Health & Wellbeing Framework
Element 2: Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

1   Introduction

This Policy is part of the Health & Wellbeing Framework which is made up of a number of elements which together encompass all formal policy, procedure and statement documents, including associated forms, relating to health & wellbeing in Abertay University.

If you would like this document in a different format (e.g. large print, braille) or need any assistance to access or understand the policy/procedure please contact your School/Service designated HR Partner.

This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. The University may also vary any parts of this procedure, including any time limits, as appropriate in any case. This procedure applies to all employees.

2   Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to all employees.

Abertay University is committed to achieving a healthy workforce by placing value on both physical and mental health. The University also recognises that mental health issues can be triggered by excessive levels of work related stress and it is the University's duty of care to take measures as reasonably practicable to preserve the mental health and well-being of its employees whilst at work.

Abertay University recognises the importance of ensuring that all employees are able to work in a supportive, professional and caring environment, where they are valued and respected. By applying these values to our work practices we aim to promote mental wellbeing and prevent stress by promoting a supportive work place culture.

Abertay University recognises that it is required to provide employees with a safe and healthy work environment, so far as is reasonably practicable, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, HSE Management Standards for Work-Related Stress 2004 and The Equality Act 2010.

The concept of positive mental health and well-being implies a state of health characterised by emotional and spiritual resilience that allows us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness. Mental health problems can be triggered by stress arising from the workplace or outside world; mental wellbeing at work is determined by the interaction between the working environment, the nature of the work and the individual.

The University promotes a comprehensive approach to tackling mental health issues arising from the workplace or personal circumstances by addressing prevention, management and support. This policy requires a shared understanding between employees and managers that mental ill health can be a legitimate health issue in the workplace.

Employees experiencing difficulties that could lead to them experiencing mental ill health should be encouraged to seek help and support. Employees have a duty to themselves and

others to help minimise mental ill health in the workplace and should take an active part in mental well-being management initiatives. This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures contained within the Health and Wellbeing Framework.

The University will identify and detail the factors which may cause increased stress in the workplace by Risk Assessment.

2.1 Definitions

The term "mental ill health" is one which encompasses a wide range of experiences which affect an individual's ability to balance his/her life. The difficulties can range from stress and anxiety through to serious mental health conditions diagnosed and treated by the health services.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as an adverse reaction to excessive pressure or other type of demand placed on them. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.

2.2 Policy Aims

Our policy aims to:

- Not tolerate any discrimination attached to mental illness, which includes barriers to employment in accordance with the equal opportunities policy;

- Prevent so far as is reasonably practicable, those circumstances detrimental to mental health by providing a working environment where hazards to health are identified, assessed, removed or reduced;

- Raise awareness of mental ill health including stress, its causes and associated factors;

- Ensure that employees who have, or have had , symptoms of mental ill health are treated responsibly and in an understanding manner;

- Promote mental health support available to Abertay employees;

- Offer easy access to confidential counselling and occupational health services;

- Provide training for all managers on their role, how to recognise, manage and minimise mental ill health in the workplace;

- Ensure that all employees, especially those with management and supervisory responsibilities, take proactive steps to ensure that the overall working environment it provides are conducive to mental wellbeing;

- Ensure that managers provide employee support during periods of sickness absence and return to work interviews to support individuals in their return to and rehabilitation in work in accordance with the University's sickness absence policy;

- Carry out organisational stress audits by applying then analysing the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) risk assessment process to develop an organisational management plan based on these results.

2.3 Principles

- All cases will be dealt with in accordance with the University's policies on equality and diversity;

- Cases will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and related documentation will be subject to the provisions of the Data Protection Act;

- The University will not disadvantage unfairly an employee who admits to suffering from work related stress or and mental health problem.

2.4 Responsibilities

2.4.1 The University is responsible for ensuring that:

- Stress, which is likely to lead to ill health, is reduced as far as practicably possible in the work environment;

- The University culture promotes a positive attitude to mental health and wellbeing;

- Suitable training and support is provided to managers to equip them to undertake the necessary risk assessments in the workplace and preventative measures are implemented where appropriate;

- Information is provided for employees on positive coping mechanisms and general health improving activities within the workplace;

- Advice, information, and how to access support is provided for all employees including recognising the symptoms of poor mental health;

- Managers are knowledgeable in their duty of care for employees;

- Supervision is in place to ensure confidentiality where people can gain support in dealing with poor mental health;

- A plan is implemented to reduce work place stress, and promote mental wellbeing.

