MENTAL WELLBEING POLICY

Policy Statement and Policy Commitments

Public Health Wales aspires to create a vibrant, inclusive, and healthy culture where all our people are supported to thrive.

As an organisation, we have a duty of care for our staff and, in line with our values of working together with trust and respect to make a difference, we want all staff to be treated with dignity, trust and respect, and with a kind and compassionate approach.

We are committed to creating and nurturing a positive, flexible and sustainable work environment. Our aspiration is to be an exemplar organisation for wellbeing, where our staff are supported to ensure that their experience of work enables them to be healthier, happier in work, and able to be at their best.

In addition to this, the law requires that organisations actively manage the workplace to try to prevent accidents and ill-health before they happen. The same principles apply to prevention of potential causes of work-related stress.

Promoting and protecting the mental wellbeing of the workforce is important for an individual's physical health, social wellbeing and productivity. Healthy workplaces help people to flourish and reach their potential on both a professional and personal level.

Fostering positive mental wellbeing at work requires the right environment and management structures to be in place as well as a positive outlook on mental wellbeing. We therefore commit to:

1. Creating a supportive, productive and fulfilling environment. An environment that encourages social connection, learning, acts of kindness, and being more active, as well as one that provides people with the skills to 'take notice' of their own and others' wellbeing, and to take supportive and proactive actions as a result.

2. Developing managers to promote the mental wellbeing of their staff and to talk with them about difficult issues with sensitivity, and to respond appropriately when they have concerns about individuals, and/or when illness is evident.

3. Supporting members of staff, workers, secondees, and volunteers to manage their own mental wellbeing, by promoting the benefits of mental wellbeing, and providing access to tools, techniques, advice and guidance.

4. Helping those who experience mental health issues to discuss these in a safe and confidential environment, and to receive suitable support and adjustments to their working environment to enable them to be at their best.

5. Proactively working towards an equitable, system-wide approach which aims to ensure a "level playing field" for all staff. Underpinning the previous points is recognition of the diverse nature of our workforce, who have a varying range of needs, with many facing additional barriers and experiences that impact their mental wellbeing.

Supporting Procedures and Written Control Documents

All corporate policies and procedures are available on the Public Health Wales website

Other related documents/policies are:

Staff Wellbeing intranet pages
NHS Wales Managing Attendance at Work Policy
My Contribution Policy
Health and Safety Policy
Special Leave Policy
Flexible Working Policy and Toolkit
NHS Wales Respect and Resolution Policy
Maternity, Adoption, Paternity/Maternity Support, Shared Parental Leave and IVF Policy
Menopause Policy
Transitioning at work guidance
Recruitment Procedure
Wellbeing Matters
Our Wellbeing Matters – supportive resource for all staff
Manager Wellbeing Matters – guidance to support managers' own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others

Ongoing commitment to mental health development for all staff including provision of courses including Wellbeing sessions for line managers and parallel sessions for all other staff.	
Scope Mental health and stress can affect anyone, regardless of their role or position. This Policy applies equally to all members of staff, agency and bank workers, secondees, and volunteers.	
Equality and Health Impact Assessment	An Equality, Welsh Language and Health Impact Assessment has been completed and can be viewed on the policy webpages.
Approved by	People and Organisational Development Committee
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Group with authority to approve supporting procedures	People and Organisational Development Committee
Accountable Executive Director/Director	Neil Lewis, Director of People and Organisational Development
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Summary of reviews/amendments				
Version number	**Date of Review**	**Date of Approval**	**Date published**	**Summary of Amendments**
1		31 March 2017	6 April 2017	First version
2		31 March 2017	6 April 2017	Change of counselling service provider reflected throughout policy: • 10 – sentence change and hyperlink • 13 – flowchart and hyperlink • 14 – flowchart and hyperlink • P17 – added in Care first as a contact point
3	November 2019 – July 2022	06 Sept 2022	12 Sept 2022	Amendment of Policy name from Prevention of Stress and management of mental wellbeing to Mental Wellbeing Policy Amendment to Policy statement to align more closely with the organisational culture we seek to develop; Changes to aim to include need to challenge stigma; Change in review and monitoring arrangements; Changes in aim and responsibility sections to strengthen diversity and inclusion considerations; Appendices removed from Policy and added as standalone, accompanying documents in Policy page

1. INTRODUCTION

Public Health Wales aspires to create a vibrant, inclusive, and healthy culture where all our people are supported to thrive.

