MENTAL WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY, PROCEDURE AND TOOLKIT

VERSION 2: NOVEMBER 2020

ABSTRACT

Peterlee Town Council recognises that its employees are its most valuable asset and that only through their development in a healthy and safe working environment can they contribute fully to its aims and objectives. As a good employer it wishes to promote the physical, psychological and social well-being of all its employees.

Janet Hugill
Corporate Services Manager

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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1 Policy outline

1.1 What is the policy about?

Peterlee Town Council (the Council) recognises that its employees are its most valuable asset and that only through their development in a healthy and safe working environment can they contribute fully to its aims and objectives. Whilst the Council has little control over external factors, as a good employer it wishes to promote the physical, psychological and social well-being of all its employees.

1.2 Who does the policy apply to?

This policy applies to all Council employees.

1.3 Responsibility

All Council employees have a responsibility to ensure that they comply with this policy and any subsequent processes that are developed to support it.

Everyone involved in implementing this policy and any subsequent processes that are developed to support it, is responsible for ensuring that it is fairly implemented and must:

- not breach the policy or any related processes;
- seek advice from the Town Clerk (or nominated representative), if unsure of how to implement the policy; and
- deal with any issues arising equitably without direct or indirect discrimination on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or trade union membership.

1.4 Monitoring

Data in relation to 'work-related stress', **(defined as 'mental well-being and mental ill-Health')**, will be gathered through a range of management information used for recording and reporting data, e.g. attendance management interviews, accident reporting, grievances etc. in line with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) best practice.

This data will be reviewed within the Council to identify the impact of work-related mental ill-health and used to develop any further mechanisms to address significant issues.

1.5 Confidentiality

All information will be handled sensitively and used only for its proper purpose. However, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as information might have to be disclosed where an issue results in formal proceedings.

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 individuals have the right to see their own personal data held subject to the rights of confidentiality of any third parties involved in that information.

1.6 Dealing with abuses of the policy

Employees who attempt to abuse this policy may face disciplinary action. The Council takes false or misleading accusations very seriously which may result in further action taken through the Disciplinary Procedure. This will not include ill-founded allegations that were made in good faith.

1.7 Publicising/distribution of the policy

A copy of this policy is available from your manager. A copy will be made available to employees via cloud storage.

New employees should be informed of the existence of this policy during recruitment and induction information processes.

1.8 Reviewing the policy

The Town Clerk (or nominated representative) will keep the operation of this policy under review and will make such changes to the policy as deemed appropriate.

2 Procedure

2.1 Policy statement

The Council is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees and recognises that mental health issues in the form of 'work-related mental ill-health' is a management issue. The Council acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors and aims to:

- promote the health and well-being of its employees through, for example, the promotion of opportunities to lead healthier lifestyles;

- work towards the Stress Management Standards as identified by the HSE (a summary of the standards is provided in Section 3.4);

- identify workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate or control as far as is reasonably practicable, the risks from work-related mental ill-health. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed;

- provide access to confidential counselling for employees affected by work-related mental ill-health where appropriate; and

- provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement this policy.

2.2 What is mental ill-health and how can it be addressed?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define mental ill-health (stress) as *"an 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 positive if managed correctly and stress which can be detrimental to health.

Symptoms of mental ill-health can manifest as either physical and/or psychological effects. A summary of such may include:

- physical effects – headaches, muscle tension, stomach problems, bowel and bladder problems and increased heart rate; and

- psychological effects - irritable, anxious, mood swings, short tempered, constant worrying, low self-esteem and poor concentration.

Workplace interventions to address mental ill-health related problems can be implemented at one of three levels:

- **Individual Level** – where an employee raises significant work-related mental ill-health concerns or is experiencing related symptoms. Employee focused interventions can include:

  (i)   counselling, support and advice referral to health practitioner;

  (ii)   specific work-related training and management support; and

  (iii)   processes to explore the extent to which their experience of work can reasonably and sustainably be adapted to address their concerns.

- **Management Level** – employees in all forms of employment may experience work-related mental ill-health concerns. Workplace support structures, work training and mechanisms for such concerns to be raised, and acted on at an early stage, can address problems before any overt health or well-being concerns arise.

