

# Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace – Policy

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# Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy

## Version control

This document is subject to regular review due to legislative and policy changes. The latest versions of all our publications can be found on our website. Before contacting us about the content of this document, we recommend that you refer to the most recent version on the website and any relevant guidance.

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Notes / changes
v1.0	29/06/21	Full council	New Policy

# Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy

Contents	
Version control	2
Contents	3
Roles and Responsibilities	4
Directors and Heads of Service	4
Managers	4
Human Resources	4
Employees	5
Terminology	5
Introduction	5
Aim	6
Understanding Mental Health	6
The Mental Health Stigma	7
Managing Mental Ill Health	8
Disability Related Mental Health	8
Work-Related Causes of Mental Ill Health	9
Mental Health First Aiders	9
Wellbeing Champions	10
Further Support for Employees	10
Training	11
Normalising Mental Health	12

# **Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy**

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Directors and Heads of Service**

- Ensuring effective implementation and awareness of the policy.
- Ensuring there is continued commitment towards the Time to Change Pledge
- Promoting and support positive mental health within the workforce.
- Foster a culture of openness and support regarding mental health.
- Promote and encourage staff to become Mental Health First Aiders, or Wellbeing Champions.

### **Managers**

- Support employees experiencing mental health issues.
- Encourage and signpost to resources for positive mental health amongst teams.
- Ensure employees are aware of the Employee Assistance Programme Care First and encourage staff to use this.
- Discuss with HR for further guidance and information in supporting positive mental health for staff.
- Undertake mental health training provided by HR and support staff to become either a Mental Health First Aider, or Wellbeing Champion.
- Be mindful and respectful of all mental health barriers staff may face and provide support in a non-judgmental and caring way, encouraging staff to talk openly about mental health, therefore removing the stigma around mental health.
- Support the movement of removing the stigma in line with the Time to Change Employer Pledge.

### **Human Resources**

- Reviewing the policy and supporting documents in line with legislation and best practice.
- Advising and supporting managers in the application of this policy.

# Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy

- Provide training to managers and staff, including training Mental Health First Aiders.
- Where appropriate, support line managers during formal meetings to address issues.
- Support the movement of removing the stigma in line with the Time to Change Employer Pledge.

## Employees

- To undertake mandatory mental health e-learning and training.
- To be respectful and non-judgmental of all mental health barriers colleagues may face.
- To seek assistance when mental health barriers present and be willing to address the issue.
- Support the movement of removing the stigma in line with the Time to Change Employer Pledge.

## Terminology

Throughout the policy, a **legal requirement** is indicated by the word '**must**' - for example, where an employee's mental ill health amounts to a disability, the council must make reasonable and practicable adjustments that will help an employee to do their job without being at a disadvantage.

The word 'should' indicates what the council considers to be good employment practice.

## Introduction

The mental health of employees is integral to how they feel about their jobs, how they perform in their role and how they interact with colleagues and customers.

Employees with good mental health are more likely to perform well, have good attendance levels and be engaged in their work. It is therefore in the Council's interests to:

# Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy

- Improve mental health awareness in the organisation
- Tackle the causes of work-related mental ill health
- Create a workplace culture where employees feel able to talk about their mental health
- Support employees who are experiencing mental ill health.

Achieving these objectives can help a manager reduce the severity, duration and quantity of mental ill health in its workplace.

## Aim

The overall aims of the mental health policy, in conjunction with the [Mental Health Guidance for Managers](#), is to develop and promote a culture of positive mental health and wellbeing within the council, and to ensure effective support for all staff is available throughout. It also aims to remove the overall stigma associated with mental health.

This policy aims to:

- Ensure support and training on mental health, for all employees and managers.
- Remove the stigma attached to mental health.
- Ensure all staff are effectively supported with their individual mental health.
- Ensure there are appropriate Mental Health First Aiders and Wellbeing Champions available within Services.

Denbighshire County Council wants to promote positive mental health in the workplace and remove the stigma. Staff should feel comfortable in talking about their mental health with their managers and colleagues. We have committed to the Time for Change Pledge and managers throughout the council will know how to support employees.

## Understanding Mental Health

Mental health is the mental and emotional state in which we feel able to cope with the normal pressures of everyday life.

