**STAFF RETENTION - WELLBEING AND MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE**

**Scope**

• Policy Statement

• The Policy

• Wellbeing

• Stress

• Mental health

• Related Policies

• Related Guidance

• Training Statement

**Policy Statement**

The Mental Health at Work report 2017 laid bare some eye-watering statistics. Between 2016 and 2017 UK businesses lost a staggering 5 million working days due to work-related stress, depression, and anxiety. The well-being and mental health of the workforce is becoming an increasing factor that is linked to productivity and its impact on the bottom line. The Mental Health Foundation found that improved health and wellbeing support in the workplace could create savings of as much as £8 billion per year throughout the economy.

The health and well-being of the workforce are increasingly becoming more strategically relevant than ever before, and this policy lays out the steps required to counteract the prevalence and impact of wellbeing and mental health on our workforce.

We place a high value on maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for all our staff and recognise that our duty of care extends to the physical and mental wellbeing of the workforce. There is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to introducing well-being at work, the needs of the organisation and our workforce will dictate what will and will not work. The impact and experience of the COVID-19 outbreak have been different for everyone, as has how we have reacted, but there is no doubt it has been a really difficult time for us all.

That is why it is so important to do what we can to look after our mental health and wellbeing, now more than ever.

**The Policy**

**Wellbeing**

The Importance of Wellbeing at Work: Getting the Strategy Right

There are seven interrelated strands that we can use to guide the strategy and they provide a helpful start to bringing some structure to our planning.

There are areas within these seven strands that are already in places, such as staff supervisions and appraisals. We regularly review how they are delivered to help make them more relevant and less stressful for all involved.

**Seven Strands of Wellbeing**

1. Health. This includes both physical and mental health.

Physical health provisions could include health checks, wellbeing benefits, occupational health support, and correct safety regimes (e.g. establishing and enforcing safe working practices, providing adequate PPE, and ensuring all staff has received relevant personal safety training).

Provisions for mental health could include support for managing stress and ill health, risk assessments, and conflict resolution training.

2. Good work. This includes the provision of a healthy work environment and open and inclusive culture, as well as good management and fair pay.

Things to consider include the demands placed on staff, including workload, job roles and responsibilities, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. The level and appropriateness of oversight should also be considered (no one enjoys being micromanaged), as well, as providing space for employees to innovate and bring their ideas to the table in addition to being able to raise concerns without fear of repercussions (whistleblowing).

Good management covers effective people management including sickness absence management, change management, effective communication, oversight, and leadership. Pay and rewards schemes should be fair and transparent and include non-financial recognition, as well as remuneration.

3. Values/principles. Leadership and corporate governance structures should seek to set and uphold clear objectives and ethical standards to build trust within an organisation. This should include the right of all employees to be treated with dignity and respect, as well as any social responsibility and community partnership schemes. Valuing workforce diversity is also an important aspect here to reflect and respect the local community within which the business operates.

4. Collective/social. This includes ensuring staff isgiven a voice through genuine dialogue and consultation. Positive professional relationships between employees should be encouraged through management style and teamwork exercises.

5. Personal growth. This includes mentoring, coaching, succession planning, and career development plans, with support for lifelong learning and creativity in an open and collaborative culture.

6. Good lifestyle choices. This includes support for physical exercise, healthy eating – and the taking of breaks!

7. Financial wellbeing. This includes fair pay and benefits, retirement planning, and assistance to access signposted services, such as debt counselling and Citizen Advice, including domestic abuse services.

**The Five Ways to Wellbeing**

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are simple and proven actions that, as an organisation, we can encourage to help staff find balance, build resilience, and boost mental health and wellbeing.

1. Connect. Feeling close to and valued by others is critical to boosting wellbeing.

• In practice: phone, message, visit a family member or friend.

• When at work, take a moment to talk with your colleagues to see how they are doing.

2. Keep learning. Curiosity and new experiences help keep the brain stimulated.

• In practice: try something new or rediscover an old interest.

• When at work, take on a new responsibility or take training in an area you are unfamiliar with.

3. Be active. Physical activity improves physical health and mood, increases wellbeing, and helps decrease stress, depression, and anxiety.

• In practice: go for a walk at least once a day.

• When at work, step outside for some fresh air during a break.

4. Give. Acts of kindness, whether large or small, can help create a sense of happiness and life satisfaction.

• In practice: volunteer your time for a cause you believe in.

• When at work, do small acts of kindness for a colleague.

5. Take notice. Pay more attention to the present moment, to thoughts and feelings, and to the world around you.

• In practice: pay attention to change around you, remark on the unusual, and savour the moment.

• When at work, take a moment to notice your colleagues, has anything changed about them?

How to Support the Five Ways to Wellbeing- Start small, consider the following

**The work environment:**

• Light: natural light boosts mood, energy levels, and productivity. If staff is working in windowless areas, it is the right time to consider a move?

• Grow plants: scientists say that plants offer an external focus and stimulus for our brain.

