

# Mental Wellbeing Policy

The school is committed to achieving a health workforce by placing value on both physical and mental health. Mental health problems can be triggered by stress arising from the workplace or outside work and mental wellbeing at work is determined by the interaction between the working environment, the nature of the work and the individual.

We would like to create a working environment that promotes and supports the wellbeing of all employees and encourages employee to take responsibility for their own mental health and wellbeing.

The school recognises that mental health issues can be triggered by excessive levels of work-related stress and that they have a duty of care to take measures, as reasonably practicable, to preserve the mental health and wellbeing of its employees whilst at work.

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | What is mental ill health?.....              | 1 |
| 2 | Policy aims .....                            | 2 |
| 3 | Responsibilities .....                       | 2 |
| 4 | Mental Wellbeing Toolkit .....               | 4 |
| 5 | Headteacher (or Line Manager) guidance ..... | 6 |
| 6 | External support .....                       | 8 |

Where the headteacher is the employee concerned, any reference to the headteacher in this policy should be replaced with the chair of governors.

## 1 What is mental ill health?

Mental ill health can encompass a wide range of experiences that affect an individual’s ability to cope with life and/or work responsibilities. These difficulties can range from stress and anxiety through to serious mental health conditions diagnosed and treated by the health services.

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as “an adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon 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.

Symptoms of stress can be both physical and/or psychological and can include:

### Physical

- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Stomach problems
- Bowel and bladder problems
- Increased heart rate

### Psychological

- Mood swings
- Short temper
- Constant worrying
- Low self esteem
- Poor concentration

## 2 Policy aims

The school aims to:

- Build and maintain a workplace environment and culture that supports mental health and wellbeing and prevents discrimination
- Increase employee knowledge and awareness of mental health, including stress, and wellbeing issues and behaviours
- Promote a positive working environment that does not adversely impact on the mental health and wellbeing of employees
- Support the effectiveness of its employees to enable them to fulfil the demands of their role;
- Ensure that employees who have, or who have had, symptoms of mental ill health are treated responsibly and in an understanding manner

The school recognises that the majority of people who experience mental health difficulties recover and learn to manage their symptoms, especially if they are supported in the early stages.

## 3 Responsibilities

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>School</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Actively supporting the implementation of this policy by promoting good mental health and wellbeing in all aspects of school activity</li><li>• Promoting a positive attitude to mental health and wellbeing within school</li><li>• Ensuring advice and information about how to access support is provided for all employees</li><li>• Ensuring managers understand their duty of care for employees</li><li>• Ensuring stress, which is likely to lead to ill health, is reduced as far as practicably possible in the work environment</li></ul>  |
| <b>Employees</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taking positive steps to safeguard their own mental health e.g. by taking regular breaks and working reasonable hours</li><li>• Informing school, usually with the Headteacher or line manager, of any mental health difficulties to ensure they can deal with them fairly and provide appropriate support</li><li>• Supporting their colleagues if they are experiencing poor mental health, encouraging them to talk to their manager</li><li>• Seeking support from their GP or other appropriate agencies if they are experiencing health issues</li><li>• Discussing with their manager any appropriate measures to make their work less stressful</li><li>• Recognising the principles and importance of work life balance</li><li>• Participate in initiatives intended to eliminate or reduce work-related mental health issues and contribute towards a non-stigmatising culture</li></ul> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Headteachers/<br/>Line Managers</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging a workplace culture where mental health, wellbeing and physical wellbeing are regarded as equally important</li> <li>• Ensuring employees are appropriately trained to do their job and understand their role</li> <li>• Communicating effectively with employees, particularly when there are organisational or procedural changes</li> <li>• Considering the implications for employees of any changes to working practices, ways of working, new policies or procedures and the need for appropriate support and training</li> <li>• Recognising and resolving work-related issues at an individual and team level where possible</li> <li>• Managing absence in accordance with the policy, liaising with HR and Occupational Health to maximise support to employees who have mental or physical issues</li> <li>• Ensuring employees are managing the demands of the job by monitoring workloads, working hours and monitoring absence</li> <li>• Recording any work-related mental ill health on the Accident Report Form: <a href="https://myforms-durham-dash.achieveservice.com/en/service/Corporate_Accident_Report_Form">https://myforms-durham-dash.achieveservice.com/en/service/Corporate_Accident_Report_Form</a></li> <li>• Ensuring employees returning to work after a period of absence due to mental ill health are treated in a sensitive and sympathetic manner</li> <li>• Using the Mental Wellbeing Toolkit to identify any areas that are causing or could cause mental health issues and take action to eliminate or reduce them where practicable</li> </ul> |
| <b>HR Advice and Support<br/>(with SLA)</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising awareness of this policy and support available</li> <li>• Provide advice and guidance to Headteachers regarding specific cases involving employee mental ill health</li> <li>• Support Headteachers and employees during periods of change in the work environment</li> </ul>  |
| <b>DCC Occupational Health<br/>(with SLA)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help to support individuals who have been absent with mental health difficulties and advise them and their management on a planned return to work</li> <li>• Provide support and advice to individuals who are experiencing mental health difficulties but remain at work</li> <li>• Advising employees about treatment options to help them overcome problems, including referral to other agencies where appropriate</li> </ul>  |
| <b>DCC Health and Safety<br/>(with SLA)</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing guidance and support to managers and employees in implementing control measures</li> <li>• Advising on changes in legislation and current best practice with respect to mental health and stress in the workplace</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Trade Union Representatives</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging members to seek help where appropriate</li> <li>• Helping individuals to understand the policy and where to seek help, if necessary</li> </ul>   |

