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Cymru  
Public Health  
Wales

Reference Number: PHW54

Version Number: 2

Date of next review: March 2019

# Prevention of Stress and Management of Mental Wellbeing Policy

## Policy Statement

As an organisation, we have a duty of care for our staff: in line with our values, our aim is that all staff are treated with dignity, trust and respect, and with a kind and compassionate approach. We are committed to developing our organisation, and our focus is on the creation of 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 do their best job.

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 controlling potential causes of work-related stress.

We value the health and wellbeing of all of our staff and aim to create a safe working environment, with processes and practices which protect, and where possible enhance, the health and wellbeing of employees. We recognise that mental health is as important as physical health, and that mental health difficulties or stress related conditions, regardless of whether issues relate to the workplace or to the home, affect not only individuals but friends, families, carers and the workplace as a whole, and can occur and re-occur at any point in time.

## Policy Commitment

- Creation of a supportive workplace and culture for everyone in the organisation, with an underlying focus on promotion of positive mental wellbeing and elimination of discrimination and stigma.
- Managers 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.

- Staff who experience mental health difficulties able to discuss them in a safe and confidential environment, and to receive suitable support and adjustments to their working environment, allowing them to work effectively and to fulfil their work priorities.
- Provision of a working environment which promotes the mental health and wellbeing of clients and visitors.

### **Supporting Procedures and Written Control Documents**

Other related documents are:

- Sickness Absence Policy;
- My Contribution Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Flexible Working Policy and Toolkit;
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Maternity, Adoption, Paternity/Maternity Support, Shared Parental Leave and IVF Policy

### **Scope**

This policy applies to all employees of Public Health Wales.

<b>Equality and Health Impact Assessment</b>	Insert link to completed <b>Integrated Screening Tool</b> .
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<b>Approved by</b>	People and Organisational Development Committee
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<b>Approval Date</b>	31 March 2017
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<b>Review Date</b>	March 2019
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<b>Date of Publication:</b>	4 May 2018
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<b>Group with authority to approve supporting procedures</b>	People and Organisational Development Committee
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<b>Accountable Executive Director/Director</b>	Phil Bushby, Director of People and Organisational Development
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**Disclaimer**

**If the review date of this document has passed please ensure that the version you are using is the most up to date either by contacting the document author or [Corporate Governance](#).**

<b>Summary of reviews/amendments</b>				
<b>Version number</b>	<b>Date of Review</b>	<b>Date of Approval</b>	<b>Date published</b>	<b>Summary of Amendments</b>
1		31 March 2017	6 April 2017	First version
2				Change of counselling service provider reflected throughout policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 10 – sentence change and hyperlink</li><li>• 13 – flowchart and hyperlink</li><li>• 14 – flowchart and hyperlink</li><li>• P17 – added in Care first as a contact point</li></ul>

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# 1 Introduction and Background

Stress and anxiety conditions are amongst the most common reasons for absence from work in the UK, with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), reporting that these are the most common causes of long-term absence in public sector organisations.

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 controlling potential causes of work-related stress. Over and above the legal duties to put preventative measures in place, we have a duty to protect individuals from harm caused by work related stress.

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress, which can be detrimental to health. As an organisation, it is important that we understand what pressures our staff are under and ensure they don't lead to stress.

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. Further information on the variety of mental health conditions which exist can be accessed [here](#).

We are also aware that working culture and conditions can impact on physical health in as well as mental wellbeing. 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 their sitting positions.

Anybody can have a mental health difficulty and, on average, one in four people will experience a mental health difficulty at some point in their lives. Most people who experience mental health issues do improve or learn to live with them, especially if support is given early on and it's recognised that a proactive approach by staff, managers and colleagues can have significant impact in the management of stress. The workplace can also be an important support mechanism to overcoming such

problems when adequate flexible procedures are in place, such as our Flexible Working [Policy](#) and [Toolkit](#).

Support will be provided when needed, regardless of the source of issues and/or concern, with no differentiation being made to the root cause, should it lie in the home or in the workplace.