# **Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy**

Mental health is as much a part of everyone's life as physical health is, and mental ill health will likely affect one in four people at some point in their life. Positive mental health leads to higher job satisfaction, increased productivity, stronger team work, higher resilience to change, and better work-life balance.

The risks of poor mental health include; employees attending work when they are too ill to carry out their duties, employees taking time off or remaining on long-term sickness absence for longer, employees resigning from their job, unhealthy coping mechanisms leading to 'secondary symptoms' e.g. the strain of coping with depression may cause someone to become dependent on alcohol or drugs. In some cases, poor mental health combined with a lack of support could lead to someone harming themselves or taking their own life.

The council is committed to taking all reasonable steps it can to reduce work-related causes of mental ill health, and to supporting employees with establishing positive mental health and wellbeing.

## **The Mental Health Stigma**

There is still a lack of understanding about mental health and misconceptions persist. It is often thought to be a sign of weakness, which it is not. Additionally, people experiencing mental ill health can still be seen as dangerous, when in fact they are more likely to be attacked or harm themselves.

This stigma creates a fear of being judged or discriminated against and discourages people from talking about their mental health. Someone experiencing mental ill health often feels unable to tell their manager or seek help. As a result, they may try to hide their problems and therefore their mental ill health may not be spotted until it becomes a serious problem for the individual and the organisation.

The council recognises the stigma attached to mental health and is committed to removing this stigma and barriers staff may face. Employees are encouraged to disclose mental health issues and will be fully supported to seek appropriate support.

# Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy

Managers should read the attached [Mental Health Guidance for Managers](#) for further information on how to support a member of staff effectively. Further advice can also be sought from Human Resources.

## Managing Mental Ill Health

Managers must remember that everyone is different, and mental ill health will affect everyone in different ways. Therefore the support an employee needs will be unique to them. Managers should never pressure an employee to disclose something they are not prepared to, and should instead encourage and support the employee to talk when they are ready to, and to seek support that works for them.

The overarching principle for managing mental ill health is for managers to be open, non-judgemental, supportive, empathetic and caring. Never downplay how someone is feeling, or judge someone for feeling a way that you would not. What might seem minor to one person could be huge for someone else, and it is not appropriate to cast judgement on this, everyone should be treated with respect.

Where a member of staff is off work with a stress or mental health related absence, managers should support the employee in accordance with the Attendance at Work Policy, as well as in line with the aim of this policy.

Managers should read the [Mental Health Guidance for Managers](#) for further information on how to support a member of staff effectively. Further advice can also be sought from Human Resources.

## Disability Related Mental Health

A person is disabled if they have 'a physical or mental impairment' which has 'a substantial and long-term adverse effect' on their 'ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

Where an employee's mental ill health amounts to a disability, managers must consider making 'reasonable adjustments' that will allow them to carry out their job. A 'reasonable adjustment' is a change or adaptation to the working environment that has the effect of



# **Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy**

removing or minimising the impact of the individual's disability in the workplace so they are able to undertake their job duties, or apply for a job, without being at a disadvantage.

Managers should read the Guide – Reasonable Adjustments for further information.

Managers must also consider job applicants and ensure that they do not discriminate against someone seeking employment who has a mental health condition. Reasonable adjustments may be needed through the selection process in the same way as if someone had a physical disability. Employee mental health will be considered when making changes to the workplace, or to terms and conditions, as well as when designing job descriptions and allocating work.

## **Work-Related Causes of Mental Ill Health**

Some causes of mental ill health may be difficult to tackle. For example, job insecurity when there is the possibility of redundancies. However, many causes can be reduced or removed when carefully considered.

Managers should seek to identify what areas of work might be a cause of mental ill health, in conjunction with staff. This can be done via one-to-one/supervision meetings, staff feedback, team meetings, and staff surveys.

Where an employee discloses a work related cause of mental ill health, or highlights an issue in the workplace, the manager must take all reasonable steps to address this and rectify the issue. Employees should feel supported to highlight areas of concern in order for issues to be addressed effectively.

