# Managing Stress and Promoting Positive Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

## April 2023

| | |
|---|---|
| **Company Number:** | 07801612 |
| **Approved By:** | Board of Trustees |
| **Policy Type:** | Statutory |
| **Adopted On:** | April 2023 |
| **Date of Next Review:** | April 2025 |
| **Review Period:** | 2 Years |

# Contents

# 1. Policy statement

1.1 The Trust has developed a managing stress and wellbeing policy to manage its obligations to promote positive mental health and wellbeing of all staff. It covers our commitment to protect the health, safety, and wellbeing of our staff; the responsibilities of managers and others for maintaining psychological health; health promotion initiatives; communicating and training on health issues; the range of support available for the maintenance of mental health and organisational commitment to handling individual issues.

1.2 The aim of this policy is to describe the Trust's commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing of staff in its broadest, holistic sense, setting out how the Trust fulfils our legal obligations, the responsibilities of different functions and specialists and the range of services available to help staff maintain health and wellbeing. The Trust recognises that wellbeing and performance are linked. Improving staff's ability to handle pressure and to balance work and home life will ultimately lead to improved performance.

1.3 The Trust recognises the importance of identifying and tackling the causes of work-related stress. We also recognise that personal stress, while unrelated to the workplace, can adversely affect the wellbeing of staff at work.

1.4 As part of its ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of its staff, the Trust has signed up to the Department of Education Staff Wellbeing Charter. The charter is a declaration of support for, and set of commitments to, the wellbeing and mental health of everyone working in education. A copy of the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter can be found at The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter - November 2021 (publishing.service.gov.uk).

1.5 Mental wellbeing is relevant for all staff, which means every member of staff can play a part in improving wellbeing in the workplace. By addressing mental health issues, the Trust can improve the general wellbeing of staff, reduce absenteeism, lower staff turnover, and increase productivity.

1.6    This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time. We may vary any of the provision detailed within this policy without consultation. It has been formally adopted by the Trust.

# 2    Who is covered by the policy?

2.1    The policy applies to all employees regardless of length of service. It also applies to any agency workers, casual staff, self-employed contractors/consultants, and volunteers.

# 3    Legal Obligations

3.1    The Trust have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that your health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised.

3.2    This policy takes account of our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1998 and Equality Act 2010.

# 4    Understanding stress and mental health

4.1    **Stress** is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or demands placed on them. Sustained over a period of time, stress can lead to mental and/or physical illness.

4.2    Mental health is a term used to describe our emotional, psychological and social **wellbeing**; it affects how we think, feel and act and how we cope with the normal pressures of everyday life. Positive mental health is rarely an absolute state since factors inside and outside work affect mental health, meaning that we move on a spectrum that ranges from being in good to poor mental health.

4.3     There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing **stress**. Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enable individuals to meet their full potential and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure becomes excessive it produces **stress** and undermines mental health.

4.4     Pressures outside the workplace, whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown or financial worries, can result in **stress** and poor mental health. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.

4.5     We recognise that individuals react to similar situations in different ways and that what triggers **stress** and poor mental health varies from person to person.

# 5     Our approach to mental wellbeing

5.1     We will:

5.1.1     Promote a culture of open communication by providing both formal and informal channels through which staff can raise concerns.

5.1.2     Take account of stress and mental wellbeing when planning and allocating workloads. We will provide opportunities to discuss these through our appraisal and one-to-one supervision processes.

5.1.3     Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking and monitor holidays to ensure that staff are using their entitlement appropriately.

5.1.4     Ensure risk assessments include or specifically address work-related stress.

5.1.5     Facilitate requests for flexible working where reasonably practicable in accordance with our Flexible Working Policy.

5.1.6     Ensure that in any workplace reorganisation our change management processes are designed to minimise uncertainty and stress.

5.1.7     Implement policies and procedures to address factors that can cause or worsen stress so that we can provide a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation and address inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action.

5.1.8     Provide training to help all staff understand and recognise the causes of work-related stress and mental ill health, the impact of stress from factors in everyday life and the steps they can take to protect and enhance their own mental wellbeing and that of their colleagues.

5.1.9     Provide support services such as occupational health and confidential counselling and mental health champions and mental health first aiders for staff affected by or absent by reason of stress.

