



# Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

May 2023

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## Introduction

Here at Orkney Islands Council, we want to support our colleagues' wellbeing and this includes mental health. We know for some of us, talking about our mental health can be uncomfortable. But with research suggesting that 1 in 4 of us will experience a mental health issue every year and that 17% of us are living with a serious mental health concern, it's ever more important to talk about how we are feeling.

Just like physical health, we all have mental health. Sometimes we might experience mental health concerns that last a few weeks or months, or we might have more serious issues that are longer term. Our mental health may change over time, just like our physical health does. The purpose of this policy is to encourage you to talk about your mental health and wellbeing, to let you know what we can do to support you, and to give you information on where to go for further help.

We have a number of guides that accompany this policy including a guide to managing workplace stress and a guide on supporting employees' mental health and wellbeing.

### The aims of this policy are:

- To encourage us to talk more about mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.
- For those experiencing symptoms to feel you can ask for the support you need.
- For managers to have the knowledge and confidence to know what to do if you need to provide support to a team member through this time.
- To give all colleagues information about where to access further guidance and support.

We are committed to ensuring the health and wellbeing of all employees and that we are all treated fairly and with dignity and respect at work.

We are committed to taking all reasonable steps to make sure that we:

- Listen to you if you tell us about your mental health or workplace stress.
- Keep information about your mental health confidential.
- Support you if you are experiencing symptoms related to your mental health and wellbeing, making reasonable adjustments where needed.
- Treat you with respect, not making judgements or assumptions about you because you have told us about your mental health or workplace stress symptoms.
- Treat any issues of bullying and harassment in relation to mental health or workplace stress issues seriously. See our Dignity at Work Policy for more information.

### Policy statement

As an employer we have a legal duty under Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all our employees. In terms of Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and

Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the Council also has a duty to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of our employees to which they are exposed whilst at work; this includes the risks of psychological as well as physical harm. Orkney Islands 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.

We recognise 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 an individual will still potentially impact on the workplace.

## **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 Orkney Islands Council's commitment to providing a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation. This policy also takes account of Orkney Islands 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 Orkney Islands Council's Sickness Absence Policy must be followed in conjunction with this Policy.

Please note this policy does not form part of any contract of employment and may be amended and reviewed in conjunction with Trade Unions at any time.

## **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.

### **Corporate Directors and Head of Services are responsible for:**

- Monitoring absence statistics, staff surveys and other available information on a regular basis, particularly in care settings where coping with distressing and traumatic incidents, including vacancy rates which may indicate where there are not enough people to do all of the work.
- 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.

### **As a manager with responsibility for others, you should:**

- Have an awareness of your own management and leadership style and the impact your behaviours might have on the people you manage.
- Have regular conversations with your team members and should cover health and wellbeing.



- Listen non-judgementally and provide appropriate support to your team members who are affected by mental health problems or workplace stress.
- Follow the relevant manager guidance to support team members in managing any mental health issues or workplace stress.
- Consider using the Wellness Action Plans with your team members to help proactively manage health and wellbeing. Guides can be found for line managers and employees within [Health and Wellbeing \(sharepoint.com\)](https://sharepoint.com).
- Set team members realistic targets, monitor workloads, working hours and overtime to ensure that they are managing their workload within the time available.

### **As an employee you should:**

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

# Talking about mental health and wellbeing at work

If you're living with a mental health issue, we know it can be a difficult step to tell people about it. But we encourage you to talk to your manager, so they can give you the support you need. You can mention it in your next one-to-one or ask to meet with them just to talk about this.

Your manager won't judge you. They'll listen to you and talk to you about what they can do to help. You might feel it's enough for them just to be aware of what you're experiencing. Or they might need to make changes to your work or work environment to help. There is more information about reasonable adjustments in the section below. You can discuss and agree what will happen next.

They may encourage you to go to your GP for support, if you haven't already. They might also ask you if you're happy to be referred to occupational health. This is so we can get more information about how your mental health issue is likely to affect you at work, and what adjustments we can make to help.

If you tell your manager about your mental health concerns, they'll keep this confidential and won't share this information unless you say it's okay – except if we've got serious concerns for your safety or that of others.

## Reducing stigma

We recognise the importance of promoting open communication to support reducing any stigma around mental health issues. We are committed to raising awareness of mental health in the workplace and continue to:

- Utilise national campaigns and activities relating to mental health and wellbeing.
- Provide online training to all employees via iLearn to raise awareness of mental health conditions.
- Provide specific training for managers on supporting people with mental health issues.

## Making reasonable adjustments

There might be reasonable adjustments we can make at work to help you manage your mental health or workplace stress symptoms. These may be temporary changes or longer-term changes depending on your particular circumstances.

Your manager may do a risk assessment to understand more about how your mental health or stress symptoms might affect you at work and the adjustments you need.

### Wellness Action Plans

You can use a Wellness Action Plan to identify how your mental health or stress is impacting you at work and use this to discuss any changes you might need with your manager.