• Workplace design: open plan or closed? There are pros and cons to both so you need to consider the type of work undertaken, the potential for distractions, and the need for privacy. Open offices are more sociable with a better opportunity to build strong relationships between employees. Closed offices offer more privacy but can induce loneliness.

• Get the ergonomics right! Boring but true. This is the first step in protecting individuals’ physical health through the good design of workstations and equipment.

• Watch the temperature: what suits one, will not suit all. Be aware of how the temperature is affecting all members of staff – and do not let it be dictated by one or a few.

• Add a splash of colour: bright colours help to suppress melatonin (the sleep hormone); they also boost energy. Think of a ‘pop’ of greens, blues, yellows, or reds. Conversely, if your offices are painted a dull grey, beige or white, these are said to induce feelings of sadness and depression.

• Inject some personality: your culture should be in harmony with the office environment.

**Health and fitness: You tube exercise group please ask for handle.**

• Subsidise gym memberships: there are several Gym that do not tie you down please speak to the Registered Manager for options otherwise please ask for you tube channel to follow for daily routine exercises. In time we hope to have an area set aside at the offices for fitness classes on the premises.

• Cycle to work scheme: We will source out this scheme to encouraging staff to cycle to work as a great way to boost wellness and cut down costs.

• Offer free fruit: We have free fruit for pick up each time you do your appraisal as this is CapitalPro’s way to encourage healthy eating.

• Sports team: If interested in particular sport please speak to the registered manger to see if this is something we could do to boost fitness it is also a great way to foster teamwork and relationships between colleagues.

• Encourage charity events: fitness-related charity events, are not only great for fitness levels, but they also offer the chance to do something for a good cause.

**Mental wellbeing:**

• Have a proper break room: once back in offices and not working from home we will be looking at having somewhere for employees to go and relax properly during their breaks will benefit everyone, helping to rejuvenate, invigorate and aid productivity.

• Encourage people to take their breaks: everyone needs a break. To maximise productivity, it is advisable to take regular, short breaks throughout the working day. For those using computers or other devices with a screen, it is imperative to spend some time away from them. The same applies to annual leave: everyone needs a holiday and will feel so much more refreshed on their return.

• Work-life balance: This is an individual mix of private, personal, and work priorities that, when out of balance, can cause stress, anxiety, depression – and ultimately burnout.

• Say thank you: people need to feel appreciated, valued, and worthwhile at work. From a simple thank you to a fair and well-structured reward scheme, showing gratitude will boost self-esteem, happiness, energy levels, and productivity.

**Culture of Support: Wellbeing in a Care Setting**

Within care settings, it is not easy to promote well-being. Shift patterns and the nature of the work (often one-to-one with individuals, rather than with colleagues) conspire to make it difficult. It is not, however, impossible. The following are some steps that we can consider:

• Invest in a visible culture of support. Make sure our leadership structure is solid and reflects the values, ethos, and philosophy that are identified as pillars of the business.

• Make sure teams are well supported with adequate resources and identified contingency plans to deal with unexpected situations.

• Encourage staff to seek support early, secure in the knowledge that it will be confidential and as practical as possible, including open discussion of flexible working.

• Create a safe space where people can raise concerns – and be listened to.

• Embed mental health awareness into our training programme so everyone is aware of the signs that someone may be struggling – or maybe struggling themselves – and trigger support.

It is also important to remember that many employees will also have two ‘jobs’: the one they are paid for and the one that begins when they step back through their front door. This second of these can impact their ability to do the first, as it is often a caregiving role, whether to children, ageing parents, grandparents, or siblings. It is therefore important that employees are involved in planning any well-being strategy to ensure it will meet their needs.

**Ready to Share… But with whom?**

Although there is a range of checklists that provide a helpful starting point for individual self-assessment, it is going from self-assessment to sharing or intervention that can be most difficult. Individuals will only share when they feel secure enough to do so – and only with an appropriate person. This could be someone entirely separate from their line management, depending on the size of the business. It could be a peer, rather than a supervisor or manager or a well-being champion in the workplace.

A well-being champion is an employee, who volunteers to focus on the well-being of their colleagues as part of company-wide wellbeing initiatives. In effect, they are the ambassadors of the well-being strategy and can act as intermediaries should that strategy fall short of employee expectations or needs.

**Stress**

What causes stress?

People react in different ways to different types of stress. What one person finds exciting and challenging another can find daunting.

An individual’s reaction to stress can often be influenced by their personality, experience, motivation, and the level of support received by their line manager, colleagues, friends, and family

There can be many causes such as problems at home or pressures of work but if staff show signs of stress then it is important to try and ascertain its cause

**Potential Causes of Stress:**

• Pressures pile on top of each other or are prolonged (overload).

• There is an inadequate or inappropriate level of knowledge and skills for the job.

• The job attracts certain stressors given the nature of the work.

• Staff become confused by conflicting demands upon them.

• Staff feel a high degree of uncertainty about their work, objectives, and job or career prospects.