- **Organisational Level** – an Organisational Risk Assessment involves the periodic collation of Council-wide data that indicates potential 'hot spots' of work-related mental ill-health problems. Subsequent organisational interventions and ongoing audit measure the effectiveness of the risk management approaches taken.

2.3   Roles and responsibilities

2.3.1 Senior managers/ Town Clerk/ Elected members

Senior managers, the Town Clerk and elected members are responsible for:

- Actively supporting the implementation of the policy by promoting good mental health and
  wellbeing in all aspects of council activity;

- Promoting a positive attitude to mental health and wellbeing within the Council;

- Ensuring managers understand their duty of care for employees;

- Ensuring advice and information about how to access support is provided to all employees;

- Ensuring stress, which is likely to lead to ill-health, is reduced as far as practically possible.

2.3.2 Managers

All managers and nominated supervisors are required to:

- advise and inform their team(s), in order to increase awareness and understanding, of the policy and any related issues;

- record any work related mental ill-health on the <u>Corporate Accident/Incident/Ill Health or Near Miss Form</u> which is available from the manager in each department or from the Town Clerk (or nominated representative). The completed form should be given to the Town Clerk marked 'Private and Confidential.' In the case of the Town Clerk, the completed form should be given to the HR subcommittee;

- attend training as requested, (or arranged for them as part of their role), in good management practice and health and safety;

- ensure good communication between management and employees, particularly where there are service, organisational and procedural changes;

- ensure that all forms of actual or perceived bullying and harassment are not tolerated within their areas of operational control, (see the Council's Grievance Policy);

- ensure that concerns, actions and issues are recorded, and information passed to SMT;

- manage absence in accordance with policy, liaising with HR and Occupational health to maximise support to employees who have mental or physical issues;

- identify training requirements and ensure employees are appropriately trained and understand their role;

- ensure employees are provided with relevant developmental opportunities through the appraisal scheme and other training initiatives;

- monitor workloads to ensure that employees are not overloaded;

- monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that employees are not overworking;

- monitor holidays to ensure that employees are taking their full entitlement;

- be vigilant and offer additional support where appropriate to employees experiencing mental ill-health outside work; and

- ensure that employees are made aware of the opportunities to participate in health improvement activities and give reasonable support to employees to access them.

When work-related mental ill-health, or personal stressors (impacting on work-life balance), are raised by employees, or are identified through the attendance management procedures, the manager must clarify the nature of the employee's concerns. They should then provide the employee with any practical options to reduce these stressors.

Where interpersonal issues perceived by either party may hinder the effectiveness of attempts to resolve workplace issues, the manager will facilitate the steps above to be completed by another manager, acceptable to all parties.

2.3.3 Employees

All employees are required to raise issues of concern regarding work-related mental ill-health with their manager in the first instance.

If an employee feels that they can't raise the issue with their manager, they should approach another appropriate manager (manager's line manager), seek advice from the Town Clerk (or nominated representative), or their Trade Union. In the case of the Town Clerk, advice should be sought from the HR subcommittee.

If unsure of how to deal with issues seek help and advice on policies and procedures from their manager, Town Clerk (or nominated representative) or Trade Union.

Employees should:

- Support approaches made by managers and supervisors, to eliminate or reduce the effects of work-related mental ill-health they are experiencing;

- Consider pursing opportunities for counselling and training when offered;

- Recognise that they have a responsibility for their own personal mental ill-health and try to help themselves where possible, e.g. by attending planned training, taking appropriate meal breaks, planning their work where possible, raising concerns over workloads with managers;

- Make full use of external support arrangements available for non-work-related mental ill-health management, e.g. their Unions, Doctors, NHS services and charitable organisations such as Mind, Rethink and Sane.

2.3.4 Trade Union/Safety Representatives

Trade Unions / Safety Representatives will be:

- meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design to consider whether such changes could precipitate mental ill-health;

- meaningfully involved in the mental ill-health risk assessment and risk management process;

- provided with access to collective and statistical data;

- provided with paid time away from normal duties to attend any relevant Trade Union training in accordance with local conditions;

- allowed reasonable time in accordance with Council policy to conduct joint inspections of the workplace to ensure that environmental stressors are properly controlled: and

- Encouraging members to seek help where appropriate.

