Policy, Pregnancy and Maternity policies and procedures, All Wales Menopause Policy, Domestic Abuse Policy, Transitioning at Work Policy (to be developed) Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy and where necessary link into relevant accreditation programmes including TUC Dying to Work programme and Time to Change activity.

4. Definition

In many ways, mental wellbeing is just like physical health: everybody has it and we need to take care of it.

Good mental wellbeing means being generally able to think, feel and react in the ways that you need and want to live your life. But if you go through periods of low mental wellbeing these can lead to the development of diagnosable mental health conditions.

Mental health conditions affect around one in four people in any given year. They range from common problems, such as [depression](#) and [anxiety](#), to rarer problems such as [schizophrenia](#) and [bipolar disorder](#).

5. Principles

- To create a workplace environment that promotes the mental wellbeing of all employee
- To raise awareness of the importance of mental wellbeing in HEIW
- To promote a culture of trust, co-operation and mutual respect, where all employees treat each other with dignity
- To develop an inclusive culture that is supportive and non-judgmental of people with mental health conditions
- To clarify HEIW's commitment to providing a culture in which managers and senior leaders are proactive in the identification of opportunities to enhance employee well-being and reducing avoidable stressors
- To provide information for employees at point of induction and throughout their employment of the internal support available
- To help employees recognise the early signs of poor mental wellbeing and provide timely, effective and appropriate assistance for employees in managing stress in themselves and in others.
- To encourage better individual recognition and management of personal health issues, which are particularly important for the management of mental wellbeing
- To recognise the links between mental wellbeing and physical health and where appropriate provide advice and assistance

6. Objectives

Objective 1: To develop a culture based on trust, support and mutual respect.

Policy actions:

- As an employer we aim to create and promote an inclusive culture where employees can talk openly about their job and mental wellbeing without fear of discrimination or reprisal

- Give non-judgemental and proactive support to employees who experience mental health conditions
- Deal sympathetically with employees' mental wellbeing and acknowledge there can be multiple triggers for low mental wellbeing which may have an impact on their performance
- Give new employees a comprehensive induction programme providing an understanding of the organisation, the established policies and procedures, and the role they are expected to carry out

Objective 2: To provide support and assistance for employees experiencing low mental wellbeing or mental health conditions

Policy actions:

- Ensure employees who are experiencing difficulties with their mental wellbeing are treated fairly, consistently and are not made to feel guilty
- Encourage employees to utilise support available to them i.e. Employee Assistance Programme, their own GP, or a counsellor of their choice
- Where appropriate investigate the contribution of working conditions and other organisational factors to low or worsen mental wellbeing and remedy this where possible
- In cases of long-term sickness absence, put in place, where possible, a phased return to work utilising Managing Attendance at Work Policy and procedures
- Make every effort to identify suitable alternative employment, in full discussion with the employee, where a return to the same job is not possible due to identified risks or other factors
- Treat all matters relating to individual employees and their mental wellbeing in the strictest confidence and only share in circumstances of safeguarding or on a 'need to know' basis with consent from the individual concerned

Objective 3: To positively encourage the employment of people who have experienced mental health conditions by providing fair and inclusive recruitment and selection procedures.

Policy actions:

- Show a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health conditions, including positive statements within recruitment literature, policies and procedures
- Ensure that all employees involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health conditions, understand the impact of unconscious bias and their duties under the [Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#) including reasonable adjustments
- Make it clear, in any recruitment or occupational health check undertaken, that people who have experienced mental health

conditions will not be discriminated against and that any disclosure of a mental health condition will only be used where necessary to assess and provide the right level of support or to make tailored reasonable adjustments

- Do not make assumptions that a person with a mental health condition will be more vulnerable to workplace stress or take more time off than any other employee or job applicant

7. Roles and responsibilities

Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to making this workplace mental wellbeing policy effective.