The adjustments we can make will depend on your circumstances, but the types of changes that might help could be:

- Having meetings with your manager more often.
- Agreeing that we'll tell you information face to face, so you can talk through how you feel about it. Alternatively, you might prefer us to send information to you in an email first, so you have time to think through how you want to talk about it. Whatever helps in your situation.
- Adjusting some of your duties.
- Providing specific equipment such as noise cancelling headphones or a light box which might help if you have Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).
- Changing your start and finish times, or when you take your breaks. This might help you avoid situations you know are going to be stressful for you.
- Agreeing for you to work somewhere else at times if you need to.
- Giving you time off to attend medical appointments.

If you think you might need a change to your working pattern to help you manage your mental health or stress, talk to your manager about this when you are creating your [Wellness Action Plan](#). In some circumstances, this request may be considered as a reasonable adjustment rather than requiring an application through the [Flexible Working Policy](#).

Your manager may suggest an occupational health referral. This is so that we can get more information about how your mental health or stress symptoms are likely to affect you at work and what adjustments can be put in place to support you.

## Implementation of existing Policies

The Council has a policy on Sickness Absence management which includes absence triggers based on duration or frequency of sickness absences. Any employee absences resulting from mental health or workplace stress should be recorded as per the Sickness Absence Management policy.

It is acknowledged that mental health or stress symptoms may in some circumstances impact a person's performance at work, and therefore this should be taken into account when applying the Council's Disciplinary or Capability Policy.

Other policies that may be useful for you and your team member include:

- Health and Safety.
- Leave of Absence.
- Flexible Working.
- Supporting Menopause in the workplace.

## Wellness Action Plans

Wellness Action Plans can be used to identify what helps you to manage your mental health or stress symptoms at work, what causes you to become unwell and the support you would like to receive to improve your wellbeing.

By creating a Wellness Action Plan, you can identify what works and what doesn't work for you in managing your mental health and wellbeing. It can help identify what support you might need from your manager and what you can do to support your own mental health and wellbeing.

There are templates you can use to create your Wellness Action Plan; one for [hybrid working](#) and one for the [workplace](#). You can either do this on your own and then share it with your manager or discuss it with them to put it together. Once you have shared this with your manager, they will keep it confidential and won't share it with anyone else without your permission.

It is good to meet regularly with your line manager to discuss your Wellness Action Plan and how you feel things are going. You can use your usual one-to-one, or just ask them if you want a catch up.

## Other sources of support

There is lots of other support available about managing mental health, stress and wellbeing. Here are some that you may find useful:

### **Wellbeing Resources**

Resources to support employees and further information can be found within the Wellbeing section of the [Council's Intranet](#).

### **Mental Health Awareness for Managers – Virtual**

The aim of the course is to understand common mental health problems and how to cope with and deal with these in a positive way in your role as a manager.

Occupational Stress will be covered along with your responsibilities as a manager in dealing with this in terms of both organisational policy and under legislation.

### **Scottish Mental Health First Aid – Face to Face**

This is a two-day course and is designed for everyone. It covers how to recognise someone in a mental health crisis, how to approach and support them and covers basic suicide intervention skills.

### **Managing Personal Stress – Face to Face**

For all employees who are prone to stress and would like to investigate the reasons and potential solutions behind work related stress, contact Learning and Development for a place on a Managing Personal stress workshop.

### **iLearn health and wellbeing resources**

Available to all employees to raise awareness of health and wellbeing in a workplace setting.

### **Trauma Informed Training – Virtual**

Training sessions are available on [TURAS](#), The NHS Learning Management Centre. Contact Learning and Development for further details.

**Trade Unions** can be contacted for further advice and support.

# Glossary

Knowing how to talk about mental health, stress and wellbeing is important for both people experiencing symptoms and those who need to provide support to a team member or colleague during this time.

Having a shared understanding of the terms and terminology that are frequently used in discussions about the mental health is key to ensuring we are all clear on what we mean and helps to reduce any potential confusion or embarrassment.

You aren't expected to be an expert on mental health conditions. Having an awareness of the common terms used when discussing mental health and wellbeing means that conversations are more likely to be supportive and better provide the right guidance and signposting where needed.

The table below provides a short guide to some of the terms and definitions that are used regarding the mental health.

Term	Definition
<b>Mental wellbeing</b>	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.
<b>Mental illness or mental health problems</b>	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.
<b>Work related stress</b>	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.
<b>Mental health disability</b>	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 health-related disability would fall under the scope of the Equality Act (2010) and reasonable adjustments should be supported in line with the relevant section in the Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.





# Wellness Action Plan

Guide for  
Line Managers







## Helpful definitions

For the purpose of clarity, when we refer to 'mental health' in this guide we are using it in the broadest possible sense. Some useful definitions to terms used in this guide can be found below.



## **Mental health**

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. How we feel can vary from good mental wellbeing to difficult feelings and emotions, to severe mental health problems.

## **Mental wellbeing**

Mental wellbeing is the ability to cope with the day-to-day stresses of life, work productively, interact positively with others and realise our own potential. When we talk about wellbeing, we are referring to mental wellbeing.

## **Poor mental health**

Poor mental health is when we are struggling with low mood, stress or anxiety. This might mean we're also coping with feeling restless, confused, short tempered, upset or preoccupied. We all go through periods of experiencing poor mental health – mental health is a spectrum of moods and experiences, and we all have times when we feel better or worse.