# 6    Responsibilities

6.1     Employees

All staff should ensure that they are familiar with this **policy** and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. Staff should plan and organise their work to meet personal and organisational objectives and co-operate with support, advice and guidance that may be offered by line managers or the HR Department. Anyone who experiences or is aware of a situation that may result in work-related **stress** or undermine mental **wellbeing** at work should speak to a manager or a mental health champion/first aider.

6.2     Line managers

All line managers have a responsibility to recognise potential issues of work-related stress or mental ill health in the staff they manage. They will be given training to support them in this and should seek advice from the HR Department if they have concerns. All managers should provide support to staff by working with the HR Department and through making appropriate referrals to the Occupational Health Department. They need to:

Promote a culture of open communication.

Effectively plan and provide feedback on performance.

Ensure that staff receive necessary training and support.

Monitor workloads and reallocate work where necessary.

Ensure that staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and others, and act on behaviour that falls below those standards.

6.3     Human resources support

The Trust will engage with its HR support to develop trust -wide policies and procedures, to protect the wellbeing of employees, assist line managers in supporting individuals, and liaise as appropriate with occupational health and other medical professionals, with the object of helping employees to maintain good psychological health.

The Trust operates practices and policies that ensure staff are able to achieve a satisfactory balance between their work and other commitments and adhere to the working limits set out in the Working Time Regulations 1998.

6.4     Occupational health

The Trust has engaged occupational health professionals who will provide a comprehensive service designed to help staff stay in work, or to return to work, after experiencing mental health problems. This will include preparing medical assessments of individuals' fitness for work following referrals from

the Trust, liaising with GPs and working with individuals to help them to retain employment/engagement.

Occupational health professionals will play a critical part in developing rehabilitation plans for staff returning to work after absences related to mental ill health, and work with GPs and line managers on designing/amending jobs and working environments to ensure that rehabilitation is successful. Advice will also be taken from our occupational health professionals regarding design and implementation of any suitable health promotion and lifestyle behaviour management programmes, including initiatives on managing pressure and ongoing health conditions at work.

6.5     Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA)

We have appointed a number of mental health champions [and mental health first aiders] who can be contacted by any member of staff experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. Mental health champions and mental health first-aiders can discuss your concerns and provide details of available support. Details of mental health champions and mental health first aiders are available from the HR Department.

# 7     Health promotion initiatives

7.1     The Trust will develop and run a range of health promotion initiatives designed to raise awareness of health and lifestyle issues affecting mental health and wellbeing. The HR department will have primary responsibility for leading these programmes, but line managers and staff will be expected to participate. These programmes will be evaluated to determine their effectiveness.

7.2     The programmes will cover:

stress management;

disability awareness;

bullying and harassment;

handling violence and traumatic incidents at work;

lifestyle behaviours, with voluntary screening (for example in relation to alcohol, drugs and smoking);

physical activity and fitness; and

developing an action plan to change attitudes towards mental ill health.

7.3     Staff will also be encouraged to establish clubs and groups designed to foster wellbeing, for example lunchtime walking or dancing clubs. Prior approval from the Trust is required before any club/group is set up.

# 8    Training and communications

8.1     Line managers and staff should regularly discuss individual training needs to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to adapt to ever-changing job demands. An examination of training needs will be particularly important prior to, and during, periods of organisational change.

8.2    As part of the Middle leader training, Line Managers will receive training, so they are able to recognise the symptoms and causes of mental ill health.

8.3    Staff will receive training in mental health awareness, so they are able to recognise the symptoms of mental ill health in themselves and others in addition to recognising causes.

8.4    Managers and staff are encouraged to participate in communication/feedback exercises, including stress audits and staff surveys. All staff are expected to be aware of the importance of effective communication and to use the media most appropriate to the message, for example team meetings, one-to-one meetings, electronic communications, and trust-wide methods. The Trust will ensure that structures exist to give staff regular feedback on their performance, and for them to raise concerns.

8.5    Managers and staff are encouraged to utilise Wellness Action Plans where appropriate (Appendix 1).  A Wellness Action Plan is an informal plan that can be considered for staff who already have a mental health disorder or concern, but they are also useful for staff who are currently well but want to take a more pro-active approach to staying mentally fit at work.  A plan can be tailored to the individual's needs and seeks to identify any possible triggers to stress, how the individual wishes to be communicated with and steps/actions that can be taken by the Trust to assist when they are not coping.