2.3.5 Occupational Health Service

Occupational Health will:

- help support individuals who have been absent with workplace mental wellbeing related ill-health and advise them and their management on a planned return to work;

- provide support and advice to individuals who are at work but are experiencing workplace mental wellbeing related health problems;

- refer individuals to workplace mental wellbeing counsellors or specialist agencies as required;

- ensure maintenance of individual employee confidentiality in any data analysis; and

- promote local and regional public health and Council priorities as they relate to employee health and wellbeing.

2.3.6 Telephone Based Counselling/Occupational Health Service (OHS)

Support for employees and managers can also be sought from Zurich Municipal by telephoning the helpline on 0117 934 2121 or the Employee Assistance programme on 0800 716017.

It may be appropriate for a person who is suffering from mental ill-health to have the opportunity to have face-to-face access to a counsellor. In this case, the Council will give consideration to face-to-face counselling where appropriate.

2.4 Managing Mental Wellbeing/ill Health

2.4.1 Individual Level Interventions

The procedure for addressing work-related mental ill-health issues experienced by individual employees is detailed within the Mental Wellbeing Management Toolkit. See section 3.3, for the flowchart outlining the management process to be followed for both work and home related mental ill-health.

Tackling mental ill-health has been shown to have real financial and welfare benefits to organisations. It can for example, help improve employee morale and their commitment, reduce costs associated with absence management and in turn bring higher productivity and lower absenteeism.

The HSE has identified six broad categories of risk factors for work-related stress (see section 3.4). The 'Mental ill-health Toolkit' provides a structured approach to individual risk assessment which includes:

- identification of the mental ill-health hazards/risks perceived by the employee;

- evaluation of the risks and recording of what needs to be done in an action plan; and

- review the assessment and actions taken.

2.4.2 Management Level Interventions

The HSE Stress Management Standards essentially represent aspects of good organisational and management practice.

Good standards of management practice can eliminate or reduce the effect of work-related stressors experienced by employees and its negative impact on service delivery. Aspects of good practice include

open lines of manager/employee communication, to ensure mental ill-health related problems can be raised at an early stage.

The purpose of using the Mental Wellbeing Toolkit is to further clarify the nature of work-related concerns and the extent to which employees may be open to reasonably practicable workplace modifications. These conclusions must be put to the employee for their consideration. It is recognised that manager beliefs and behaviours may themselves be a source of mental ill-health to employees.

2.4.3 Organisational Level Interventions

Organisational interventions are considered a key element in good workplace mental health management by the HSE. No ideal method exists to determine whether existing control measures to prevent harm from mental health related factors are sufficient. However, a suitable and sufficient standard of risk assessment at the organisational level is considered, by the HSE to include:

- a continuous quality improvement audit cycle;

- the collation of routinely available data considered potential markers of mental health problems (e.g. sickness absence rates, turnover rates, incident data and so on),

- data to be presented in an organisationally meaningful manner that can identify potential 'hot spots' and allow consideration by senior managers for organisational development and priority setting;

- processes to further clarify specific issues of concern in 'hot spots' to inform senior management intervention;

- processes to develop and adopt solutions that are 'reasonably practicable', with an emphasis on prevention and organisational solutions; and

- documented and communicated workplace mental wellbeing action plans for all employees.

2.5   Equality and diversity

The Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and ensuring discrimination, harassment or victimisation is not tolerated.

Our policy is to treat people fairly, with respect and dignity. We also comply with legal requirements in relation to age, disability, gender, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

2.6   Contact details

If you would like any further advice or would like the document in an alternative format, please contact the Town Clerk or Corporate Services Manager using the contact details below:

Email: Ian.morrris@peterlee.gov.uk or Janet.hugill@peterlee.gov.uk
Tel: 0191 5862491

3   Toolkit

3.1   Mental Wellbeing Management Toolkit

3.1.1   Who is this toolkit for?

This Toolkit provides advice and guidance to both managers and employees on when and how to use the Mental Well-being Questionnaire (MWQ) and Mental Well-being Action Plan (MWAP).