## **Mental health problems**

We all have times when we struggle with our mental health. A mental health problem is when difficult experiences or feelings go on for a long time and affect our ability to enjoy and live our lives in the way we want. You might receive a specific diagnosis from your doctor, or just feel more generally that you are experiencing a prolonged period of poor mental health.

## **Common mental health problems**

These include depression, anxiety, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). These make up the majority of the problems that lead to one in four people experiencing a mental health problem in any given year. Symptoms can range from the comparatively mild to very severe.

## **Severe mental health problems**

These include conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder which are less common. They can have very varied symptoms and affect your everyday life to different degrees, and may require more complex and/or long-term treatments.

## **Work-related stress**

Work-related stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them at work. Stress, including work-related stress, can be a significant cause of illness. It is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as increased capacity for error. Stress is not a medical diagnosis, but severe stress that continues for a long time may lead to a diagnosis of depression or anxiety, or other mental health problems.

## **Burnout**

Burnout isn't technically a diagnosis, but instead refers to a collection of symptoms. You may feel exhausted, have little motivation for your job, feel irritable or anxious and you may see a dip in your work performance.



## What is a Wellness Action Plan?

Given the high levels of stress and poor mental health we are seeing in the workplace, there is a growing demand for innovative and proactive ways of managing our mental health at work.



## Guide for Line Managers What is a Wellness Action Plan?

The Wellness Action Plan is inspired by Mary Ellen Copeland's Wellness Recovery Action Plan® (WRAP®): an evidence-based system used worldwide by people to manage their mental health.

Wellness Action Plans are a personalised, practical tool we can all use – whether we have a mental health problem or not – to help us identify what keeps us well at work, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem at work should you be experiencing one.

As a manager, encouraging your team members to draw up a Wellness Action Plan gives them ownership of the practical steps needed to help them stay well at work or manage a mental health problem.

By giving your team an opportunity to draw up a Wellness Action Plan, they will be able to plan in advance and gain an awareness of what works and what doesn't work for them. A Wellness Action Plan can help your people to develop approaches to support their mental wellbeing.

It also opens up a dialogue between you and your team member, to help you better understand their needs and experiences and therefore better support their wellbeing. This in turn can lead to greater productivity, better performance and increased job satisfaction.

By regularly reviewing the agreed, practical steps in the Wellness Action Plan, you can support your team member to adapt it to reflect their experiences or new approaches they find helpful. By allowing the individual to take ownership of the process and of the Wellness Action Plan itself, you will be empowering them to feel more in control.

Wellness Action Plans are also particularly helpful during the return to work process, as they provide a structure for conversations around what support will help your team member and what workplace adjustments might be useful to discuss and consider.





Supporting  
your team  
members  
to develop  
a Wellness  
Action Plan

## How to get your team started with a Wellness Action Plan

Mind provides [three Wellness Action Plan templates](#) and associated guides for your team members to make use of depending on their predominant way of working. We have guides for:

- People working in a workplace
- People working remotely
- People who are hybrid working

Start by sharing our guides with your team and encouraging them to protect time in their calendar to reflect on what keeps them well at work and complete the appropriate Wellness Action plan template.

Completing a Wellness Action Plan can take some time, particularly if it is the first time a team member has ever been asked to consider what keeps them well at work, so look to schedule some time to discuss their completed Wellness Action Plan template at least a week after sharing the guides to allow time for a person to properly reflect on the questions being posed.

## Discussing a Wellness Action Plan

While the Wellness Action Plan itself will provide a structure to your discussion with your team member, it's important to create an environment in which they feel safe and comfortable to share the details they've prepared. Consider the following in preparing for your conversation:

### Choose an appropriate place

- When discussing mental health and wellbeing, it's important to make people feel comfortable so that they feel able to have an open and honest conversation. If holding your discussion in the workplace, find a private and quiet space.
- If your team member is working remotely, be sure to provide appropriate notice of the meeting so they can find an appropriate space to have the discussion. A person working from home may not feel comfortable having a conversation about mental health if sharing a working space with a partner or other members of their household.
- Sometimes a neutral space outside of the workplace like a coffee shop can help a team member to feel at ease. Depending on the location of any remote workers in your team, consider whether it might be possible to hold the meeting in person in a mutually agreeable location.

## Listen and don't make assumptions

- It can be difficult for people to share information relating to their mental health. The Wellness Action Plan template will hopefully have provided your team member time and structure to order their thoughts and articulate their feelings in a way they're comfortable.
- Provide your team member the space to talk through their Wellness Action Plan in their own words in their own time. Listen and be respectful.
- Support your team member to explore the support they need
- We are all experts on our own mental health and the support or adjustments we may need. Don't make assumptions about what may or may not be of support to your team member and try not to influence them by offering your own suggestions unless it is sought.
- Workplace adjustments for poor mental health don't need to be costly or require significant changes. They can be simple. See our section on workplace adjustments for further information.