## **2 Roles and responsibilities**

### **2.1 Public Health Wales**

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 do their best job. We will foster a culture where our focus is on the creation of a positive, flexible and sustainable work environment. Our key actions will be:

- Zero tolerance of discrimination.
- Zero tolerance of bullying and harassment.
- Routine and systematic use of Health Impact Assessment, EQIA and risk assessment methods.
- Allocation of adequate resources, for instance, time and commitment, to support and protect staff wellbeing and promote positive mental wellbeing.

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

#### **2.1.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974**

Requires employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees.

#### **2.1.2 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.

### 2.1.3 The 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.

### 2.1.4 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 [Workplace Stress Referral Form](#) 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).

### 2.1.5 Maternity, Adoption, Paternity/Maternity Support, Shared Parental Leave and IVF Policy

The purpose of the policy is to advise staff of their rights in relation to maternity, adoption and paternity/maternity support leave, and also in respect of IVF treatment. It should be read in conjunction with the document entitled "Procedures for Pay and Leave - Maternity, Adoption, Paternity/Maternity Support, Shared Parental Leave and IVF Treatment" which provides further detail on entitlements and responsibilities within each of these areas.

## 2.2 Managers

Managers have a key role in demonstrating and promoting the importance of the health and wellbeing of the team they lead. They must have a proactive approach so any issues may be identified at an early stage and staff can be supported with early interventions. They 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 proactive approach, defined by the responsiveness of their actions. Key actions for managers include:

- Zero tolerance of discrimination, bullying and harassment.

- Duty of care to self and others.
- Foster a safe and supportive environment.
- Attend any stress management training and use resources on offer within the organisation.
- 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.
- Identify and meet training and development needs, ensuring staff are provided with clear and realistic objectives and that performance is managed effectively and fairly.
- 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.
- Proactively 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.

## 2.3 Staff

Staff have a responsibility to identify potential causes of stress for themselves or colleagues before they become a problem, and to raise them with their manager. If managers are not aware of a problem, it is difficult for action to be taken and to enable the most appropriate support to be identified. As defined in manager's responsibilities, staff should also demonstrate a proactive approach to raising issues, whether their own or their colleagues.

Staff should demonstrate by their actions:

- Zero tolerance of discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- Duty of care to self and others.

- Meet with 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.
- Awareness of own wellbeing and willingness to seek advice and support when necessary.
- Be supportive of colleagues through any difficulties they may have.
- Accept sources of help and support.
- Recognition of the fact that stress can exacerbate and/or lead to MSDs.

## **2.4 People and Organisational Development Directorate**

The directorate has a key role in 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:

- Provision of confidential support and coaching to managers when a complex issue has been identified.
- Advise and signpost employees to sources of support.
- Lead role in audit and review of policy.

## **2.5 Occupational Health**

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

- 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.

## 2.6 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.

## 2.7 Interdependent Policies, Guidelines and Protocols

There are a number of interdependent policies, guidelines and protocols which should be used in support of stress prevention and promotion of mental wellbeing.

### [Sickness Absence policy](#)

To be proactive, consistent and have a fair approach to managing sickness absence. To utilise all of Public Health Wales services, including Occupational Health to support a timely return to good health, and to ensure that all parties work together to facilitate a return to work as soon as possible following a period of sickness.

### [My Contribution policy](#)

My Contribution is our performance management process for helping you see how your role fits into the organisation and how what you do has a real impact on the success of Public Health Wales. Having regular conversations and constructive feedback is at the heart of the process and there is a form to help you and your manager to plan your discussions as well as record your achievements and action plan.

### [Health and Safety policy](#)

The aim of this policy is to detail how Public Health Wales will discharge its statutory health & safety duties to provide a safe environment for service users, visitors, contractors, staff and others who may be affected by the work of the organisation.

### [Flexible Working policy](#) and [toolkit](#)

This policy sets out Public Health Wales' commitment to creating a more flexible workplace to enable the recruitment and retention of staff and to

facilitate a healthy work-life balance that is essential to the health and wellbeing of our workforce.