8.6    The Trust will consider special communication media during periods of Trust change.

# 9    Occupational health support

9.1    Staff can also speak to their line managers if they would like to be considered for support from occupational health. A comprehensive occupational health service is available, from individual health screening to the design of return-to-work plans for those rehabilitating after a period of long-term sickness absence.

9.2    Workplace wellbeing services provided by the occupational health team include:

pre-employment screening;

fitness-for-work assessments;

9.3    If staff believe that their work, or some aspect of it, is putting their wellbeing at risk they should, in the first instance, speak to their line manager or the HR department. The discussion should cover workload and other aspects of job demands and raise issues such as identified training needs.

9.4    A referral to the occupational health team will be made if this is considered appropriate after an individual's initial discussion with their manager or the HR department. Discussions between staff and the occupational health professionals are confidential, although the occupational health team will provide a report on the individual's fitness to work, and any recommended adaptations to the working environment, to the Trust.
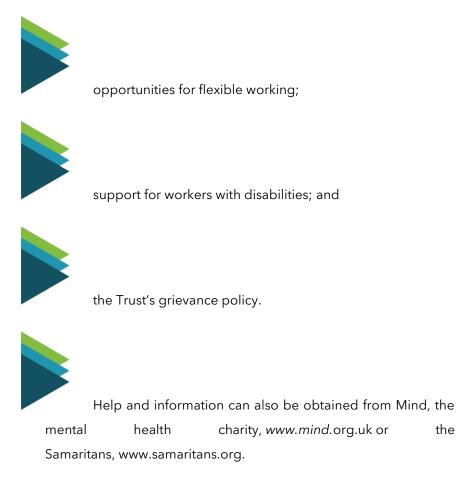
# 10  Other services

10.1    Other measures available to support staff in maintaining health and wellbeing include:

procedures for reporting and handling inappropriate behaviour (for example bullying and harassment);

special leave arrangements;

opportunities for flexible working;

support for workers with disabilities; and

the Trust's grievance policy.

Help and information can also be obtained from Mind, the mental health charity, *www.mind*.org.uk or the Samaritans, www.samaritans.org.

10.2 If any member of staff is considered by their line manager or colleagues to be at serious risk of self-harm, or of harming others, action must be taken straight away. The matter should be referred to their line manager **OR** the HR Department who will seek medical advice from the Occupational Health provider if that is reasonably practicable. Every effort will be made to contact any person nominated by the member of staff as an emergency contact. Where necessary the emergency services will be called. The **wellbeing** of the member of staff and those around them will always be our first concern.

# 11 Addressing work-related stress

11.1 If you believe you are suffering from work-related **stress** you should discuss this with your line manager in the first instance. If you feel unable to do so you should contact a mental health champion/first aider or the HR Department. You should also access the support services referred to in clause 7.

11.2 Once an issue affecting your health comes to the attention of your line manager, supervisor or the HR Department, we will discuss with you what

steps can be taken to address that issue. Those steps may include any of the following:

A review of your current job role, responsibilities, workload and working hours. Adjustments may be agreed to these, on a temporary basis and subject to further review, where appropriate.

Where it appears that stress has been caused by bullying or harassment, investigation under our Disciplinary and/or Grievance Procedures.

Referral for medical advice, treatment and/or a medical report to be provided by the Occupational Health provider, our medical advisers or any specialist or GP who has been treating you.

If you are on sickness absence, discussion of an appropriate return to work programme. Our Sickness Absence Policy may be applied.

# 12 Absence due to stress or mental ill health

12.1    If you are absent due to work-related stress or mental ill health, you should follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained in your contract and our Sickness Absence Policy.

12.2    In cases of prolonged or repeated absence it may be necessary to apply the procedure set out in our Sickness Absence **Policy**.

# 13  Confidentiality

13.1    Information about stress, mental health and mental wellbeing is highly sensitive. Every member of staff is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality that is required when dealing with information about stress or mental health whether they are supporting a colleague or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a workplace policy or procedure.

13.2    A breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action.

13.3    However, there are occasions when information about stress or mental wellbeing needs to be shared with third parties. For example:

> Where steps need to be taken to address work-related stress such as reallocating work within a team.

> Where medical advice is required on how to support a member of staff, address issues raised by work-related stress or address issues raised by mental ill health.

> Where allegations of harassment, bullying or other misconduct require a disciplinary investigation or proceedings to take place.