## Carry out regular reviews

- A Wellness Action Plan is most effective when treated as a live, flexible document, so a regular feedback loop with your team member to discuss and assess what is working and what isn't is an important part of the process.
- Look to protect time to review wellbeing and your team member's Wellness Action Plan as part of regular catch-ups or one-to-ones and make any necessary changes or capture any learnings.
- If your team members are comfortable and happy to do so, you might consider the benefit of a session with your wider team to discuss any key considerations for ways of working together that are useful to share. Understanding one another's communication preferences for example can ensure the team work in a way that supports everyone to perform at their best. Some team members might be happy to share their written Wellness Action Plan in entirety, you might consider where might be best to save these documents to enable appropriate restricted access to the immediate team. But do remember: team members should be supported to only share as much as they are comfortable.



## A note on confidentiality

Your team member owns their Wellness Action Plan. It should be written by the individual, expressing their own personal choices, experiences and needs.

The Wellness Action Plan should only be held confidentially between you and your team member and only read or shared with their permission.

If you are encouraging a team member to fill out a Wellness Action Plan as a result of being unwell, you might wish to ask whether they consent for a copy of it to be held with HR, alongside similar documentation such as an Occupational Health report or a Return to Work plan.

It should be up to the team member to determine whether they are happy for it to be held by HR or kept confidential between them and yourself as their manager.

In order to fulfil your duty of care to keep your staff members safe at work, you will be obliged to break confidentiality if they are experiencing a crisis. If you become aware that someone is at serious risk of harm, whether this is the employee or someone else, you should call the emergency services. When beginning a discussion about a Wellness Action Plan, it is best to ensure they understand the circumstances under which you might be required to share information they disclose.



# Workplace Adjustments

As a result of completing a Wellness Action Plan, you might decide along with your team member that some workplace adjustments are needed in order to support them.

Adjustments for mental health are often simple and it is best practice to offer support to all staff, whether or not they have a formal diagnosis or a disability according to the legal definition in the Equality Act 2010. Where a team member meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, further information regarding an employer's legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments can be found in the legal obligation section below.

### Adjustments

Below are some types of adjustments that may help mitigate mental health symptoms and the impact on your team member's performance at work. They are not prescriptive, but people with lived experience of a mental health problem have found some or all of these useful.

It is important to be guided by the needs of your team member, however, this list could act as a prompt for you to explore symptoms and support needs together.

### Changes to how team members perform their role:

- Flexible hours or change to start or finish times; change of workspace, for example quieter, more or fewer people around, dividing screens
- Working from home at certain times or on certain days in a given period
- Changes to break times
- Provision of quiet rooms
- Light-box or seat with more natural light
- Agreement to give a team member time off for appointments related to their mental health, such as therapy and counselling

### Changes to the role itself (temporary or permanent):

- Temporarily changing duties, for example changing the balance of desk work and customer-facing work, reducing caseloads, changing shift patterns
- Reallocation of some tasks or amendments to the team member's job description or duties

### Extra support:

- Redeployment to a more suitable role
- Increased supervision or support from manager, buddy or mentor
- Extra help with managing and negotiating workload
- Debriefing sessions after difficult calls, customers or tasks
- Mediation can help if there are difficulties between colleagues
- Access to a mental health support group or disability network group
- Identifying a 'safe space' in the workplace where the person can have some time out or access support
- Provision of information to promote self-care
- Encouraging to participate in activities that support good mental health such as exercise, meditation or eating healthily
- Providing regular opportunities to discuss, review and reflect on people's positive achievements – this can help people to build up positive self-esteem and develop skills to manage better their triggers for poor mental health



## Legal obligation

Under the Equality Act 2010, there is a legal duty on employers to make reasonable adjustments for employees with a disability to enable that person to continue with their duties without being at a disadvantage compared to others.

What is 'reasonable' will depend on the individual circumstances of the team member and their role in your team. Adjustments should be considered on a case-by-case basis, but factors you might find helpful to consider include:

- The effectiveness of the adjustment in preventing the disadvantage
- The practicability of making the adjustment
- The extent to which making the adjustment would impact on service delivery
- Financial and other costs
- The potential impact on other colleagues

If you are in a position of assessing a proposed adjustment from an employee with a disability captured by the Equality Act 2010, you should make clear the considerations that will be taken into account in reviewing whether an adjustment is reasonable and practicable to implement.

However, as above, we recommend employers do not follow a rigid approach to workplace adjustments. Adjustments for mental health are often simple and it is best practice to offer support to all staff, whether or not they have a formal diagnosis or a disability according to the legal definition.

Allowing staff flexibility in how and when they perform their role, in line with business needs, can reap rewards in terms of loyalty, increased productivity and reduced absence, and can help normalise mental health and disability in the workplace.

## Mental health and the Equality Act

A team member doesn't have to have a particular mental health condition to be legally protected under the Equality Act and entitled to reasonable workplace adjustments. What they do need to demonstrate is that their mental health problem is considered a disability.

'Disability' has a special legal meaning under the Equality Act, which is broader than the usual way we might understand the word. The Equality Act says you have a disability if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial, adverse, and long-term effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Long term can be considered an impairment that has lasted at least 12 months, is likely to last 12 months, or (if your mental health problem has improved) that it is likely to recur.

If a team member's mental health problem meets this definition of a disability, they will be entitled to the protections covered by the Act - including the legal duty to provide reasonable adjustments.