3.1.2   When should I consider using this toolkit?

The Health and Safety Executive define 'six standards' to describe the most common aspects of work that contribute to mental well-being.

If an employee does not feel these standard definitions are true for them, in relation to their work, then this may contribute to psychological stress and/or physical ill-health.

Consider using this Toolkit when:

- such work-related psychological stressors are identified as a problem by the employee or observed by a manager or colleague. These stressors can be an important barrier to employees providing regular and effective service, but may often be 'hidden' or 'undeclared'; and

- in appropriate situations, to raise and discuss work related stressors with an employee, such as at Attendance Management Interviews and Return to Work Interviews.

The following points are intended to help managers recognise situations when they should consider raising the possibility of work-related stress with an employee. Such stressors are often a significant contributory factor acting to:

- **reduce employee psychological well-being** - you or colleagues of your employee may notice behavioural and mood changes;

- **contribute to performance or behavioural concerns**; and

- **increase sickness absence** – this can be long or recurrent short-term absence or attributed to physical symptoms (particularly long-term) as well as mental health related.

This Toolkit should be used alongside other policies such as the Attendance Management Policy and Procedure.

Employees should be offered a copy of the 'Tackling Mental Health Problems: An Employee Guide' Leaflet (Section 3.6). This includes details of the range of additional employee focused support available through the Council and NHS Services. This is also useful for employees who experience psychological distress not associated with work.

3.1.3   What training do I need as a manager?

Managers play a vital role in the identification and management of stress within the organisation. They are likely to see the problems causing the stress first-hand, will be in the best position to notice changes in employees behaviour that may indicate a stress-related problem and will often be the first point of contact when an employee feels stressed.

However, managers also need to think about their behaviour, and how it can either add to the stress their employees experience or help alleviate the problem. Management behaviour is often highlighted as a major factor by those suffering from work related stress.

3.1.4 My employee may have a work-related stress problem, how do I clarify it?

Ask the employee to complete the MWQ. This helps narrow down the work-place problems the employee is experiencing using the HSE stress standards as a guide. This will help focus attention on the specifics of any stressors and provide appropriate options for support.

Give the employee enough time and privacy to complete the MWQ but try to ensure you have received it prior to any subsequent planned meeting to complete the MWAP so you can give consideration to viable support options.

The experience of stress is subjective it cannot be measured reliably and cannot be eliminated entirely from day-to-day working life.

As the manager you may not see things the same way as your employee but the purpose of the MWQ is to enable you to understand the way your employee sees the problem, not a basis for debate of the 'reality' of these perceptions.

Remember, all instances of work-related mental ill-health must be recorded and on the Corporate Accident / Incident / ill health / near miss report form.

3.1.5 What if my employee finds it difficult to discuss these problems with me?

Employee perceptions of interpersonal difficulties with line managers are a well-recognised potential stressor within the workplace. In such circumstances it may be appropriate for the responsibility of implementing this Toolkit to be undertaken by another officer.

Alternatively, the process can be completed by the normal manager and employee, but with the option for a Trade Union representative or workplace colleague in attendance, and the meeting supported by an appropriate HR Officer.

The employee should be given the opportunity to raise any concerns about being able to engage in a meaningful discussion with their manager, and if such concerns apply, alternative management meeting arrangements described above, should be offered.

3.1.6 How do I prepare an Action Plan in response to a Questionnaire?

As the manager you should arrange a meeting with the employee within **2 weeks** of receipt of the completed MWQ.

The main purpose of the meeting is to discuss the employees MWQ responses and devise an action plan which addresses the root causes, specifically looking at areas of concern that need to be discussed, addressed and documented.

The completion of the MWQ should help you work together to develop a MWAP that recognises, prioritises and provides effective solutions, where possible, to the issues raised in the MWQ

A jointly developed and agreed MWAP 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.

Once the interventions have been discussed, the MWAP needs to be agreed between you and the employee and, if involved, the HR representative and/or employee's trade union representative. You and the employee must sign the MWQ and MWAP on completion.

3.1.7 What is the Desired Outcome of the Mental Well-being Action Plan (MWAP)?

The purpose of this policy, procedure and toolkit is to ensure that the Council has done all that reasonably can be done, accepting the organisational demands and resource issues, to address the sources of psychological stressors for the individual employee as far as practicable.