We are committed to creating and nurturing a positive, flexible and sustainable work environment. Our aspiration is to be an exemplar organisation for wellbeing, where our staff are supported to ensure that their experience of work enables them to be healthier, happier in work, and able to be at their best.

Public Health Wales is committed to promoting and protecting the mental wellbeing of its staff. Mental ill health and stress are associated with many of the leading causes of disease and disability in our society. Promoting and protecting the mental wellbeing of the workforce is important for individuals' physical health, social wellbeing and productivity.

The term 'mental health' covers a broad spectrum. Mental ill-health can affect people at any time of life and in different ways, including anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, self-harm and dementia, and can be triggered by many factors. Stress, life events, past experiences and genetics all play a part in determining our mental health along with many other external factors and it is recognised that these are not always work-related. Presentation of mental distress may differ between individuals: for example, more women than men are treated for mental ill-health. However, this does not necessarily suggest that they are more affected by mental health issues, as men tend to be less likely to seek help. Further information on the variety of mental health conditions which exist can be accessed here.

Mental wellbeing in the workplace is relevant to all staff and everyone can contribute to improved mental wellbeing at work. Addressing workplace mental wellbeing can help strengthen the positive, protective factors of employment, reduce risk factors for mental ill-health and improve general health. It can also promote the employment of people who have experienced mental health issues, and support them once they are at work.

Understanding and addressing all factors which affect people's mental wellbeing at work has a range of benefits, both for individuals and the organisation.

We acknowledge that many factors can influence the mental wellbeing of individuals and such factors in the workplace influence the mental wellbeing of individual employees, particular departments, or organisations as a whole. We are aware that working culture and conditions can impact on physical health as well as mental wellbeing. The issue of identity, in particular, and an individual's corresponding ability to bring their true selves to their workplace is critically important in creating the required conditions to foster mental health. Musculo-skeletal disorders (MSDs) are commonly reported in office conditions but may arise from individuals being tense or stressed and adopting strained postures, or not taking sufficient breaks from sitting positions.

2. COVID-19

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has meant a change in working practices for all of our people, many of which continue to have a significant impact on our mental wellbeing. For some staff, period of lockdown meant social isolation, and for those who were considered clinically extremely vulnerable, shielding led to loneliness. For others now required to work from home, their work life balance has been impacted due to difficulties in being able to separate their working life from their home life. Concerns for friends and family members has also led to anxiety and concern.

Others have continued to work from our bases, and have had concerns over their safety on the commute to work and feeling safe in the workplace. The role of the line manager in supporting the wellbeing of their people and keeping in touch has become even more important, and making sure managers have dedicated time to do this has, at times, been challenging.

The pandemic will continue to have a long-term impact in all elements of our lives, and its effect on our mental wellbeing will have long reaching consequences. It is crucial that we continue to support our people to tell us what they need and engage with them in every part

of the organisation, to ensure that we maintain a proactive approach to mental wellbeing.

3. AIM OF THE POLICY

The aim of this Policy is to make clear and to demonstrate that Public Health Wales is committed to safeguarding, as far as is practicable, the mental wellbeing of its workforce.

Public Health Wales has therefore committed to creating and nurturing a supportive, productive and fulfilling environment, where all staff are supported to understand mental wellbeing in the workplace, the need to challenge stigma and to create an inclusive, happy and healthy workplace, where everyone can thrive - An environment that encourages social connection, learning, acts of kindness, and being more active, as well as one that provides people with the skills to 'take notice', and to take action.

4. ACHIEVING OUR AIM

To achieve our aim we will:
- tackle workplace factors that may negatively affect mental wellbeing and/or add to stigma, and develop management skills to promote mental wellbeing and support staff to manage mental health problems effectively;

- develop a culture based on trust, support and mutual respect within the workplace, as well as one which focuses on the individual and recognises that all individuals are different and may require differing forms of management, encouragement and support;

- proactively work towards eliminating any possible adverse or differential impact that may be experienced by any individuals in respect of:
  - Age, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Disability, Gender identity or expression, Marriage (including same sex) or civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity issues, Race,

Religion or belief, Transgender, Carer, Welsh language, or other protected characteristics

- provide support and assistance for employees experiencing mental health difficulties.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

As an organisation, our aspiration is to be an exemplar for wellbeing, where our staff are supported to ensure that their experience of work enables them to be healthier, happier in work, and able to be at their best.