Supporting  
your own  
wellbeing



## **Don't forget that your wellbeing as a manager is just as important as that of your team.**

You cannot fill from an empty cup - to be an effective manager and leader who can support others, you need to be managing your own mental health and wellbeing.

Developing a Wellness Action Plan of your own with your manager can be a helpful way of keeping track of what keeps you well and ensuring you're looking after your own needs too.

For tips on how to promote your own wellbeing and proactively support your mental health at work have a look at our [tips for staying well at work](#) and information on the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#), available on the Mind website.

## **Boundaries**

Setting, maintaining and managing boundaries is key for any line manager. Boundaries need to be there to keep people safe and this is especially important when supporting team members who are experiencing poor mental health.

As a line manager it's important to consider the following:

- Be clear about the time that you are able to provide in supporting a team member's mental wellbeing. For example, you can ensure that 121s and team debriefings have a set start and finish time and that these are clearly communicated in advance
- Be clear about your own skills and abilities in supporting team members and communicate these clearly at the start of any discussion around mental health and wellbeing so that boundaries are not overstepped. Don't be afraid to reinforce or remind those that you are supporting of these throughout if needed
- Be clear in explaining next steps and managing expectations. Do not make promises you cannot keep
- Build your awareness of the organisation's policies, guidelines and resources that are available to you and the team
- Remember that you can also ask for help in supporting your team. If you need help, speak with your manager or consider approaching your HR team or wellbeing lead in your organisation



Sources of  
support for you  
and your team

### Mind Infoline

Telephone: 0300 123 3393

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

[www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines)

Mind provides confidential mental health information services. With support and understanding, Mind enables people to make informed choices.

The Infoline gives information on types of mental distress, where to get help, drug treatments, alternative therapies and advocacy.

The line is open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays).

### Samaritans

Telephone: 116 123

Whatever you're going through, Samaritans are there to listen – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Samaritans offer a safe place for you to talk any time you like, in your own way about whatever's getting to you. They won't judge or tell you what to do, they'll listen to you.

### Mind Legal line

Telephone: 0300 466 6463

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

Mind's Legal line provides legal information and general advice on mental health related law. We can provide information about:

being detained under the Mental Health Act (sectioning)

- mental capacity
- community care
- discrimination and equality.

The line is open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays).

### Shout, text support

Text : SHOUT to 85258

Shout is a free, confidential 24/7 text messaging support service for anyone who is struggling to cope. The service is anonymous and won't appear on any phone bill.

### Side by Side, Mind's online community

[Side by Side](#), is a supportive online community where you can feel at home talking about your mental health and connect with others who understand what you are going through. We all know what it's like to struggle sometimes, but now there's a safe place to listen, share and be heard.

Whether you're feeling good right now, or having a hard time, it's a safe place to share experiences and listen to others. The community is available to all, 24/7. Side by Side is moderated daily from 8.30am to midnight.

### CALM helpline

Telephone: 0800 58 58 58

The CALM helpline is there for anyone who needs to talk confidentially about a tough time they are experiencing. Calls are taken by trained staff who are there to listen, support, inform and signpost you to further information. The helpline is open from 5pm to midnight every day, 365 days a year.





We're Mind, the mental health charity. We're here to fight for mental health. For support. For respect. For you.

We provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. We campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

[mind.org.uk](https://mind.org.uk)

 **MindCharity**

 **mindforbettermentalhealth**

 **mindcharity**

 **mind\_2**

**Mind**, 2 Redman Place, London E20 1JQ

Mind is a registered charity in England (no. 219830) and a registered company (no. 424348) in England and Wales.



# Wellness Action Plan

Guide for people  
working in a workplace







## Helpful definitions

For the purpose of clarity, when we refer to 'mental health' in this guide we are using it in the broadest possible sense.

Some useful definitions to terms used in this guide can be found below.



## Mental health

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. How we feel can vary from good mental wellbeing to difficult feelings and emotions, to severe mental health problems.

## Mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is the ability to cope with the day-to-day stresses of life, work productively, interact positively with others and realise our own potential. When we talk about wellbeing we are referring to mental wellbeing.

## Poor mental health

Poor mental health is when we are struggling with low mood, stress or anxiety. This might mean we're also coping with feeling restless, confused, short tempered, upset or preoccupied. We all go through periods of experiencing poor mental health – mental health is a spectrum of moods and experiences and we all have times when we feel better or worse.

## Mental health problems

We all have times when we struggle with our mental health. A mental health problem is when difficult experiences or feelings go on for a long time and affect our ability to enjoy and live our lives in the way we want. You might receive a specific diagnosis from your doctor, or just feel more generally that you are experiencing a prolonged period of poor mental health.

## Common mental health problems

These include depression, anxiety, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). These make up the majority of the problems that lead to one in four people experiencing a mental health problem in any given year. Symptoms can range from the comparatively mild to very severe.

## Severe mental health problems

These include conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder which are less common. They can have very varied symptoms and affect your everyday life to different degrees, and may require more complex and/or long-term treatments.

## Work-related stress

Work-related stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them at work. Stress, including work-related stress, can be a significant cause of illness. It is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as increased capacity for error. Stress is not a medical diagnosis, but severe stress that continues for a long time may lead to a diagnosis of depression or anxiety, or other mental health problems.