Once this situation has been established the employee experiencing mental health related concerns will be able to judge whether they feel able to continue in the role.

Remember, the MWQ and MWAP are intended as a guide for managers and employees when discussing the management of mental health and may need to be adapted to suit individual circumstances.

3.1.8 What happens after the Action Plan is completed?

It is essential that the manager and employee review and evaluate any changes made to tackle work-related mental ill-health. At least one review meeting will be required, after a maximum of **4 weeks** from when the action plan was implemented.

Managers should periodically check that agreed actions are being undertaken e.g. that agreed meetings are being held, or that there is evidence that key actions have taken place.

It is important to ask the employee whether they feel the solutions are having the desired effect and review the MWAP with the employee if appropriate, noting key changes.

If you have needed to use the Managing Mental Wellbeing Toolkit to address work related ill-health experienced by employees, you should raise this in future meetings with your manager, in order that possible team or service level stressors can be identified and proactively managed.

3.1.9 When would the toolkit be inappropriate to manage stress?

Whilst this toolkit is the preferred method of managing work-related stressors and resulting mental ill-health, it is recognised that there may be some occasions when the toolkit is not appropriate and may serve to create further unnecessary stress for those concerned.

If other management actions are the underlying trigger for the employee's psychological stress, e.g. disciplinary procedures or a suspension, timely resolution of these may prove to be more effective instead of the use of this toolkit.

In these circumstances, the option of deferring completion of this toolkit (if still considered relevant by the employee) until after the other management procedures are concluded would be a reasonable course of action.

3.1.10 What if the process does not resolve the employees concerns?

Where the employee is absent from work, and the conclusion of the process described above does not result in a return to work, or the employee continues to raise concerns in relation to health and work, Occupational Health Service referral through the Attendance Management Policy and Procedure should be made. This MUST include a signed copy of the completed MWQ and MWAP.

3.1.11 Ensure continuous mental ill-health management for colleagues

It is important to assess the impact that workplace mental health related problems could have on the team. Losing one colleague for an extended period with a mental health related illness could have dramatic impact on the workload and morale of the rest of the team.

By taking action to tackle the causes of workplace mental ill-health early, it can help prevent or reduce the impact of these problems on the team and the organisation.

3.2 The Mental Well-being Questionnaire (MWQ) and Action Plan (MWAP)

(Part 1) Mental Well-being Questionnaire – For Completion by Employee

Please read and answer the following questions by indicating to what extent you feel that the following factors have influenced your wellbeing, effectiveness or attendance at work.

Following the completion of the questionnaire please provide further details/examples of the source of mental ill-health you have identified in the **'employee response'** section of the action plan (part 2) prior to returning it to your manager or representative. Your manager will discuss with you, your responses and jointly consider with you any resulting actions.

If you would prefer your responses to be considered by somebody other than your manager then please raise this with them.

Note to Employee
From the list of statements in the table below please consider which best describe the difficulties you are experiencing in the workplace.

Employee Name……….....................................…………… Team……………...…...……………… Manager…..................................……………….

Please place a 'tick' in the left or right hand columns as appropriate

Cause of mental ill-health	Possible Stressors	This is a major concern for me, and is impacting on my sense of well-being and ability to work to my full potential.	Not a significant concern for me
(1) Demands	Different people at work demand things from me that are hard to combine		
	I have unachievable deadlines		
	I have to work very intensively		
	I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do		
	I am unable to take sufficient breaks		
	I feel pressured to work long hours		
	I feel I have to work very fast		
	I am under unrealistic time pressures		