## 4 Mental Wellbeing Toolkit

Headteachers play a vital role in the identification and management of stress in the school and will often be the first point of contact when an employee feels stressed. They are likely to see the areas causing stress first hand and will be best placed to notice changes in employee behaviour that may indicate that their mental wellbeing is suffering.

The Mental Wellbeing Toolkit, which includes the Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire and Mental Wellbeing Action Plan, should be used when work-related stressors are identified as a problem either by the employee or observed by the Headteacher, line manager or colleague. It can be used as a tool to raise and discuss work-related stressors during a meeting, such as a Return to Work Interview, Attendance Management Interview or Appraisal.

The toolkit helps the employee to identify the specific areas within the workplace that are causing or contributing to their ill health and provides the opportunity for both the employee and Headteacher (or appropriate manager) to consider what actions could be taken to resolve or improve the situation.

A copy of the Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire and Mental Wellbeing Action Plan can be found on the extranet.

### 4.1 HSE Management Standards

The Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire is based on the HSE Management Standards that have been developed to help employers tackle work-related stress and reduce the occurrence and negative impact of mental ill health.

The Management Standards cover six areas of work design that have been identified as having the potential to contribute to work-related mental ill health. Essentially, they represent a framework for good organisational and management practice.

| Demand        | Definition  |
|---------------|---|
| Demands       | Workload, work patterns and the work environment  |
| Control       | How much say the person has in the way they do their work   |
| Support       | Encouragement and resources provided by the school, line managers and colleagues  |
| Relationships | Promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour  |
| Role          | Whether people understand their role within the school and whether the school ensures that they do not have conflicting roles |
| Change        | How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the school  |

## **4.2 Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire**

This should be issued to an employee in circumstances where the individual has identified that work-related issues are impacting on their mental health or where the Headteacher or a colleague has observed that this may be the case.

The Headteacher (or line manager) should meet with the employee to discuss the initial concerns that have been raised and suggest that it would be useful if the employee completed the Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire. This will help them to narrow down the specific workplace issues that are causing or contributing to their mental ill health.

The employee should be given sufficient time and privacy to complete the questionnaire but should be asked to return it before the next planned meeting to ensure that consideration can be given to the issues and appropriate support options identified.

## **4.3 Mental Wellbeing Action Plan**

A meeting to formulate an action plan to address the issues identified should be scheduled within 2 weeks of receiving the Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire.

The Mental Wellbeing Action Plan is designed to enable both the manager and employee to develop effective solutions to the issues raised in the questionnaire. A jointly developed and agreed action plan should:

- Help set realistic goals to work towards – prioritising the main stressors will help identify the most effective interventions
- Help to identify any actions that are required – operational feasibility must be considered, and timescales should be noted
- Demonstrate the school is serious about addressing the employee's concerns – the employee and Headteacher (or line manager) must sign the action plan once completed
- Provide something to evaluate and review against in the future – the action plan should be regularly reviewed until actions are complete

### **4.3.1 Review meetings**

It is essential that the Headteacher (or line manager) and employee meet to review and evaluate the actions that have been implemented to tackle the issues raised on the Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire. At least one review meeting will be required no more than 4 weeks after the action plan is agreed.

It is important to discuss whether the employee feels that the actions are improving the work-related issues originally highlighted. It may be necessary to update or change the action plan at review meetings.

## **4.4 Special considerations**

### **4.4.1 When management is the stressor**

Interpersonal difficulties with line managers are a well-recognised potential stressor within the workplace. In these circumstances, it may be appropriate for someone else in school to participate in the discussions about the Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire and formulation of the Mental Wellbeing Action Plan to enable the employee to raise concerns and engage in meaningful discussion about the issues of concern.

