Mental Wellbeing Policy

Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing
Delivering quality services

Supporting a mentally healthy workplace

Coventry City Council

www.coventry.gov.uk

The need for a workplace mental wellbeing policy

Coventry City Council aims to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of its employees. The Council recognises that it has a duty of care to look after the mental well-being of its staff whilst they are at work and to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that workplaces and working environments are safe.

Mental ill health and stress are associated with many of the leading causes of disease and disability in our society. Promoting and protecting the mental wellbeing of our workforce is important for individuals' physical health, social wellbeing and productivity.

Many factors in the workplace influence the mental wellbeing of individual employees. Understanding and addressing the factors which affect people's mental wellbeing at work has a wide range of benefits, both for individuals and the organisation.

Mental wellbeing in the workplace is relevant to all employees and everyone can contribute to improved mental wellbeing at work. Addressing workplace mental wellbeing can help strengthen the positive, protective factors of employment, reduce risk factors for mental ill health and improve general health. It can also help promote the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems and support them once they are at work.

This workplace mental wellbeing policy covers the following aspects of mental health and wellbeing:

Promotion of mental wellbeing

Promoting the mental wellbeing of all employees through:

- Providing information and raising awareness about mental wellbeing
- Providing opportunities for employees to look after their mental wellbeing
- Promoting policies and practices that promote wellbeing.

Management skills

- Developing skills for managers and supervisors to:
- Promote the mental wellbeing of employees
- Deal with issues around mental health and stress effectively.

Support

- Providing support to employees through:
- Providing a work environment that promotes and supports mental wellbeing for all
- Offering assistance, advice and support to people who experience a mental health problem while in employment

- Support for employees returning to work after a period of absence due to mental health problems.

Employment

Helping people get back to work after a period of absence due to mental illness through:

- Making reasonable adjustments
- Supporting employees who develop a mental health problem.

Scope

Mental health problems and stress can affect anyone, regardless of their position in the organisation. This policy applies equally to all employees.

The implementation of this policy will also be supported by other Council policies, including; Promoting Health at Work, Addiction & Substance Abuse and Anti-Bullying & Dignity at Work Policy.

Aim of this policy

To create a workplace environment that promotes the mental wellbeing of all employees and provide support for employees experiencing poor mental health.

Objectives

To tackle work place factors that may negatively affect mental wellbeing, and to develop management skills to promote mental wellbeing and managemental health problems effectively.

Coventry City Council promotes a comprehensive approach to addressing issues that impact upon an individual's mental well-being through prevention, management and support, whether these issues have arisen in the workplace or from personal circumstances.

Policy actions:

- Give employees information on and increase their awareness of mental wellbeing.
- Offer employees flexible working arrangements that promote their mental wellbeing.
- Set employees realistic targets to promote work life balance.
- Ensure all staff clearly understand what is expected of them, their objectives and responsibilities
- Provide employees with good management support, appropriate training and adequate resources to do their job.
- Manage conflict effectively and ensure the workplace is free from bullying and harassment and all forms of unfair discrimination'
- Establish good two-way communication to ensure staff involvement, particularly during periods of organisational change.

To provide support and assistance for employees experiencing mental health difficulties.

Policy actions:

- Ensure individuals suffering from mental health problems are treated fairly and consistently and are not made to feel guilty about their problems.
- Offer access to the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service and other wellbeing and support provisions.
- Ensure that contact is maintained with any employee absent due to stress or mental ill-health and those absences are actively managed in accordance with the Promoting Health at Work Policy.
- Ensure that employees returning to work after a period of absence due to stress or mental ill-health are supported in a sensitive and sympathetic manner through the Promoting Health at Work procedures.
- If the cause of the individual's illness had been related to specific work issues, the manager must investigate the contribution of working conditions and other organisational factors and take remedy action where required, before the individual resumes their duties.
- In cases of long-term sickness absence, put in place, where possible, a phased return to work.
- Treat all matters relating to individual employees and their mental health problems in the strictest confidence and share on a 'need to know' basis only with consent from the individual concerned.

To positively encourage the employment of people who may have experienced mental health problems by providing fair and non-discriminatory recruitment and selection procedures.

As an employer we recognise that people who have or have experienced mental health problems may have previously experienced discrimination in recruitment and selection procedures. This may discourage them from seeking employment. While some people will acknowledge their experience of mental health issues openly, others may fear that stigma will jeopardise their chances of securing employment. Given appropriate support, many people who have experienced mental health problems continue to work successfully, as do many with ongoing issues.

Policy actions:

- Show a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues. This includes having positive statements in recruitment literature.
- Ensure that all those involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health issues and the Equality Act 2010 and are trained in appropriate interview skills.
- Make it clear, in any recruitment or occupational health check undertaken, that people who have experienced mental health

issues will not be unfairly discriminated against and that disclosure of a mental health problem will enable both employee and employer to assess and provide the right level of support or adjustment.

- Do not make assumptions that a person with a mental health problem will be more vulnerable to work place stress or take more time off than any other employee or job applicant.
- Ensure all line managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace.

To recognise that work place stress is a health and safety issue, and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing work place stressors.

Policy actions:

- Identify all work place stressors and conduct risk assessments to identify any hazards that could give rise to stress or mental ill-health and act upon these hazards to eliminate or minimise them where practicable
- Ensure employees are fully trained to do the job
- Ensure employees are provided with appropriate training and developmental opportunities
- Ensure employees are managing the demands of the job by monitoring workloads and working hours
- Provide confidential counselling for all employees affected by poor mental health, whether the cause is work or personal

Responsibilities

As employees of the Council we all have responsibilities in promoting mental well-being and any member of staff should not hesitate to seek advice and/or support if they feel they need it.

Managers have a responsibility to:

- Monitor the workplace, identify hazards and risks and take steps to eliminate or reduce these as far as is practicable
- Ensure good communication between management and other members of staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Assist and support employees who are known to have mental health problems or are experiencing stress outside work–for example due to bereavement or separation.
- Ensure employees are provided with the resources and training required to carry out their job.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not over-loaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that employees workloads are reasonable and monitor holidays to ensure that employees are taking sufficiently balanced breaks.

- Ensure employees are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Ensure that employees performing a management or supervisory functions have sufficient competence to discharge that function in a manner consistent with the maintenance of mental health in the workplace.
- Responding appropriately and promptly when concerns are raised by employees, or by trade unions on their behalf.

Human resources have responsibility to:

- Provide advice and support to employees and managers in relation to this policy.
- Monitor and report on levels of sickness absence which relate to mental health problems Including stress-related illness

Employees have the responsibility to:

- Raise issues of concern regarding stress or mental ill-health with their Line Manager, Human Resources or the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service
- Consider attending wellbeing days and health screening when offered
- Consider opportunities for counselling when recommended
- Behave in a manner that is conducive to the mental wellbeing of their colleagues
- Attend training as required
- Raise concerns, either directly or through their trade union

Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing have the responsibility to:

- Provide specialist advice and awareness training on mental wellbeing.
- Train and support managers in implementing stress risk assessments.
- Support individuals who have been off sick with mental health and stress related problems and advise them and their management on a planned return to work.
- Provide confidential counselling to any employee experiencing mental health issues
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to promote mental wellbeing
- Respond appropriately to mental health emergencies

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