> Where a member of staff presents an immediate danger to themselves or others.

13.4 In these circumstances, wherever possible, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.

# 14 Relationship with other policies

14.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures covering attendance and health, including policies on special leave, flexible working, the management of absence, sick pay, bullying and harassment, equal opportunities and health and safety.

# 15 Review of policy

15.1 This policy is reviewed every two years by the Trust in consultation with the recognised trade unions. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

# Employee name xx/xx/xxxx

## Wellness action plan

Use this plan with the employee/employer companion document.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Name** | Name | Phone number | Email Address |
| **Line manager** | Name | Phone number | Email Address |
| **HR contact name** | Name | Phone number | Email Address |
| **Supporter name(s)**<br><br>*(if applicable) e.g. close family member, friend or colleague* | Name | Phone number | Email Address |
| **GP surgery and phone number** | Surgery name | Phone number | |
| **Employee Assistance Programme** | [ ] | | |
| **Mental Health Team**<br><br>*(if applicable) e.g. 24 hour helpline* | Name | Phone number/s | |

**Emergency contact**

*(may be same as supporter name)*

Name          Phone number/s

**Other useful contacts**

Name          Phone number/s

| Healthy<br>I am feeling my best | Flaring/reacting<br>I am experiencing symptoms but still able to work | Off work<br>I am experiencing symptoms and unable to work |
|---|---|---|
| **What would I be aware of at each stage and what would my manager/colleagues notice about me at each stage?**<br>*Consider physical/mental health symptoms, energy levels, concentration, relationships/interaction with others, productivity at work* | | |
| | | |

| Any triggers that I am aware of that affect my health - For example, specifics relating to your condition, situations at work or at home, relationships, your response to pressure/stress/change. | Personal wellbeing and coping strategies that are helpful inside and outside of work | Workplace support or adjustments that are/may be helpful - what my employer could do/does that helps |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

**Record of adjustments and support in place**

# Record of current support and adjustments in place (this should be updated after wellbeing meetings)

| Support/adjustment | | Expected duration | Adjustment review date |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wellbeing meetings to review progress and this plan will be held every: | | | |
| Time off for appointments/treatment sessions will be managed as follows: | | | |
| Absence relating to this condition will be managed as follows: | | | |
| Other adjustments/support agreed | | | |
| Other adjustments/support agreed | | | |
| Other adjustments/support agreed | | | |

**Keeping in touch**

In addition to the standard absence reporting practice, if I am absent from work for a reason relating to my health condition, contact with my manager will take place as follows:

**Who will contact who**

**How will contact be made**

**How often**
*(daily, weekly, monthly)*

**When** *(preferred day/time)*

**During this contact we will discuss**

**(edit as needed):**

How I am feeling and what help or support I might need

Current work to be covered

Any work issues

Plan a return to work/date if appropriate and consider phased hours and tasks

Determine if medical guidance/opinion needed *(e.g. OH, GP, specialist)*

Determine if support is needed via Employee Assistance Programme etc.

Referral to [ ] rehab services if support is needed to prepare for, or plan, a return to work

**When planning a return to work, we have agreed to discuss**

How I am feeling and what help or support I might need

*(edit as needed):*

Current work to be covered

Any work issues

Plan a return to work/date if appropriate and consider phased hours and tasks

Determine if medical guidance/opinion needed (*e.g. OH, GP, specialist*)

Determine if support is needed via Employee Assistance Programme etc.

Referral to [ ] rehab services if support is needed to prepare for, or plan, a return to work

## Advance statement

I will let my manager know if there are changes to my condition which have an effect on my work and/or if the agreed adjustments are not working.

We will then meet privately to discuss the possibility of reasonable adjustments or any changes that can be made.

If my manager notices a change in my performance at work or feels that these reasonable adjustments are not working, I would be happy to meet privately to discuss how to approach this.

If I become unwell at work, or if my manager is concerned about my wellbeing, or I am absent without following the usual absence reporting process, I would like my manager to contact xxx. If my manager cannot reach them, I agree that my manager can contact my GP/ Mental Health team/treating specialist (delete as appropriate and ensure contact details are available).

An up-to-date copy of this form will be kept by employee/manager/HR.

A copy of this document may also be given to a new or prospective manager with your prior consent.

| Name | Role | Signature | Date |
|------|------|-----------|------|
|  | Employee |  |  |
|  | Line manager/HR |  |  |