Alternatively, it may be appropriate for the Headteacher (or line manager) to participate in the discussions but with the inclusion of the employee's Trade Union Representative or work colleague and a member of the HR Advice and Support Team.

#### **4.4.2 Circumstances when the toolkit may be inappropriate**

This toolkit is the preferred method of managing work-related stressors and the resulting mental ill health, however, it is recognised that there may be occasions where the toolkit may create further unnecessary stress for the individual.

If other management actions e.g. disciplinary procedures or suspension are the trigger for the employee's stress, timely resolution of these may prove to be more effective. In these circumstances, the consideration regarding the use of the toolkit could be deferred until after the conclusion of the other procedures.

#### **4.5 Conclusion of the process**

The action plan should be reviewed for as long as deemed necessary and until all the actions have been completed as far as possible.

If the employee does not return to work or continues to raise concerns regarding their health and work, an Occupational Health referral should be made either as part of the Attendance Management process or as a management concern. Where a Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire and Action Plan has been completed the referral to Occupational Health should include a copy.

### **5 Headteacher (or Line Manager) guidance**

Everyone experiences pressure on a daily basis and some level of pressure is required to motivate us and enable us to perform at our best. If employees experience too much pressure without the opportunity to recover, they may feel unable to cope, resulting in increased stress and a decrease in mental wellbeing.

Mental ill health can happen to anyone and it should not be seen as a weakness. The impact of stress on an individual's mental health will vary from one individual to another and may even vary at different times of an individual's life. It is therefore important to learn to recognise mental ill health at an early stage and understand what to do in order to reduce it.

The toolkit recognises that whilst dealing with their mental ill health is an employee's responsibility, the school has a responsibility to help reduce any factors that may arise within their workplace.

#### **5.1 Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire**

The experience of stress is subjective and, as Headteacher, you may not see things the same way as your employee.

The purpose of the MWQ is to enable you to understand the way your employee sees the issue(s) and the reality of these perceptions should not be debated.

The questionnaire provides you with an insight into how the employee sees and experiences issues that arise within the workplace. Whilst you may not agree with their perception of the situation, the validity of this should not be debated, and the information should be used as the basis for your discussion when formulating the action plan.

All instances of work-related mental ill health must be recorded using the Accident Reporting Form: [https://myforms-durham-dash.achieveservice.com/en/service/Corporate\\_Accident\\_Report\\_Form](https://myforms-durham-dash.achieveservice.com/en/service/Corporate_Accident_Report_Form)

## 5.2 Mental Wellbeing Action Plan

The action plan should be drawn up in conjunction with the employee, based on the responses provided on the Mental Wellbeing questionnaire.

It provides a clear and structured framework through which to try to address the stressors identified by the individual employee.

The action plan ensures that the school have done all that it can reasonably do to address the source of stressors to the individual, subject to the organisational demands and resources present.

### 5.2.1 Suggested actions

The table below shows some examples of how stressors within each of the six Management Standards could be addressed:

| Demands  | Relationships  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold regular team or 1-1 meetings to discuss the workload for the forthcoming week(s)</li> <li>• Develop a personal work plan to ensure the employee knows what their job involves</li> <li>• Allocate additional resources</li> <li>• Provide training (informal or formal) and resources to help the employee prioritise</li> <li>• Consider changes to the employee's work pattern to help them cope with external pressures e.g. childcare, commuting</li> <li>• Allow regular breaks, especially when the work is complex or emotionally demanding</li> <li>• Provide realistic deadlines</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the school's policy for dealing with unacceptable behaviour e.g. Resolution Policy, Disciplinary Policy</li> <li>• Highlight the school's Confidential Reporting Code</li> <li>• Provide support to help employee deal with and diffuse difficult situations</li> <li>• Encourage good communication</li> <li>• Discuss how individuals work together and how they can build positive relationships</li> <li>• Identify ways to celebrate success</li> <li>• Create a culture where colleagues trust and encourage each other.</li> </ul> |
| Control  | Role   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree systems that enable employee to have a say over the way their work is organised or undertaken</li> <li>• Talk about the skills people have and if they believe they are able to use these to good effect? How else could they use their skills?</li> <li>• Allow and encourage employees to participate in decision making</li> <li>• Allow employees some control over the pace of their work</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold regular team and/or 1-1 meetings to ensure individuals are clear about their role and know what is planned for the coming months</li> <li>• Ensure job descriptions are up to date</li> <li>• Ensure all new employees receive a thorough induction and that colleagues understand the roles and responsibilities of the new recruit</li> <li>• Define work structures clearly so all team members know who is doing what and why</li> </ul>   |