Senior Leaders have a responsibility to:

- Ensure, through good communication, that employees are aware of the provisions of this policy including the action everyone can take to minimise the risk of work-related stress and of the support services available to them
- Support the training and provision of information for line managers on effective management practices and related topics as highlighted in section 8 training and awareness raising
- Promote specialist counselling for employees through the Employee Assistance Programme, regardless of whether the challenges are work related or personal
- Encourage positive attitude to personal health and growth through participation in health promotion activities and resources
- Self-reflect and understand triggers and signs that can lead to low mental wellbeing

Line Managers have a responsibility to:

- Ensure good communication between themselves and their team, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes that affect everyone
- Support employees who are having or have experienced mental health conditions whether in work or outside of work
- Ensure employees are provided with the resources and training required to carry out their job
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that employees are not overworking
- Monitor holidays to ensure that team members are taking their full entitlement
- Ensure team members are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities as part of PADR
- Support employees who have been off sick with mental health difficulties and work with them to create a planned return to work.
- Refer employees to Employee Assistance Programme or specialist

- agencies as required
- Ensure they accept and undertake all training opportunities about the impacts and management of mental health in the workplace

People Team have a responsibility to:

- Provide advice and support to employees and managers in relation to this policy
- Monitor and report on levels of sickness absence which relate to mental wellbeing
- Provide training packages for manager as part of management development program

Workforce and OD Health and Wellbeing Team:

- Develop inclusive health and wellbeing strategy for the organisations, including training opportunities
- Create opportunities for health and wellbeing promotional activities
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to promote mental wellbeing

Employees have a responsibility to:

- Being aware of their own well-being and seek advice and support when necessary
- Learn to recognise and act on signs of stress in themselves and others
- Advise their line manager or People Team of any work-related issues/difficulties that are causing stress, which may affect their health and/or wellbeing, or has the potential to do so, and participate positively in determining solutions. If the stressors have arisen from circumstances outside of work, employees are encouraged, where possible to discuss these with their manager so that appropriate assistance and flexibility can be considered
- Be supportive and compassionate of colleagues who are experiencing difficulties
- Understand that 'banter' or humour and terminology used to describe mental health can be seen as bullying and harassment is unacceptable behaviour and to report any concerns to their line manager or People Team

8. Training and awareness raising

HEIW will provide and identify training and awareness raising programmes through its Health and Wellbeing Strategy, management development program, PADR system. With a clear focus on the need to foster equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination and stigma. Including but not limited to the following topics:

- Personal resilience

- Time management
- Managing change
- Dignity at work awareness
- Communication skills
- Conflict resolution
- The impact and aftermath of Covid-19 on mental wellbeing across the protected characteristics:
- Understanding and making reasonable adjustments in the workplace
- Understanding the impact and stereotypes associated with gender identity including Trans phobia
- Cultural awareness and competency
- Challenging unconscious bias
- Impact of age and life events on mental wellbeing

9. Resources

[HEIW Health and Wellbeing Resources](#)
[NHS Wales Health and Wellbeing Charter pdf](#)
[Minds Introduction to Mental Health](#)

Integrated Equality Impact assessment (EIA) appendix 1

10. Integrated Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

HEIW is committed to ensuring that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the way it treats its employees reflects their individual needs and does not discriminate against individuals or groups.

HEIW has undertaken an Integrated Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) as part of policy development and has received feedback on this policy to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion is at its core. In the hope of eliminating any possible adverse or differential impact that it may have on any groups in respect of: age, disability, gender identity; marriage (including same sex) or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity issues, race, religion and or belief sexual orientation, transgender, carer, Welsh language, or other protected characteristics

In exploring these possible adverse or differential impacts HEIW acknowledge the intersectionality of individuals. Meaning that due regard has been given to the way in which power structures based on factors such as: age, disability, gender identity, sexuality, race, religion, belief or non-belief and religion interact with each other to create barriers of overlapping discrimination and disadvantage.

HEIW EIA appendix 1 is a live document and will be updated as part of review and monitoring of this policy.

11. Review and Monitoring

The People, OD and Inclusion Team will be responsible for reviewing the workplace mental wellbeing policy and for monitoring how effectively the policy meets its aims and objectives.

Indicators to measure effectiveness could include:

- working hours and patterns
- accidents at work
- employee complaints
- employee absence levels
- employee turnover
- Referral to and/or use of Mental Health First Aider
- use of Employee Assistance Programme
- the employee Health Needs Assessment, pulse surveys and NHS Wales Staff surveys
- early retirement through ill health
- exit interviews.

The policy and EIA will be reviewed six months from implementation and then annually after that to ensure that it remains relevant.