## Burnout

Burnout isn't technically a diagnosis, but instead refers to a collection of symptoms. You may feel exhausted, have little motivation for your job, feel irritable or anxious and you may see a dip in your work performance.



## What is a Wellness Action Plan?

Given the high levels of stress and poor mental health we are seeing in UK workers, there is a growing demand for innovative and proactive ways of managing our mental health at work.



## Guide for people working in a workplace What is a Wellness Action Plan?

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Wellness Action Plans are a personalised, practical tool we can all use – whether we have a mental health problem or not – to help us identify what keeps us well at work, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem at work should you be experiencing one.

It also opens up a dialogue with your manager or supervisor, in order for them to better understand your needs and experiences and ultimately better support your mental health, which in turn leads to greater productivity, better performance and increased job satisfaction.

We all have mental health just as we all have physical health, and this Wellness Action Plan has been designed to support us all to manage our mental health, wherever we are on the spectrum.

Wellness Action Plans are also particularly helpful during the return to work process, as they provide a structure for conversations around what support will help you and what workplace adjustments might be useful to discuss and consider with your manager.





Using a  
Wellness  
Action Plan



## How to get started with a Wellness Action Plan

Plan some time in to fill in your Wellness Action Plan and think about the current pressures you're facing, the impact they're having on your mental health and wellbeing and what you can put in place to deal with these.

Being situated with your colleagues in a workplace can support social connection and aid collaborative activities, but it can present unique challenges. You might wish to reflect on the extent to which it enables you flexibility to carry out responsibilities you might have outside of work, the extent to which you can concentrate on work in a busy or loud environment and the extent to which it might be more difficult to communicate with colleagues across other teams or departments if they're working remotely.

It's useful to think about what support your manager can put in place to support you and discuss these topics with those in your household if working from home.

Once you've completed your Wellness Action Plan, it's helpful to review it monthly. This can help you log any learning or helpful practices from the previous month. It's also beneficial to understanding your triggers and to make sure you're adapting to any changes in your work arrangements as we continue to emerge from the pandemic. Things can change daily so it's important to keep on top of identifying what keeps you well and check the things you've put in place are working.

## Ways of working

Following the emergence of the coronavirus, a number of organisations have been working in new ways with an increased number of employees working remotely, across a greater range of locations and with increasing levels of flexibility. These new ways of working can present new challenges as well as opportunities for improvement. Many of these may be unique to specific business units or teams or to particular roles within a business.

As you and your organisation begin to recognise these challenges and understand how best to address these, you may find it useful to update your Wellness Action Plan to reflect these changes.

## Sharing your Wellness Action Plan

A Wellness Action Plan can be a useful self-reflective tool, but if you think it would be helpful, you can share your completed Wellness Action Plan with your manager to support conversations about your wellbeing.

Your manager can help identify when you may be becoming unwell or help you put things in place to help you stay well. You could also share it with colleagues to promote openness and understanding so you can work effectively with each other and offer support.



## A note on confidentiality

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Top tips for  
staying well  
at work



## Identify your triggers

We're all different. What affects someone else's mental wellbeing won't necessarily affect yours in the same way. Whether it's challenges in work or the current circumstance we all find ourselves in, we all have times where we feel stressed, upset or find it difficult to cope. Working out what triggers poor mental health for you can help you anticipate problems and find solutions. Whether it's taking in too much negative news and media regarding the current circumstance or a heavy workload. Finding out your triggers can help.

## Take time for yourself

Spending time on yourself is essential for your wellbeing, and helps you be more resilient. It's vital to prioritise your own needs sometimes, rather than the demands of your work. Ignoring your needs can lead to stress and burn-out. Take short breaks throughout the day as well as at least half-an-hour to get some food. A short break can help you feel recharged and refreshed. It can also give you a different perspective on any work problems.

## Be kind to yourself

It's important to be kind to yourself and remember it's okay to not be okay. We may feel different from one day to the next as situations change so it's important to be kind to yourself.

## Connect with colleagues

Evidence suggests that feeling close to and valued by other people is a basic human need. Good relationships are important to our wellbeing. Explore the social opportunities that might be available through your employer such as fitness classes or book clubs. Joining lunch and learn sessions or striking up conversations with colleagues over a coffee in the break room can also be great ways to build professional relationships.

## Celebrate the small successes

We all want to contribute and make a difference to the things we work on, we want to feel accomplished and that we've achieved something. So it's important to celebrate the successes, big and small. Some days that might mean a great piece of work, other days it could mean doing housework or making the bed. Try to identify one small thing each day that you can accomplish.

### Quick tip: Set boundaries

It can feel easy to bring work home, especially if you've had experience of working remotely. Consider how you communicate clear boundaries with colleagues through making clear your working hours using your diary or email signature and investigate how you can properly manage work notifications to your digital devices outside of working hours.

### Quick tip:

### Get the basics right

Quality sleep, a good diet and proper hydration can make all the difference to your work day. Be sure to keep yourself well hydrated throughout the day and if struggling with sleep consider consulting Mind's guidance.