• There is lengthy travelling involved for work purposes.

• There are poor working relationships between individuals.

• There is a lack of understanding, leadership, or support.

• Staff are working additional hours.

• Staff are not taking appropriate breaks.

• There is inadequate or unreliable equipment to undertake their duties.

• There is insufficient training and development for their role.

• There is little communication from line managers/colleagues.

• Staff find it difficult to manage their work and personal time effectively.

• There is inadequate feedback from line managers/colleagues on how well an employee is undertaking their role.

• Certain jobs may place extra emotional demands on staff as well as physical conditions within the workplace.

It should also be remembered that the source of stress may be from outside the workplace. Staff experiencing stress from home, family, or financial pressures may find it difficult to separate these from their working life and consequently are not able to deal with work matters efficiently and effectively.

**Risk Assessment**

Risk assessments should be undertaken when a staff member indicates that they feel that they are unable to cope with the demands placed upon them at work’ Carrying out a risk assessment proactively manages the pressures before they lead to ill health and absence.

Risk Assessments should also be undertaken on a reactive basis when a staff member returns to work following a period of absence that was diagnosed as work-related stress.

Many things can be done to relieve the symptoms of stress. A leaflet produced by the HSE outlines some of them. A copy of this leaflet is available here https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/signs.htm.

**Identifying the Signs of Stress**

People can react in many ways when facing danger or feeling threatened. Listed below are a few of the common signs that may indicate when someone may be suffering from stress:

• Physical effects: raised heart rate, blurred vision, increased sweating, aching neck/shoulder, headaches, skin rashes, dizziness, loss/gain in weight, tiredness, faster breathing/pulse, lowered resistance to infections.

• Behavioural effects: poor work, mood swings/depression, lack of self-esteem, more accident prone, changing sleep patterns, no enthusiasm, poor concentration, increased anxiety/irritability/frustration/aggression, inability to deal calmly with everyday tasks/situations, tendency to drink more alcohol/smoke more.

**Mental Health**

This is the way we feel and think about our ability to deal with life, inside and outside of work. Good mental health means being able to deal with life’s ups and downs, cope with what life throws at us, and play a full part in relationships, your workplace, and your community. Wellbeing and mental health go hand in hand but, like stress, it is important to recognise when things are getting out of hand and you are beginning to feel overwhelmed.

All the markers identified with well-being are the same indicators that are useful in identifying mental health issues.

When supporting our workforce with mental health problems, we follow one golden rule: never assume; always ask. One-off episodes are usually triggered by a one-off event; for some, it comes in episode cycles.

If a member of the workforce is off work, it is important to discuss how they would like it handled. If appropriate ask them whether they would like any particular colleagues to be informed about current health issues to provide support.

Check in with them before their return to make sure everything is in place for a smooth return. Engage them in the type of support that may require in the first week or two, depending on the length of absence.

It is important to note that, as a business, there are times when we need to recognise that all the support mechanisms in place may not, in themselves be enough and colleagues need to be encouraged to seek professional help and assistance.

This is in particular related to depression and anxiety, which can have underlying causes, such as mood disorders, personality disorders, and trauma-related issues (such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or substance/alcohol abuse.

Managers must not become over-involved in the support of mental health but rather be objective in their role, where it starts, and where it needs to be widened to other sources of support and guidance.

Professional input is often viewed as a last resort but early intervention can prevent further deterioration in wellbeing as a whole.

Mental illness is very different and requires professional advice and input at an early stage, with support in the workplace being guided by the professional health team involved.

The well-being, health, and mental welfare of all staff employed by the organisation is something that will be developed and strengthened, as we widen our understanding and broaden the response to the well-being of our staff along with the development of a strategic plan.

**Occupational Health**

Please seek advice from your GP if you feel you have stress from work and ensure you let the Registered Manger know of your occupational health concerns.

Note: In a collective bargaining agreement organisation care must be taken to involve the groups representative where applicable and with the consent of the worker

**Related Policies**

Appraisal

Challenging Behaviour, Violence, and Aggression

Recruitment and Selection

Sickness/Absence

Staff General Welfare and Facilities

Supervision

Training Development and Qualifications

**Related Guidance**

NICE Quality Statement 147 “Healthy workplaces: improving employee mental and physical health and wellbeing” published March 2017 https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs147

NICE Guideline NG 116 Post-traumatic stress disorder December 2018 https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng116

Good Work - The Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\_data/file/627671/good-work-taylor-review-modern-working-practices-rg.pdf

**Work-Related Stress**

http://www.hse.gov.uk

NHS – Every Mind Matters

https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters

**Training Statement**

All staff, during induction, are made aware of the organisation's policies and procedures, all of which are used for training updates. All policies and procedures are reviewed and amended where necessary and staff ismade aware of any changes. Observations are undertaken to check skills and competencies. Various methods of training are used including one-to-one, online, workbook, group meetings, individual supervisions, and external courses are sourced as required please speak to the Registered Manager for further information.

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