We will foster a culture where our focus is on the creation of a positive, flexible and sustainable work environment. We also recognise that everyone has a responsibility to contribute to making the Mental Wellbeing Policy effective.

This includes:

- Ensuring that we reflect our values and strategic priorities in our everyday decision making, so that we actively promote and adopt the positive behaviours required to achieve our aim of good wellbeing for all.

- Zero tolerance of discrimination.

- Zero tolerance of bullying and harassment.

- Routine and systematic use of Health Impact Assessment, EQHIA and risk assessment methods, to ensure a proactive approach to ensuring the outcome of health equity for all.

- Allocation of adequate resources, for instance, time and commitment, to support and protect staff wellbeing and promote positive mental wellbeing.

Underpinning legislation

There are a number of pieces of legislation which underpin organisational requirements in this regard:

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
Requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
Requires employers to assess the risks of ill health (including stress related conditions) arising from work-related activities, ensuring that the hazards are removed or proper control measures are put in place to reduce the risk so far as is reasonably practical.

Equality Act 2010
Stress may be a symptom of an underlying condition that could amount to a disability. Under the Equality Act employers are required, in such an eventuality, to make reasonable adjustments to the workplace, such as reducing an employee's workload where they are under stress.

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) Management Standards for Work Related Stress
The Management Standards define the characteristics, or culture, of an organisation where the risks from work related stress are being effectively managed and controlled.

The Management Standards cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. In other words, the six Management Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work.

In order to support the standards, the [Individual Wellbeing check in proforma](#) may be completed by the individual **if they choose to do so**, with support from their manager (Appendices 1 and 2 provide further information of how this form may be used).

Public Health Wales Board and Executive Team have a responsibility to:

- Lead, role model, and demonstrate visible support of mental wellbeing in the workplace
- Match up principles with practice

- Foster a psychologically safe workplace, holding managers, teams, and individuals to account for their workplace behaviours, taking a zero tolerance approach to any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment
- Allocate adequate resources, for instance, time, commitment and budget, to support and protect staff wellbeing and promote positive mental wellbeing.

Managers' responsibilities:

Managers have a key role in demonstrating and promoting the importance of the health and wellbeing of the team they lead. A pro-active approach will enable any issues to be identified at an early stage and staff can be supported with early interventions.

Managers should be able to talk to staff about difficult issues with sensitivity, and to respond appropriately when they have concerns about individuals, and/or when illness is evident. Above all, managers should demonstrate a pro-active approach, defined by the responsiveness of their actions.

Key actions for managers include:

- Assist and support staff who are known to have mental health problems or are experiencing stress outside of work;
- Foster a safe and supportive environment;
- Attend any mental wellbeing training, and any other related training, for instance, diversity and inclusion, and make use of resources on offer within the organisation;
- Ensure that they understand the individual circumstances of their staff, how these may affect their mental health and support needs, and adapt their approach accordingly so that any issues are addressed, regardless of background;
- Communicate and engage with staff so they are aware of resources and support services available;
- Meet with staff on a planned and regular basis, including ongoing one to one meetings and the My Contribution performance management framework;
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities and are provided with clear and realistic objectives and that performance is managed effectively and fairly;

- Ensure that jobs are well designed and any role conflict is addressed;
- Engage with staff to support them in the process of risk assessment and work to eliminate, minimise or reduce the risks of work related stress;
- Pro-actively engage with staff who show signs of stress and take steps to support and make reasonable adjustments whenever necessary;
- Monitor the workload and working hours of their staff and adopt a flexible approach, wherever possible, to work schedules in order to help avoid conflicts between work and personal lives;
- Recognise the fact that stress can exacerbate and/or lead to MSDs;
- Information on how you refer staff for support can be found by accessing the manager's referral flowchart here <insert new link to HR policies page>.