## Ask for help

If you feel your workload is spiralling out of control, take the opportunity to discuss it with your manager or supervisor. Discuss what work you should prioritise and reflect on what is possible to negotiate in terms of timelines and deadlines as well as the scope or scale of the work to be completed. If you're encountering a bottleneck related to other teams, departments or staff, discuss what support your manager might be able to provide in addressing some of these issues.

## Learn to say no

It can be easy to take on more work than you can manage, but over time this can lead to stress and burnout. Try to protect your mental health by politely saying no to extra demands when you've not got capacity. If you feel unable to decline additional work, be sure to clarify with your manager what existing work should be deprioritised or dropped to accommodate it within your workday.



# Wellness Action Plan template

A Wellness Action Plan reminds us what we need to do to stay well at work – whether working from a physical workplace or remotely – and details what we can do to look after our own mental health and wellbeing.

It also helps us develop an awareness of our working style, stress triggers and responses, and enables us to communicate these with our manager and colleagues.



## How you work

### What are your current and intended working arrangements?

You might wish to highlight any flexibility you've agreed with your manager, for example working hours.

### Are there any characteristics of your individual working style that you'd like to make your manager or colleagues aware of?

For example a preference for face to face conversations or digital communications when being allocated work including negotiation on deadlines before they are set, a need for adequate time to prepare prior to meetings or creative tasks, having access to a mentor/buddy for questions you might not want to contact your manager about, having a written plan of work in place which can be reviewed and amended regularly, clear quality criteria for work outputs if you have a tendency to over-work a task, tendency to have particularly high or low energy in the morning or in the afternoon.

## Staying mentally healthy at work

### What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?

For example, taking an adequate lunch break away from your workspace, getting some exercise before or after work or in your lunch break, natural light at your workspace, opportunities to get to know colleagues.

### What can you, your manager or colleagues put in place to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work and minimise these triggers?

For example, regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments.

### Are there any situations or behaviours that can trigger poor mental health for you whilst working?

For example, conflict at work, organisational change, tight deadlines, something not going to plan, difficulties in contacting colleagues whilst they are working remotely.

## Experiencing poor mental health at work

### How might experiencing poor mental health impact on your work?

For example, you may find it difficult to make decisions, struggle to prioritise work tasks, difficulty with concentration, drowsiness, confusion, headaches.

### Are there any early warning signs that might be noticed by your manager or colleagues when you are starting to experience poor mental health?

Experiencing poor mental health at work

**What actions would you like to be taken if any of these early warning signs of poor mental health are noticed by your manager or colleagues?**

For example, talk to you discreetly about it, contact someone that you have asked to be contacted.

**Is there anything additional you would like to share that would support your mental health at work?**



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[mind.org.uk](https://mind.org.uk)

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# Wellness Action Plan

Guide for people who  
are hybrid working







## Helpful definitions

For the purpose of clarity, when we refer to 'mental health' in this guide we are using it in the broadest possible sense. Some useful definitions to terms used in this guide can be found below.

## Mental health

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. How we feel can vary from good mental wellbeing to difficult feelings and emotions, to severe mental health problems.

## Mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is the ability to cope with the day-to-day stresses of life, work productively, interact positively with others and realise our own potential. When we talk about wellbeing we are referring to mental wellbeing.

## Poor mental health

Poor mental health is when we are struggling with low mood, stress or anxiety. This might mean we're also coping with

feeling restless, confused, short tempered, upset or preoccupied. We all go through periods of experiencing poor mental health – mental health is a spectrum of moods and experiences and we all have times when we feel better or worse.

## Mental health problems

We all have times when we struggle with our mental health. A mental health problem is when difficult experiences or feelings go on for a long time and affect our ability to enjoy and live our lives in the way we want. You might receive a specific diagnosis from your doctor, or just feel more generally that you are experiencing a prolonged period of poor mental health.

## Common mental health problems

These include depression, anxiety, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). These make up the majority of the problems that lead to one in four people experiencing a mental health problem in any given year. Symptoms can range from the comparatively mild to very severe.

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## Work-related stress

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increased capacity for error. Stress is not a medical diagnosis, but severe stress that continues for a long time may lead to a diagnosis of depression or anxiety, or other mental health problems.

## Burnout

Burnout isn't technically a diagnosis, but instead refers to a collection of symptoms. You may feel exhausted, have little motivation for your job, feel irritable or anxious and you may see a dip in your work performance.



# What is a Wellness Action Plan?

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It also opens up a dialogue with your manager or supervisor, in order for them to better understand your needs and experiences and ultimately better support your mental health, which in turn leads to greater productivity, better performance and increased job satisfaction.

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Using a  
Wellness  
Action Plan



## How to get started with a Wellness Action Plan

Plan some time in to fill in your Wellness Action Plan and think about the current pressures you're facing, the impact they're having on your mental health and wellbeing and what you can put in place to deal with these.

Hybrid working, in addition to a great range of benefits, can present unique challenges. You might wish to reflect on the extent to which difficulties communicating with colleagues across other teams or departments operating to different work patterns, difficulties juggling other personal commitments around hybrid work patterns and establishing clear home and work-life boundaries are sources of poor mental health and wellbeing for you.

It's useful to think about what support your manager can put in place to support you and discuss these topics with those in your household if working from home.