### [Dignity at Work policy](#)

This policy sets out Public Health Wales commitment to providing a working environment free from harassment and bullying and ensuring all staff are treated, and treat others, with dignity and respect.

## **3 Procedure**

### **3.1 Self referral**

Information on how you can gain support is available in Appendix 1.

### **3.2 Management referral**

Information on how you can refer staff for support is available in Appendix 2.

## **4 Implementation Plan**

The policy will be implemented across the organisation and made available to all staff. Methods include:

- Intranet news story to launch
- Use of social media fora to publicise
- Provision of managers' briefing information
- Cross referencing with all relevant policies
- Inclusion in staff induction information
- Inclusion in Management Leadership Development Programme and other relevant training

## **5 Equality and Welsh Language**

The policy will be made available in Welsh.

## **6 Audit**

The application of the policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis, with input from the People and OD team, including analysis of relevant absence rates and related employee relations management data. Oversight will

also be provided from the Staff Health and Wellbeing Steering Group, and Project Team, and the People and OD Committee.

## **7 Distribution**

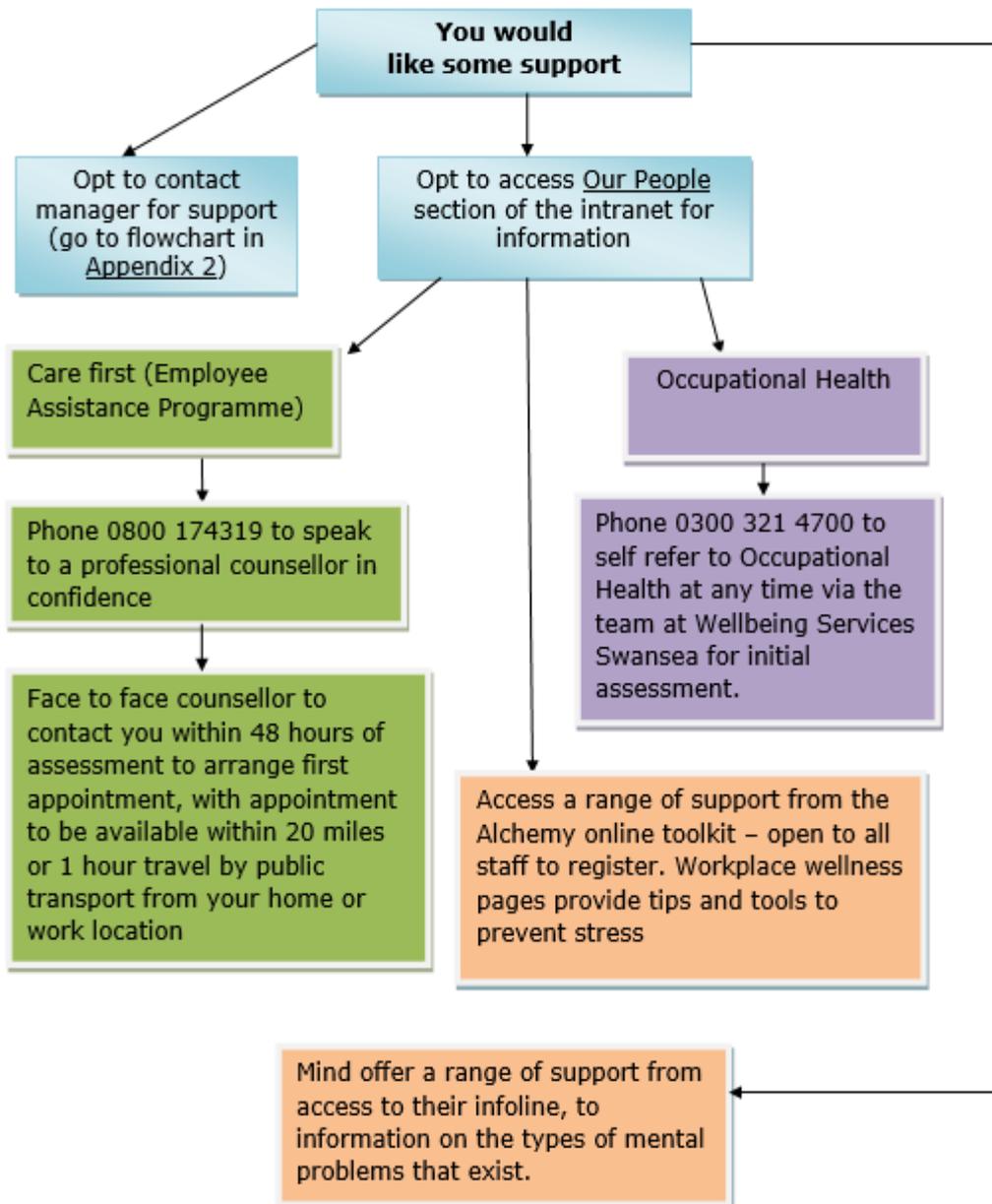
All staff will be made aware of this policy upon commencement with Public Health Wales. It can be obtained on the Public Health Wales Policies Intranet page, will be publicised via the staff intranet, and will be sent to all Directorate leads for circulation.