Cause of mental ill-health	Possible Stressors	This is a major concern for me, and is impacting on my sense of well-being and ability to work to my full potential.	Not a significant concern for me
(2) Control	I am not able to decide when to take a break		
	I don't feel I have a say in my work speed		
	I don't feel I have a choice in deciding how I do my work		
	I don't feel I have a choice in deciding what work I do		
	I don't feel I have a say over the way I do my work		
	I feel my work time could be more flexible		
(3) Support (Manager)	I don't feel I am given enough supportive feedback on the work I do		
	I don't feel I can rely on my manager to help me with a work problem		
	I don't feel I can talk to my manager about something that upset or annoyed me at work		
	I don't feel my manager supports me through emotionally demanding work		
	I don't feel my manager encourages me enough at work		
(4) Support (Peers)	I don't feel my colleagues would help me if work became difficult		
	I don't feel I get the help and support I need from colleagues		
	I don't feel I get the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues		
	My colleagues are not willing to listen to my work related problems		
(5) Relationships	I have been harassed, in the form of unkind words or behaviour		
	There is friction or anger between colleagues		
	I am bullied at work		
	Relationships are strained at work		

Part 1 continued…

Cause of mental ill-health	Possible Stressors	This is a major concern for me, and is impacting on my sense of well-being and ability to work to my full potential.	Not a significant concern for me
(6) Role	It is not clear what is expected of me at work		
	I do not know how to go about getting my job done		
	I am not clear about what my duties and responsibilities are		
	I am not clear about the goals and objectives for my department/team		
	I do not understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation		
(7) Change	I do not have enough opportunities to question managers about changes at work		
	I don't feel consulted about change at work		
	When changes were made at work, I was not clear about how they would work out in practice		
(8)Other issues	Is there anything else that was a source of mental ill-health for you, at work or at home, which may have made it harder to cope with demands at work that you would normally be able to cope with?		

Please submit the completed questionnaire and the employee response section of the action plan to your manager.

Signed: …………………………………………….. (Employee)   Date……………………………………………..

Date received by manager: ………………………………………….

(A meeting will be arranged within 2 weeks of the Mental ill-health Questionnaire being submitted to discuss the issues raised)

(Part 2) Mental Health Management Action Plan – For Completion by manager in collaboration with employee

Employee Name …………………………………….....…………   Team ………….……….………………………   Manager …….....................................……………….

Summary of Employee Response Summarise and provide examples and details of the areas of concern identified in the Mental Well-being Questionnaire	Action List approaches that: • can be reasonably implemented, given operational constraints and the resources of the Service. Specify the timescale over which the intervention can be maintained • cannot be reasonably implemented due to operational constraints and the resources of the Service	Timescale for achievement
Demands		
Control		
Support		
Relationships		

Part 2 continued…

Role		
Change		
Other		
Date of review meeting:…………..		

Signed: …….…...………….……………………………………………….(Employee)   **Date………………………………**

Signed: …………….……………………………………………….(Manager)   **Date………………………………**

Signed: …………….…………………………………………………..(Town Clerk or nominated representative)   **Date………………………………**

(Part 3) Mental Health Management Action Plan Review – for Completion by manager in collaboration with employee

Name………………………………………………………… Team…………………………………………………… Manager…………………………………………………………

Actions identified	Summary of outcomes/ Further Action

Signed: ……………………………………………………………….. (Employee)   **Date**…………………………………………………….

Signed: …………………………………………………………….. (Manager)   **Date**…………………………………………………….

3.3 Mental Wellbeing Management Procedure Flow Chart

Employee displays or describes stress-related signs or concerns

↓

Consider early informal resolution

↓

Discuss other support available (e.g. counselling) and provide the employee with a copy of 'Tackling Mental Health Problems: An Employee Guide' Leaflet

↓

Identify the cause(s) and take appropriate action

├─ **Work**
├─ **Work**/*Home*
└─ *Home*

Work:

Complete the Accident/ Incident/ Ill Health or Near Miss form and return to Town Clerk (or nominated representative)

↓

Identify the stressor(s) by completing the Mental Well-being Questionnaire

↓

Prepare and agree an action plan to address the stressor(s) within 2 weeks of receiving the completed questionnaire.

↓

Review the action plan after a period of 4 weeks following its implementation to assess if the plan is working to reduce workplace stressor(s). Make revisions where necessary

↓

Continue to monitor progress

Work/Home / Home:

- *Review work life balance and adjust where possible*
- *If mutually acceptable local resolution not achieved, consider:*
  - *referral to OHS*
  - *Seeking advice from HR*
  - *Use of Mental Well-being toolkit*

If an employee is absent from work the Attendance Management Policy must also be followed

3.4   Stress Management Standards-Summary

The HSE defines the following six elements as the primary triggers for stress. Each one is listed with the 'preferred states' intended to help avoid work related stress.

