EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

**What is EAP?**

Modern day life can be highly pressured with individuals facing a variety of issues such as family problems, marital or relationship difficulties, bereavement, work pressure or mental and physical health issues can put pressure on individuals at any time.

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that its employees will have to face these issues at some point in their lives, and as a result, offers an external, confidential, counselling service for all employees.

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is provided through 'Vivup'. They provide a completely confidential service, the counsellor you work with will only discuss the progress of your sessions in their clinical supervision and this is done confidentially to ensure that you are receiving the best and most appropriate support.

Many people feel that a counsellor is on their side, someone who can offer different kinds of support: practical, emotional and psychological. People go to counselling for many reasons but whatever the underlying cause is, it’s a way of ‘fighting back’ and resolving what it is that is troubling you.



**What does the EAP offer?**

Vivup is Aberdeenshire Councils Employee Assistance programme provider, and they offer the following services:

**Telephone Counselling:**

Telephone counselling is offered 24 hours, 7 days a week to allow immediate support to those that require it. It provides a convenient solution for individuals unable (for whatever reason) to attend face to face counselling. Once the individual has contacted the helpline, one of Vivup’s counsellors will phone back at a time that is suitable. The free phone number is 0800 023 9324.

**Online Resources:**

Instantly accessible online advice, information, and practical tips to assist employees with a variety of things such as personal/work life and health and wellbeing issues are available via the website. Vivup provide an online chat service through their website where employees can have an immediate response from a counsellor, Monday to Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm. The Vivup website has links to further resources such self-help books, podcasts and blogs and the employee benefits platform, links can be found below, this link will also allow access to the telephone number for counselling.

**General Advice and Guidance:**

Vivup offer information on practical matters which are causing stress, tension or difficulty. Typical areas of difficulty include financial, martial, health, alcohol problems, substance abuse or legal issues. Sometimes making that early call can make the world of difference and sometimes the answer to a question might be given immediately over the telephone.

**How do I make contact?**

Online chat service through their website where employees can have an immediate response from a counsellor, Monday to Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm.

**Website**: <https://vivup.tercltd.co.uk?CODE=107808>

The telephone helpline is available 24/7, 365 days a year is completely confidential and free to anyone needing mental health support.

**Vivup help line:** 0800 023 9324 (free from any standard UK landline or mobile phone)



**Crisis Plan:**

If I become so unwell as to make the above steps redundant, more drastic action may be needed. This would mean I would be at work in a manic state which could be disruptive to colleagues, and potentially dangerous or embarrassing for me. In this instance, the best thing to do is refer to my crisis plan which I have shared with my manager and my colleague Janice. It details who I want to be contacted (my parents on the phone number I have given, or my friend David). They have agreed for my employer to have these numbers in case of emergency. They will also have contact details of my relevant healthcare professional if needed.

**Supporting people to develop a Wellness Action Plan: Top tips for managers**

As a manager, when supporting your employee to develop their WAP, be positive and encouraging, but do not try to influence them.

Throughout the process provide a sense of supported empowerment and help them to feel trusted and capable.

Remember:

• People are often experts when it comes to identifying the support or adjustment they need and how to manage their triggers for poor mental health.

• The plan must be written by the individual: expressing their own personal choice, reflecting their voice and their personal experience and needs.

• The plan needs to include all the things that are important to the individual and their mental wellbeing.

Ask the person you are supporting to think about:

• what are they like when they are feeling well and flourishing at work.

• what their environment is like when it is supporting their wellbeing.

• what are the things they need to do to maintain good health and wellbeing.

• coping strategies they already use and what makes these effective.

• how they’ve managed to work through challenging situations previously.

• what hasn’t worked in the past and why they think this might be.

**What managers can do to promote wellbeing?:**

The WAP is intended not only as a tool to support staff when they are experiencing problems, but also as a means of identifying how an individual’s wellbeing can be proactively promoted. When it comes to supporting a member of staff’s wellbeing, the following actions and approaches can be helpful.

**Your managerial style:**

• Be supportive, approachable, and responsive.

• Be available for regular work-related conversations and increase the frequency of

supervision or catch-up time with the team member if required.

• Proactively support staff to monitor their workload and encourage healthy working hours and a positive work/life balance.

• Ensure you are setting realistic targets and be clear about priorities.

• Tailor your management style to suit the needs of each staff member and task by asking your staff what support they need from you.

• Use one-to-ones and catch-ups to cover a wider agenda than just your employee’s to-do list, including reflecting on what has gone well and what has been difficult in the past month, and forward planning together, for example by identifying upcoming crucial times at work, busier times, challenges that this may cause and required support.

• Encourage positive relationships with colleagues and provide mediation where necessary.

• Provide staff with meaningful work and opportunities for personal development and Growth.

• Try to ensure that the physical characteristics of the work environment do not have a detrimental effect on engagement, productivity, and wellbeing of your staff.

**Providing support:**

• Encourage staff to talk and be open about problems they are experiencing.

• Ensure confidentiality and provide an appropriate place for confidential conversations.

• When talking about an individual’s mental health listen, be respectful and do not make assumptions.

• Be positive – focus on what employees can do, rather than what they can’t, providing training, mentoring, or coaching if there are skills gaps.

• Work together and involve people in finding solutions as much as possible.

• Support staff to develop personal resilience and coping strategies.