## **8 Review**

This policy will be reviewed in one year through consultation with employees, managers and trade union representatives, with the aim of review against aims and objectives.

## 9 Appendices

### 9.1 Appendix 1 - Self referral



#### Hyperlinks and relevant contacts:

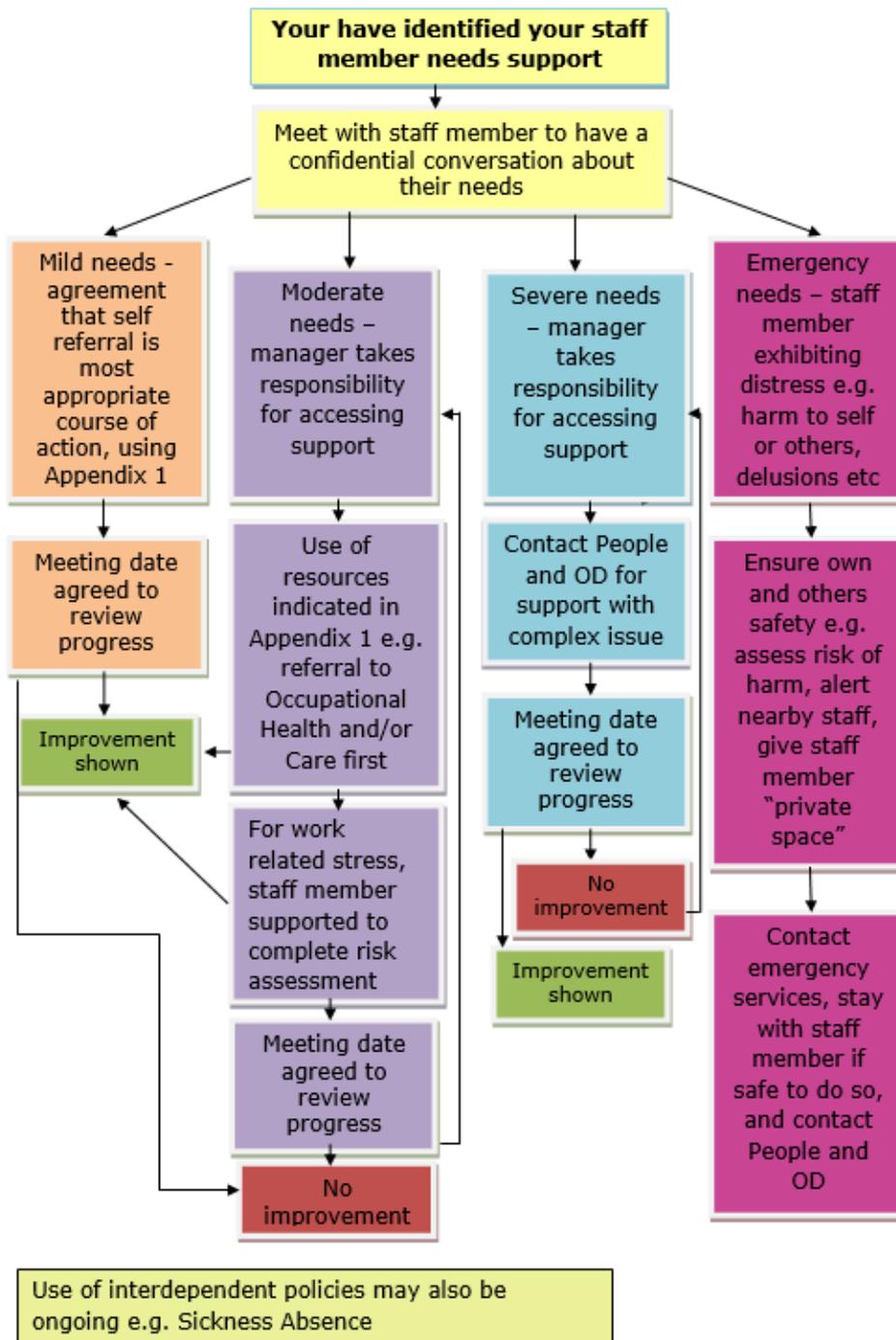
**Care first:** Phone 0800 174319 to speak to a professional counsellor in confidence