| Support   | Change   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold regular team or 1-1 meetings to discuss emerging issues or pressures</li> <li>• Include 'emerging pressures' as a standing item in employee meetings or appraisal meetings</li> <li>• Ask how employees would like to access managerial support e.g. open door policy, agreed times</li> <li>• Use policies in the workplace to enable employees to cope with domestic commitments e.g. flexible working request, parental leave</li> <li>• Talk about ways the school can provide help if someone is experiencing issues outside of work e.g. health assured</li> <li>• Ensure employees receive sufficient training to undertake their role &amp; provide opportunities for career development</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all employees are aware of why the change is happening and agree a system for doing this</li> <li>• Define and explain the key steps of the change. Ensure employee consultation is a key element of the programme</li> <li>• Agree methods of communicating e.g. meetings, letters, emails and the frequency</li> <li>• Ensure that employees are aware of the impact of the change on their roles</li> <li>• Involve employees in discussions about how jobs might be developed and changed</li> <li>• Explain what the school wants to achieve and why it is essential that the change(s) take place</li> </ul> |

## 6 External support

### Welfare Rights (Durham County Council)

For advice relating to benefits or tax issues.

[www.durham.gov.uk/welfarerights](http://www.durham.gov.uk/welfarerights)

03000 268968  
Monday to Friday, 9am – 12pm

### Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

For advice relating to benefits, work, debt, consumer, family, housing, law and courts, immigration and health issues

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)  
03444 111 444

### Talking Changes

Self-help and talking therapies service designed to help anyone living in the County Durham and Darlington area to deal with common mental health problems, such as stress, anxiety, depression, panic, phobias, OCD and post traumatic stress disorder.

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

0191 333 3300  
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 9am – 8pm,  
Wednesday and Friday, 9am – 5pm.

### Cruse (Bereavement Care)

Provides support, advice and information to children, young people and adults when someone dies, offering face-to-face, telephone, email and website support.

[www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)  
[www.hopeagain.org.uk](http://www.hopeagain.org.uk) (specifically for children and young people)

0808 808 1677  
Monday and Friday, 9.30am – 5pm, Tuesday,  
Wednesday and Thursday, 9.30am – 8pm



### **Access to Work**

To get help at work if you are disabled or have a health condition.

[www.gov.uk/access-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)

0800 1217479

Text phone: 0800 121 7579

Monday to Friday, 8am – 6pm

### **Samaritans**

For someone to talk to on any issue including:

- loss of a friend or family member;
- Financial worries;
- Job related or study stress;
- Loneliness and isolation;
- Depression;
- Dependency on alcohol or other drugs;
- Thoughts of suicide.

Telephone: 116 123

(free from landlines and mobiles, including PAYG)

### **Age UK**

Information and advice relating to money and legal, health and wellbeing, care and support, travel and hobbies, work and learning.

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

0800 0556112

8am – 7pm, 365 days per year

### **Macmillan Cancer Support**

Provides support for people who have been diagnosed with cancer, including advice on money and work.

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

0808 808 0000

Monday to Friday, 9am – 8pm



This policy has been developed by the HR Advice and Support team, based on current legislation and best practice. If you would like any advice on the application of this policy, please do not hesitate to contact the team:

|                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Telephone</b> | 03000 266688           |
| <b>Email</b>     | hradvice@durham.gov.uk |

**Further support can be accessed by contacting (subject to SLA buy in):**

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Payroll and Employee Services</b> | <a href="mailto:pesschools@durham.gov.uk">pesschools@durham.gov.uk</a>  |
| <b>Occupational Health</b>           | <a href="mailto:occhealthadmin@durham.gov.uk">occhealthadmin@durham.gov.uk</a>  |
| <b>Health and Safety</b>             | <a href="mailto:hsteam@durham.gov.uk">hsteam@durham.gov.uk</a>  |
| <b>Employee Assistance Programme</b> | <a href="http://www.healthassuredeap.com">www.healthassuredeap.com</a><br>Username: durham Password: council<br>0800 716017 |

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| LK            | v 4.3          | January 2022       | January 2024       |

The school complies with all relevant statutory obligations. The school privacy notice provides more specific information on data collected and how it is handled, a copy of which can be accessed from the school. For more information please contact the school directly.

If you have any concerns about how your data is handled, please contact either the school Data Protection Officer (details available from the school office), or the Information Commissioner's Office.