## **Mental Health First Aiders**

The council will regularly train qualified Mental Health First Aiders, who will be able to respond and support employees experiencing a mental health crisis. Their role is to keep someone safe during a crisis or when experiencing a severe mental health issue. This could include, but is not limited to:

- An employee experiencing a panic attack

# Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy

- An employee is wanting to take their own life
- An employee is self-injuring/harming themselves
- An employee has experienced a traumatic event
- An employee experiencing a psychotic state

If a manager is worried about an employee's mental health and safety, but the employee has not disclosed they are in crisis / having a severe issue, please contact Human Resources as all HR Specialists and Business Partners are qualified Mental Health First Aiders.

A [list of Mental Health First Aiders](#) can be found attached to this policy.

## Wellbeing Champions

Wellbeing Champions will be identified within each Service and managers should seek to encourage staff to adopt this role wherever possible. They will be responsible for promoting wellbeing and positive mental health initiatives within their Services, or within the wider council, arranging activities for staff, and generally being a champion of positive mental health and wellbeing. These champions will have an understanding and/or lived experience of mental health and will receive training from Time to Change Wales.

## Further Support for Employees

We want to encourage an open and supportive workplace when it comes to mental ill health but it is also recognised that sometimes this may be difficult for someone who is experiencing mental ill health.

Links to mental health support and information can be found on the HR pages of the website and includes links to specific organisations who can help various mental health issues. Many of these organisations provide a 24/7 phone service to support individuals experiencing a mental health issue.

All our employees are entitled to use the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) – Care First. The service is free of charge to use and employees can use this confidentially

# Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy

without a management referral. Care first is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and is accessible by phone or online.

For more information on Care First, please visit the Occupational Health page on Linc, or contact Human Resources.

The mandatory Mental Health Awareness e-learning module contains more information on mental health and links to various websites and apps.

Employees who are part of a Trade Union may also seek support and advice from their local Trade Union representative (who will have also received Mental Health First Aid training).

Managers and employees can also contact Human Resources for further advice and guidance or a Mental Health First Aider should they feel comfortable to do so.

## Training

The council expects all staff to be aware of mental health and the barriers / issues many may face. In order to create a culture of support and honesty about mental health, we will provide education and resources for staff and managers, so that all employees know where to access relevant support, how to support each other, and how to remove the stigma attached.

All new starters to the council will be required to complete a Mental Health Awareness e-learning module as part of the mandatory induction modules before their probationary period can be completed. This is to ensure employees are aware of mental health, and can effectively support each other as well as themselves with positive mental health. The modules also covers where someone can access further support if they need to, either for themselves or for someone they are concerned about.

Managers should feel able to spot the signs of poor mental health, without an employee needing to disclose this, and should feel confident to approach this topic with the employee. Therefore all managers will be expected to undertake management mental health training in order to effectively support their staff.

# Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy

There will be regular ongoing training and information to related topics which could affect someone's mental health. Examples could be, dealing with debt and suicide, managing stress and building resilience.

HR will be responsible for above training, as well as the training of Mental Health First Aiders within the council.

## Normalising Mental Health

Managers are expected to normalise mental health discussions, to foster a culture of support and to ensure all staff are fully supported. It will be for each manager to determine what is best suited to their teams, but there are a variety of ways this can be done, such as:

- Team meetings** are a good way to regularly discuss how the team are feeling about their workload, upcoming challenges and get staff thinking about their own mental health and what affects it. Talking about mental health in team meetings can also normalise the topic. While it is likely that some employees will take a more active role, a manager should ensure that all employees are able to contribute so no one feels excluded, without pressuring those who are less confident.
- **One-to-one meetings** between a manager and an employee provide regular opportunities to discuss mental health, check on how the employee is doing and identify any issues early. Conversations that may contain personal information the employee may not want widely known should be held in private. This is especially important with staff who are remote working.
- **Informal chats around the workplace** should be a normal part of workplace life, with managers regularly working around their team. This can help them check on how employees are doing and whether there are any issues that may be affecting the mental health of the team.
- **Awareness days/weeks**, such as Mental Health Awareness Week, can be used as a set date when employees are asked to think about their mental health. Activities

## Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace - Policy

could include talks and/or blogs from people who have experienced mental ill health sharing their insights. This can be a good way to get employees talking about their own experiences and reminding them of the council's commitment to promoting positive mental health.

- **Noticeboards** (in a physical location or online) provide a set area for a manager to put up general information or key messages around mental health.
- **Newsletters and email** are useful for general communications and for keeping employees up-to-date with any actions the council is taking to improve mental health in the workplace.