These are simple summaries, more detailed advice on possible interventions, when an employee believes these states are not true for them, is provided at section 3.5.

Change

- Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing any organisational change
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

Demands

- Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

Control

- Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way that they do their work
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

Support

- Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and managers/supervisors
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

Relationships

- Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours e.g. bullying at work
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

Role

- Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

3.5   Possible Interventions

3.5.1 Demands

- Hold regular team meetings to discuss the anticipated workload for the forthcoming week(s)
- Develop personal work plans to ensure employees know what their job involves
- Allocate sufficient resources for employees to be able to do their jobs (time, equipment etc.)
- Provide adequate training (formal or informal) and resources to help employees prioritise, or provide information on how they can seek help if they have conflicting priorities
- Consider changes to start and end times to help employees cope with pressures external to the organisation (e.g. childcare, commuting etc.)

- Allow regular breaks, especially when the work is complex or emotionally demanding
- Provide realistic deadlines
- Don't ask people to do tasks they are not trained to do

3.5.2 Control

- Agree systems that enable employees to have a say over the way their work is organised or undertaken, e.g. through project meetings, team briefings etc.
- Hold regular discussion forums during the planning stages of projects to talk about the anticipated output and methods of working
- Allocate responsibility to teams to take projects forward:
    - discuss and define teams at the start of a project
    - agree objectives
    - agree roles
    - agree timescales
    - agree provision of managerial support, e.g. through regular progress meetings
- Talk about the skills people have and if they believe they are able to use these to good effect. How else would they like to use their skills?
- Allow and encourage employees to participate in decision making
- Allow employees some control over the pace of their work

3.5.3 Support

- Hold regular team meetings to discuss emerging issues or pressures
- Include 'work related mental ill-health/emerging pressures' as a standing item for staff meetings
- Ask how employees would like to access managerial support – 'open door' policies, agreed times when managers are able to discuss emerging pressures, etc.
- Use flexibility in the workplace procedures to enable employees to cope with domestic commitments
- Develop training arrangements and refresher sessions to ensure training and competencies are up-to-date and appropriate for the core functions of employees' jobs
- Talk about ways the organisation could provide support if someone is experiencing problems outside of work
- Ensure that employees receive sufficient training to undertake the core functions of their job
- Provide opportunities for career development

3.5.4 Relationships

- Communicate and display the Councils policy's for dealing with unacceptable behaviour e.g. grievance, discipline procedures
- Select or build teams which have the right blend of expertise and experience for new projects
- Provide training to help employees deal with and defuse difficult situations
- Encourage good communication and provide appropriate training to aid skill development e.g. listening skills, confidence building etc.
- Discuss how individuals work together and how they can build positive relationships
- Identify ways to celebrate success e.g. informal lunches/wash-up meetings at the end of the project

- Create a culture where colleagues trust and encourage each other
- Agree which behaviours are unacceptable and ensure that people are aware of these

3.5.5 Role

- Hold regular team meetings to ensure that individuals are clear about their role and know what is planned for the coming months
- Agree specific standards of performance for jobs and individual tasks and review periodically
- Introduce or revise job descriptions to help ensure that the core functions and priorities of the post are clear
- Ensure all new employees receive a thorough induction and that all members of the team understand the roles and responsibilities of the new recruit
- Define work structures clearly, so that all team members know who is doing what, and why

3.5.6 Change

- Ensure all employees are aware of why the change is happening – agree a system for doing this
- Define and explain the key steps of the change. Ensure employee consultation is a key element of the programme
- Agree methods of communicating e.g. meetings, notice boards, letters, emails and the frequency e.g. weekly, monthly etc.
- Ensure that employees are aware of the impact of the change on their jobs
- Involve employees in discussions about how jobs might be developed and changed. Review team and individual work plans after the change to ensure team and individual objectives are clear
- Explain what the organisation wants to achieve and why it is essential that the change(s) takes place

3.6   Tackling Mental Health Problems: An Employee Guide

Introduction

Mental ill-health is an important issue for both employers and employees. Peterlee Town Council has a policy in place and is committed to developing and implementing practices to prevent and reduce workplace mental ill-health.