2.4.2 Line Mangers are responsible for:

- Encouraging a workplace culture where mental health, wellbeing and physical wellbeing are regarded as equally important;

- Carrying out risk assessments in their work areas to identify any hazards that could give rise to mental health issues and act upon these hazards to eliminate or minimise them where practicable;

- Ensuring employees are fully trained to do their job and understand their role;

- Effective communication with employees, particularly when there are organisational and procedural changes;

- Considering the implications for employees of any changes to working practices, ways of working, work location, new policies or procedures, and the need for appropriate support and training;

- Recognising and resolving work-related issues at individual and team level where possible;

- Liaising with HR and occupational health to maximise support to employees who have mental / physical health issues;

- Managing absence in accordance with the policy;

- Ensuring employees are managing the demands of the job by monitoring work loads, working hours ,reviewing toil and monitoring absence;

- Carrying out department exit interviews;

- Attending regular mental health training events and promoting work place activities to promote the understanding of the benefits of positive mental health;

- Ensuring that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their work area;

- Ensuring that employees returning to work after a period of absence due to mental ill health are treated in a sensitive and sympathetic manner. If the cause absence is thought to be due to work related issues, managers must ensure that these are risk managed before the individual resumes their duties.

2.4.3 Employees are responsible for:

- Using the University's support, supervision, and employee counselling appropriately;

- Reporting to their line manager, HR, Health and Safety Officer or Occupational Health Adviser of any risk to mental health within the work place that may pose a risk to themselves or others;

- Supporting their colleagues if they are experiencing poor mental health encouraging them to talk to their manager;

- Seeking support from their G.P. or other appropriate agencies if they have health issues;

- Discussing with their manager any appropriate measures to make their work less stressful;

- Recognising the principles and importance of work life balance;

- Exercising their right to attend stress management courses;

- Being actively involved in the risk assessment process;

- Taking positive steps to safeguard their own mental health, in particular by taking regular allocated breaks and by working reasonable hours.

2.4.4 HR is responsible for

- Ensuring that Occupational Health and Employee Counselling services are accessible for all employees;

- Monitoring the application of the policy to ensure that is applied with consistency;

- Making sure that policies and codes of conduct are appropriate;

- Monitoring and evaluating recruitment practices in relation to equal opportunities;

- Participating in the University's plan to reduce stressors and promote positive mental health;

- Offering advice and support for managers in dealing with instances of mental ill health at work;

- Liaising with managers over return to work arrangements following a period of absence;

- Training managers to ensure they can fulfil their responsibilities.

2.4.5 Health & Safety Officer is responsible for

- Overseeing University risk assessment procedures and provide guidance and support to managers and employees in implementing appropriate control measures;

- Advising managers on how to carry out risk assessments in the workplace;

- Advising on changes in legislation and current best practice guidance in respect to mental health & stress in the workplace;

- Liaising with Occupational Health, HR and relevant others where a potential trend has been identified;

- Promoting a positive H&S culture and participate in policy review as a member of relevant committees and working groups;

- Monitoring H&S performance indicators.

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2.4.6 Occupational Health Service responsible for

- Providing a confidential service where employees experiencing mental health difficulties can seek advice and support;

- Advising employees about treatment options to help them overcome problems, including referral to other agencies where appropriate;

- Liaising with Head of School, with the employee's consent, where work-related factors might be a contributory factor in causing an individual's mental health problems;

- Liaising, with the employee's consent, with the GP of anyone absent through mental health problems about fitness to remain at or return to work;

- Advising Line Managers/Heads of Department, and HR Partners about arrangements for and timing of return to work following a period of absence due to mental health problems, including a suitable rehabilitation program and workplace adjustments;

- Identifying and reporting to Human Resources Department/Safety Office and managers as appropriate of any trends within departments or work areas where there appears to be an increased incidence of employees having mental health problems;

- Liaising with the Human Resources Department & Health and Safety facilitate training in the recognition and initial management of someone presenting with acute mental health problems at work;

- Facilitating mental health awareness health promotion activities;

- Developing working relationship with local Mental Health teams and specialist services as appropriate.

2.4.7 Union and Staff Representatives responsible for

- Encouraging members to seek help where appropriate;

- Helping individuals to understand the policy and where to seek help, if necessary.

2.5 Employee Counselling:

Employee Counselling Service is contracted by the University to accept:

- **Self Referrals** which can be made by any employee without referral from Occupational Health or others.

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