

HR & OD POLICIES

human resources and organisational development



Stress and Mental Wellbeing Policy

Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Aberdeenshire Council recognise that poor mental wellbeing and stress can affect anyone. This policy is in place to outline what the authority will do to support and promote the mental wellbeing of all employees.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

All employers have a legal duty under Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the Health, Safety and Welfare of their employees. Under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 every employer is also required to make suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of his employees to which they are exposed whilst at work; this include both psychological and physical risks to health. Aberdeenshire 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.

Aberdeenshire Council recognises 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 the individual will still potentially impact on the workplace.

1. Aberdeenshire Council will take all reasonably practicable steps to provide a work environment which is not detrimental to an employee's mental wellbeing. This will be achieved by:
 - Supporting employees to acquire the skills and competencies necessary to carry out their work;
 - Supporting managers to develop skills and behaviours to create a work environment which is conducive to good mental health;
 - In collaboration with employees, carry out a suitable and sufficient stress risk assessment to identify and understand the factors which impact on employees' mental health. Guidance can be found in the Employee Stress & Wellbeing Guidance document;
 - Where possible, introducing innovative preventative and protective measures to reduce identified workplace stressors;
 - Monitoring and reviewing the organisation's performance to ensure the effectiveness of control measures and that high standards are maintained or improved where necessary;

- Allocating sufficient resources to implement appropriate controls identified through a risk assessment;
2. Aberdeenshire Council will raise awareness and develop the skills of line managers to recognise, support and manage employees suffering from poor mental health or work-related stress. This includes the provision of [training in mental health awareness for managers](#);
 3. Aberdeenshire Council will provide a support framework for employees experiencing poor mental wellbeing during their employment. This includes the provision of counselling support via an [Employee Assistance Programme](#);
 4. Aberdeenshire Council will raise awareness of mental health in the workplace through health promotion activities;
 5. Aberdeenshire Council will support employees with a mental health disability by making reasonable adjustments where possible in line with the Council's [Equality Policy](#).

3. 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 Aberdeenshire Council's commitment to providing a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation. This policy also takes account of Aberdeenshire 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 Aberdeenshire Council's Attendance Management Policy and guidance must be followed in conjunction with this Policy.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

4. 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.

Service Directors & Head of Services are responsible for:

- Monitoring and reviewing the organisations performance via the annual employee survey, sickness absence statistics and occupational health statistics
- Facilitating promotional activities to raise awareness and reduce any stigma associated with poor mental health
- 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

All staff with line management responsibility for others should:

- Undertake a stress risk assessment to make suitable and sufficient assessments of the risk that stress poses to the health and safety of their employees at work, see team stress risk assessment
- Consider the contribution of working conditions and other organisational factors to poor mental wellbeing and remedy this where possible, this includes ensuring employees are provided with the resources and necessary skills and competencies to undertake their work activities
- Follow the procedures as outlined within the [Attendance Management Policy and procedure](#)
- Set employees realistic targets, monitor workloads, working hours and overtime to ensure that employees are managing their workload within the time available
- Listen non-judgementally and provide appropriate support for staff affected by or absent with mental health problems. This includes taking account of stress and mental wellbeing guidance to support employees who are affected by work-related stress
- Engage in development opportunities, where available, to help them to support employees suffering from a mental health problem, this includes:
 - Attending available training;
 - Seeking advice and guidance from Aberdeenshire Council's [Employee Assistance Programme](#) or via [Human Resource & Organisational Development \(HR&OD\)](#)

- Address any harassment, bullying or victimisation within the workplace (including violence, aggression and other forms of inappropriate behaviour) through appropriate action against employees or other third parties
- Observe confidentiality when dealing with a personal issue.*

All employees should:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and wellbeing
- Familiarise themselves with this framework and associated documentation and act in accordance with its aims and objectives
- Plan and organise their work to meet organisational objectives
- Behave in a manner that is conducive to the mental wellbeing of their colleagues
- Raise issues of concern and seek assistance as appropriate from their line manager, human resources, employee assistance programme, safety representative, trade union, their 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 stress risk assessment their manager or service is undertaking.

*Confidentiality

There are occasions when information provided by an employee suffering from 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 managers to gain advice and support from [HR&OD](#). 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.

5. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy and associated guidance documents, the following definitions have effect:

- **Mental Wellbeing:** is 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** is 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** is 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** is 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 disability would fall into the scope of the Council's [Equality Policy & Procedure](#).

Stress and Mental Wellbeing Policy

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Policy

Revision Date	Previous Revision Date	Summary of Changes
07/03/2016	-	To provide greater support to managers and employees to tackle stress and mental wellbeing issues at work.