Once you've completed your Wellness Action Plan, it's helpful to review it monthly. This can help you log any learning or helpful practices from the previous month. It's also beneficial to understanding your triggers and to make sure you're adapting to any changes in your work arrangements as we continue to emerge from the pandemic. Things can change daily so it's important to keep on top of identifying what keeps you well and check the things you've put in place are working.

## Ways of working

Following the emergence of the coronavirus, a number of organisations have been working in new ways with an increased number of employees working remotely, across a greater range of locations and with increasing levels of flexibility. These new ways of working can present new challenges as well as opportunities for improvement. Many of these may be unique to specific business units or teams or to particular roles within a business.

As you and your organisation begin to recognise these challenges and understand how best to address these, you may find it useful to update your Wellness Action Plan to reflect these changes.

## Sharing your Wellness Action Plan

A Wellness Action Plan can be a useful self-reflective tool, but if you think it would be helpful, you can share your completed Wellness Action Plan with your manager to support conversations about your wellbeing.

If you're working from home, it might also be beneficial to share with a family member or friend in your household if that's possible.

Your manager and the people in your household can help identify when you may be becoming unwell or help you put things in place to help you stay well. You could also share it with colleagues to promote openness and understanding so you can work effectively with each other and offer support.



## A note on confidentiality

You own your Wellness Action Plan. It should only be read and shared with your permission.

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Top tips for  
staying well  
at work

## Identify your triggers

We're all different. What affects someone else's mental wellbeing won't necessarily affect yours in the same way. Whether it's challenges in work or the current circumstance we all find ourselves in, we all have times where we feel stressed, upset or find it difficult to cope. Working out what triggers poor mental health for you can help you anticipate problems and find solutions. Whether it's taking in too much negative news and media regarding the current circumstance or a heavy workload. Finding out your triggers can help.

## Take time for yourself

Spending time on yourself is essential for your wellbeing, and helps you be more resilient. It's vital to prioritise your own needs sometimes, rather than the demands of your work. Ignoring your needs can lead to stress and burnout. Take short breaks throughout the day as well as at least half-an-hour to get some food. A short break can help you feel recharged and refreshed. It can also give you a different perspective on any work problems.

### Quick tip: Simple self-care

Not having to get formally dressed for work can be great. But if you feel low, putting on some nice clothes or having a five-minute grooming session is an easy boost for your self-esteem that can help you feel work-ready.

## Be kind to yourself

It's important to be kind to yourself and remember it's okay to not be okay. We may feel different from one day to the next as situations change so it's important to be kind to yourself.

### Quick tip: Create a home workstation

It's important to try create boundaries if your home is your office. Having a dedicated area of the house or your room to work from can help delineate your work time from your leisure time. If you're unable to create a dedicated workspace, try ensure you create boundaries through packing away your work equipment at the end of your work day.

## Connect with others

Working remotely can be a lonely job. Evidence suggests that feeling close to and valued by other people is a basic human need. Good relationships are important to our wellbeing. Try joining morning or evening online exercise classes, joining virtual interest groups or even starting your own.

## Celebrate the small successes

We all want to contribute and make a difference to the things we work on, we want to feel accomplished and that we've achieved something. So it's important to celebrate the successes, big and small. Some days that might mean a great piece of work, other days it could mean doing housework or making the bed. Try to identify one small thing each day that you can accomplish.

### Quick tip: Get the basics right

Quality sleep, a good diet and proper hydration can make all the difference to your work day. Be sure to keep yourself well hydrated throughout the day and if struggling with sleep consider consulting [Mind's guidance](#).





# Wellness Action Plan template

A Wellness Action Plan reminds us what we need to do to stay well at work – whether working from a physical workplace or remotely – and details what we can do to look after our own mental health and wellbeing.

It also helps us develop an awareness of our working style, stress triggers and responses, and enables us to communicate these with our manager, colleagues and others in our household.



How you work

Staying mentally healthy at work

**What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?**

For example, taking an adequate lunch break away from your workspace, getting some exercise before or after work or in your lunch break, natural light at your workspace, opportunities to get to know colleagues. You may wish to make a distinction between the activities you undertake whilst working remotely compared to when in the workplace e.g. participating in workplace-based fitness class at the end of the work day and visiting the gym on your lunch break whilst working from home.

Workplace

Remote workspace

**Are there any situations or behaviours that can trigger poor mental health for you whilst working?**

For example, conflict at work, organisational change, tight deadlines, something not going to plan, difficulties in contacting colleagues whilst working remotely.

Workplace

Remote workspace

Staying mentally healthy at work

**What can you, your manager or colleagues put in place to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work and minimise these triggers?**

For example, regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments.

**Workplace**

**Remote workspace**





Experiencing poor mental health at work

**How might experiencing poor mental health impact on your work?**

For example, you may find it difficult to make decisions, struggle to prioritise work tasks, difficulty with concentration, drowsiness, confusion, headaches.

**Are there any early warning signs that might be noticed by others when you are starting to experience poor mental health?**

**Managers and colleagues whilst working in the workplace**

**Managers and colleagues whilst working remotely**

**Any person living in your household whilst working from home**

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