Members of staff, workers, secondees, and volunteers have a responsibility to:

- Proactively raise issues of concern and seek help from their line manager, senior management team, colleague, coach or mentor, People Team advisors, Employee Wellbeing Manager, Trade Union representative, Occupational Health, or Staff Network groups or alternatively contact the Employee Assistance Programme provider, Care first, for support;
- Accept opportunities for Counselling when recommended;
- Meet with their manager on a planned and regular basis, including ongoing one to one meetings and the My Contribution performance management framework;
- Accept opportunities for training and encourage others to do the same;
- Be supportive of colleagues through any difficulties they may have;
- Information on how you can gain support can be found by accessing the self-referral flowchart here <insert new link to HR policies page>.

People and OD Responsibilities:

The People and OD directorate has a key role in the provision of coaching support to managers, to ensure that they are able to support their staff effectively and proactively. They are also a source of initial support to staff, including signposting to sources of advice, and provision of confidential advice. Key activities for the directorate are to:

- Organise training and awareness courses on workplace mental wellbeing in conjunction with suitable experts;
- Provide advice and support to staff and managers in relation to this Policy;
- Monitor and report on levels of sickness absence which relate to mental health including stress-related illness (in conjunctions with occupational health and departmental managers) and work with line managers to ensure actions are put in place locally to address;
- Work with Trade Union colleagues and Staff Diversity Networks on the development, implementation and ongoing management of outcomes and actions associated with Mental Wellbeing.

Occupational Health will provide support to managers and staff in the management of a range of conditions, from signposting to relevant sources of information, to provision of individualised care. Key activities include:

- Critical role in help with early identification, treatment and onward referral;
- Provision of timely appointments, following self or management referrals, including recommendations for reasonable adjustments and phased return arrangements;
- Source of health promotion information and support for self and management referrals;
- Expert role in provision of proactive advice to support staff to remain in work wherever possible, and to facilitate their timely return from absence.

Employee Assistance Programme
All staff are able to access the *Care first Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is accessible by **phone or online. The service includes telephone counselling support, and access to online and face to face counselling.

* Username: publichealth Password: employee
** 0800 174319

Equality
We are committed to ensuring that, as far as is practicably possible, the way we treat our staff reflects their individual needs and does not discriminate against individuals or groups, either directly or indirectly.

An Equality and Health Impact Assessment (EQHIA) has been undertaken as part of policy development, and feedback has been received and incorporated from our Staff Network groups, to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion it at its core. This has been carried out with 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 or belief, Transgender, Carer, Welsh language, or other protected characteristics.

Staff from these groups are variously affected by:
- Poor mental health, as a result of discrimination or difficult experiences they have faced;
- Unequal access to support.

This Policy will also be made available in Welsh.

6. REVIEWING AND MONITORING

The People and OD team, with Trade Union colleagues, and with staff, and line manager input will be responsible for reviewing the Mental Wellbeing Policy and for monitoring how effectively the Policy meets it aims and objectives.

Indicators to measure success may include, and are not limited to:

- Reduction in percentage of work-related mental health staff absence levels;

- Staff surveys indicating increased self-reported wellbeing levels and individuals' experiences of what measures have worked for them within the organisation;
- Line managers attendance at training and development sessions, aimed at building their skills in supporting their staff
- Use of staff wellbeing pages;
- Use of Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme services to proactively manage staff needs;
- Reduction in high and unexpected staff turnover, in all areas of the organisation;
- Reduction in Early Retirement through ill health, attributed to work-related mental health issues;
- Completion of My Contribution wellbeing section, and audit of its use;
- Exit interviews;
- Routine and systematic use of Health Impact Assessment, EQIA and risk assessment methods.

All staff will be made aware of this Policy upon commencement with Public Health Wales and when approved. Copies can also be viewed on Public Health Wales Internet or obtained via the People and OD department by contacting PeopleSupport.PHW@wales.nhs.uk

The named lead will monitor this Policy to ensure it is compliant with current legislation, to ensure it is effectively implemented, and ensure that it is reviewed in accordance with the timetable for review.

These guidelines will be reviewed in 2 years' time or sooner if required.

We are continually looking to improve our employment practices and welcome any feedback you may have in relation to this Policy. Feedback can be provided by emailing, PeopleSupport.PHW@wales.nhs.uk