**People Alchemy:** Go to <http://www.peoplealchemy.co.uk/phw> to register

**Mind:** [Mind](#) offer a range of support from access to their [infoline](#), to information on the [types of mental health problems](#) that exist.

[Workplace Stress Risk Assessment Form](#)

## 9.2 Appendix 2 – Management referral



### Hyperlinks and relevant contacts:

**Care first:** Phone 0800 174319 to speak to a professional counsellor in confidence

**People Alchemy:** Go to <http://www.peoplealchemy.co.uk/phw> to register

**Mind:** [Mind](#) offer a range of support from access to their [infoline](#), to information on the [types of mental health problems](#) that exist.

[Workplace Stress Risk Assessment Form](#)

## 9.3 Appendix 3 – The HSE Management Standards

### What are the 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. These are:

- [Demands](#) – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- [Control](#) – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
- [Support](#) – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- [Relationships](#) – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- [Role](#) – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- [Change](#) – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The Management Standards represent a set of conditions that, if present, reflect a high level of health well-being and organisational performance.

The Management Standards:

- demonstrate good practice through a step by step risk assessment approach;
- allow assessment of the current situation using surveys and other techniques;
- promote active discussion and working in partnership with employees to help decide on practical improvements that can be made;

- help simplify risk assessment for work related stress by:
  - identifying the main risk factors for work related stress;
  - helping employers focus on the underlying causes and their prevention; and
  - providing a yardstick by which organisations can gauge their performance in tackling the key causes of stress.

## 9.4 Appendix 4 – Appropriate agencies for signposting

### Care first

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.

### C.A.L.L – Community Advice and Listening Line

An all Wales out of hours mental health telephone helpline service providing emotional support, information on local and national services. They also provide literature on a range of subjects, symptoms and treatments

Telephone: 0800 132 737 (open 24 hours)

Website: [www.callhelpline.org.uk](http://www.callhelpline.org.uk)

### Depression Alliance

Information about depression and access to self-help groups  
[www.depressionalliance.org](http://www.depressionalliance.org)

### Hafal

Principal organisation in Wales working with individuals recovering from serious mental illness and their families.

Tel: 01792 832400

Email: [hafal@hafal.org](mailto:hafal@hafal.org)

<http://www.hafal.org/>

### Gofal

Leading Welsh mental health and wellbeing charity: support and information

[http://www.gofal.org.uk/Wales\\_18/12/15\\_Version1](http://www.gofal.org.uk/Wales_18/12/15_Version1)

### MIND

Mental health charity providing advice and information.

Telephone: 0300 123 3393 or text 86463

Email: [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

### Royal College of Psychiatrists

Leaflets and expert advice on mental health

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice.aspx>

### Cruse Bereavement Care

Daytime helpline: 0844 477 9400, or email: [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

Online advice and information:

[www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)

**Samaritans**

24/7 helpline number: 116 123

Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)