• Involve staff in dialogue and decision-making and remember that people are often the expert when it comes to identifying the support or adjustment they need and how to manage their triggers for poor mental health.

• Recognise and praise good work and commitment, providing regular opportunities

to discuss, review and reflect on positive achievements – this can help people to build up positive self-esteem and develop skills to better manage their triggers for poor mental health.

• Encourage staff to seek further advice and support (for example from buddying or

mentoring schemes) and seek advice and support yourself.

**GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A WAP:**

The following guidance will be helpful in developing a Wellness Action Plan. It can be used by people who are experiencing mental health problems to develop their own guide, or by health care professionals or others who are helping someone to develop a Wellness Recovery Action Plan.

WRAPs can be divided into six sections which might set out how the person’s health might change and what we or they can do to work towards recovery. The plan can be laid out in whatever form the individual feels comfortable with. The six sections are as follows:

**Section 1 Daily Maintenance Plan**

**Section 2 Triggers**

**Section 3 Early Warning Signs**

**Section 4 When Things are Breaking Down or Getting Worse**

**Section 5 Crisis Planning**

**Section 6 Towards Recovery and Return to Wellness**

**Section 1 Daily Maintenance Plan:**

In this section it is useful to start by describing how you are when you are feeling all right. This can include how you feel physically and emotionally. It can also include things you are able to do.

Next, make a list of things you need to do for yourself every day to keep yourself feeling all right. This can include basic things like eating properly and getting enough sleep. It can also include speaking to neighbours or friends, taking some exercise, dealing with your finances and, if necessary, taking medication.

**Section 2 Triggers:**

This section is useful for identifying those things that, if they happen, might cause an increase in your symptoms. These could include pressure at work, arguing with a relative or receiving an unexpected bill. It would be ideal if we could avoid the things that make us feel worse, but this isn’t always possible, so we need to be more vigilant when these situations occur.

It is useful to have some tools and techniques that you can use to deal with these situations. These may be things you have used in the past or things that others have used to help them.

**Section 3 Early Warning Signs:**

This section is closely linked to the previous section on triggers and helps you to think about subtle changes in your mood or behaviour that might indicate you are becoming unwell. The early warning signs may include feeling scared, reluctance to go out, not enjoying things you have previously enjoyed or becoming more irritable.

These early warning signs are normally a clear sign that you should use the tools and techniques mentioned in section 2 to prevent things getting worse.

**Section 4 When things are Breaking Down or Getting Worse:**

This section deals with when you are experiencing symptoms that indicate you are becoming unwell. These may be physical or psychological symptoms that you have experienced in the past. These might include anxiety, fatigue, disorientation, withdrawal from social contact etc. It is important that, if possible, you are able to identify when things are breaking down so that you can take action to prevent things getting worse. The action may be to pay more attention to your daily maintenance plan, visit your GP or seek other support. It is also useful to identify someone who can spot the signs that you are unwell and help you to take appropriate action.

**Section 5 Crisis Planning:**

This section should be completed when you are well so that others know how to support you in the event of you reaching the point of ill health where things have broken down to the extent that you are no longer able to look after yourself. This can include instructions on who is to be contacted, what treatment you want (or don’t want), who is to look after your financial affairs, what friends or colleagues are to be told and anything else that is important to you.

**Section 6 Towards Recovery and Return to Wellness:**

This section consists of a plan to use following a crisis. This should include the kind of contact you would like to have with friends or colleagues and what you would like others to know including who to contact for updates e.g. partner, family member etc. The plan can also include the things you will do to build up your physical and mental strength, if appropriate, a return to work plan including any reasonable adjustments and how you will link back to your daily maintenance plan.

**Wellness Action Plan (WAP) template:**

**1.** What helps you stay mentally healthy at work? (For example: taking a lunch break, keeping a to-do list, healthy eating).

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**2.** What can your manager do to support you to stay mentally healthy at work? (For example: regular feedback and supervision, explaining wider developments in organisation).

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**3.** Are there any situations at work that can trigger poor mental health for you? (For example: conflict at work, organisational change, something not going to plan).

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**4.** How might stress / poor mental health difficulties impact on your work? (For example: find it difficult to make decisions, hard to prioritise work tasks).

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**5.** Are there any early warning signs that we might notice when you are starting to feel stressed/mentally unwell? (For example: changes in normal working patterns, withdrawing from colleagues, changes to mood and behaviour).

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**6.** What support could be put in place to minimise triggers or to support you to manage symptoms? (For example: extra catch-up time with line manager).

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**7.** If we notice early warning signs that you are feeling stressed or unwell – what should we do? (For example: talk to me discreetly about it, contact someone that I have asked to be contacted). Please include contact names and numbers if you would like your line manager to get in touch with someone if you become unwell.

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**8.** What steps can you take if you start to feel unwell at work? (For example: take a break from your desk and go for a short walk, ask your line manager for support).

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**9.** What steps need to be put in placeduring an absence period, to aid recovery and a safe return to work? (For example: phased return, reasonable adjustments).

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Employee Signature:

Date:

Date:

Line Managers Signature:

Date to be reviewed:

Further information on Wellness Recovery Action Plans is available from:

The Scottish Recovery Network [www.scottishrecovery.net](http://www.scottishrecovery.net)

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Mary Ellen Copeland www.mentalhealthrecovery.com