This leaflet aims to help you understand the triggers and effects of workplace mental ill-health, what to do about it and what support is available.

What is Mental ill-health?

The Health and Safety Executive defines mental ill-health as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them." It can be triggered by circumstances at work, home or both. Pressure can be a good thing; it often leads to improved performance. However, when demands and pressure become too much this leads to mental ill-health. Work-related mental ill-health is not an illness but if intense and prolonged it can be associated with mental and physical ill health.

Individual Differences

There are a number of factors that influence an individual's vulnerability to mental ill-health and these include:

Personal – personality, coping strategies, and training;

Social – life events and social support; and

Biological – inherited factors, injury or disease, medication.

Work-related Triggers of Mental ill-health:

- Workload
- Lack of control over work
- Excessive time pressures
- Excessive or inflexible working hours
- Inadequate training
- Poor work/home balance
- Difficult relationships at work or home
- Lack of support and information
- Organisational or personal change
- Lack of clarity about role.

Effects of Mental ill-health

Physical:

- Muscular tension
- Headaches
- Excessive tiredness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Digestive problems
- Blurred vision.

Physiological/Behavioural:

- Anxiety and low mood
- Irritability at work and home
- Loss of appetite/overeating

- Increases smoking and drinking
- Difficulty planning, concentrating and controlling workload
- Poor relationships.

What Can You Do?

At Work:

- If possible talk to your manager. If they don't know there is a problem, they can't help
- In some cases employees may not feel confident in speaking to their managers about the issues of importance to them, or they may want confidential advice on how their concerns may potentially be addressed in general terms without initially involving their manager. If this applies to you, your Trade union can provide further guidance
- Be clear about what is happening in your area of work and how that may affect you
- Be clear about your roles and responsibilities
- Be involved in, and understand, the decision making processes in your work area
- Ask for feedback on how you do your job. If you get criticism ask for suggestions on how to improve
- Agree priorities and expectation for your work
- Discuss developing your skills with your manager
- Manage your time as effectively as possible
- Be organised – untidiness can create extra pressure
- Discuss with your manager the possibility of altering your job to make it less stressful for you; recognising you and your colleagues needs
- Delegate where appropriate
- Take regular breaks, especially at lunchtime, to recharge your batteries

- Give feedback to the organisation when given the opportunity through surveys etc.
- Seek further help as soon as you have a problem, don't wait.

At Home (Lifestyle):
- Look after your health – reduce tea, coffee, and alcohol consumption. Quit smoking. These activities provide only temporary relief from mental ill-health symptoms, will not solve the problem, and can be harmful in themselves
- **Speak to your GP if you are worried about your health, don't wait for things to get worse**
- East well – take time to enjoy meals and make them healthy and well balanced. Eat five portions of fruit and vegetables every day
- Take some exercise – go for a walk at lunchtime or in the evening, or go for a swim. This can make you feel relaxed, stretched and energetic. It's good for the mind and the heart
- Take time to relax – spend a short time alone in the day or evening to give you a sense of calm and well-being.
- Consciously make time for whatever helps you relax
- Do something you enjoy – take time and make the effort to do something that you have chosen
- Find out about complementary therapies
- Get the best out of your time – prioritise tasks both at work and home, be realistic about what you can achieve, do one thing at a time
- Allow sufficient time for journeys and pace yourself. Make some time for yourself
- Try learning relaxation techniques – some people find it helps them cope with life's pressures and stresses

Further Help

If you are unsure of how to deal with issues seek help and advice on policies and procedures from your manager, the Town Clerk (or nominated representative) or Trade Union.

Telephone Based Counselling Helpline:

Support for employees and managers can be sought from Zurich Municipal by telephoning the helpline on 0117 934 2121.

Useful Links

NHS choices provides a range of advice on mental health for all UK residents.

ACAS Stress Management with useful advice on identifying and dealing with Mental ill-health.

Human Resources – Advice & Guidance Provide advice and guidance on all HR issues to managers and employees.
HRAdviceandGuidance@durham.gov.uk