



Groundwork Sheffield

Mental Health & Stress in the Workplace Policy

GWS 055

Approved by the Board of Trustees February 2015

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1. Introduction

Most people experience some of the symptoms associated with mental health and stress difficulties at some point in their life. For some, their difficulties would be a typical reaction to common life events such as bereavement. The degree of severity of a problem will be reflected in the intensity of the symptoms of the individual's capacity to function.

As an employer we recognise that:

- People who have mental health or stress issues may have experienced discrimination in recruitment and selection procedures. This may discourage them from seeking employment.
- Whilst some people will acknowledge their experience of mental health and stress issues in a frank and open way, others fear that stigma will jeopardise their chances of getting a job.
- Given appropriate support, the vast majority of people who have experienced mental ill health continue to work successfully as do many with ongoing issues.

As an employer we aim to:

- Show a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health or stress issues. This will include positive statements in recruitment literature.
- Ensure that all staff involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health and stress issues and The Equality Act 2010, and given appropriate interview skills.
- Make it clear in any recruitment or occupational health check that people who have experienced mental health issues will not be discriminated against and that disclosure of a mental health or stress-related problem will enable both employee and employer to assess and provide the right level of support or adjustment.
- Not make assumptions that a person with a mental health problem will be more vulnerable to workplace stress or take more time off than any other employee or job applicant.
- Provide non-judgemental and pro-active support to individual staff who experience mental health or stress-related issues.
- Ensure all line managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace.

Groundwork Sheffield is concerned about the needs of any employee, volunteer or client whose mental health difficulties inhibit their ability to fulfil their potential, whether this is due to a long-term mental illness, an emerging mental health problem or a temporary debilitating condition or reaction. GWS aims to ensure that appropriate support is offered to anyone experiencing mental health difficulties.

This Policy contributes to GWS's overall approach to ensuring equal opportunities for all and acknowledging diversity in its workforce.

2. Mental Health Promotion in the Workplace

Increasing attention has been paid in recent years to the importance of promoting and maintaining mental health in the workplace. Additions to the Disability Discrimination Act

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(DDA) in December 2005, clearly identifies the need to recognise all mental illnesses whether or not there has been a clinical diagnosis. The economic costs of failing to address mental health issues in the workplace are also considerable: examples cited in the Working Minds toolkit include:

- nearly 1 in 6 employees will have some kind of mental health problem in any one year, most of which will be depressive and anxiety disorders
- over 80 million working days are lost due to mental ill health each year
- a recent HSE survey showed that 16% of managers had taken time off work because of stress during the previous 12 months
- stress related absence accounts for half of all sickness absence from work, with an estimated cost to industry of £9 billion
- work-related stress is the second biggest occupational health problem in the UK, after back problems

One of the major difficulties experienced by people with a history of mental health problems is securing employment in the first place. It has been shown that people with mental health problems are much more likely to be unemployed than those with other long term health problems.

On the other hand, unemployed people have twice the incidence of mental health problems than those who are employed. So unemployment can be caused by, and cause, mental ill health.

As an employer, GWS has a responsibility to fulfil its legal obligations under statute (including Health and Safety legislation, and the Disability Discrimination Act). As part of this duty GWS will develop best practice in providing suitable employment opportunities for people with mental health problems, and in creating and sustaining a safe working environment that minimises risks to the mental health of its staff.

GWS acknowledges the importance of reducing the incidence and impact of mental health problems. The potential benefits include:

- Reducing recruitment and training costs
- Complying with legislation
- Reduced sickness levels
- Showing that GWS is a good employer
- Demonstrating social responsibility
- Enhancing customer service
- Improving productivity
- Making the organisation more attractive to people with mental health issues and others.
- Reducing staff turnover
- Making the workplace healthier

3. Purpose and scope of the Policy

It is the responsibility of GWS, as an employer, to identify and reduce risks to mental health and stress arising within the workplace, and to ensure that staff who are experiencing or recovering from mental health problems are supported and enabled to continue in employment wherever possible.

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Therefore, this policy aims to:

- promote mental health and well-being for all staff employed by the Trust;
- raise awareness of factors within the workplace that may adversely affect mental health;
- describe the ways in which the Trust will support staff experiencing or recovering from mental health problems;
- provide a framework that supports the employment of people with a history of mental health problems

Mental health problems and stress can affect anyone, and this policy applies equally to all employees of GWS.

4. Policy Statement

GWS recognises its responsibility to promote and safeguard the mental health of its employees. It also recognises that the Trust can play a leading role in promoting fair access to employment for people with a history of mental health problems.

To that end, GWS will:

- aim to create and promote an organisational culture that is based on trust, support, and mutual respect, such that employees are able to freely report difficulties with their job or mental health without fear of discrimination or reprisal
- take a positive approach to reducing stress and promoting good mental health, by enabling and expecting managers to act appropriately
- ensure that staff who are experiencing or recovering from mental health problems receive sympathetic and constructive support
- positively support and encourage the appropriate employment of people with a history of mental health problems

These policy objectives will be achieved by training and development of staff, and monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the policy.

5. Stress

Stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as “the reaction people have to excessive pressure or other type of demand placed on them. It arises when they worry they can’t cope”. Stress is rarely caused by an individual event and may have work and personal causes.

Groundwork Sheffield is committed to promoting and securing the good health of employees and recognises that stress could affect any employee’s health.

GWS will ensure as far as possible that the effects of these stressful situations are minimised through appropriate training, management and support.

To suffer from stress does not reflect any degree of personal weakness and all employees are encouraged to be open and honest in discussing stress with their line manager.

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Many issues related to workplace stress may be solved through discussions and agreement between the manager and employee. However not all issues can be resolved easily. It is important for Managers to take time to listen to employees, acknowledge their problems and offer support.

It is important that staff minimise their own risk of stress related ill-health by undertaking their work in a safe and healthy manner, i.e. not working excessively long hours, taking prescribed rest breaks, etc.

Managers should be aware of the causes of stress, understand how to recognise it and know how to manage it. Manager's training and development needs in this respect should be considered as part of the appraisal process.

6. Creating a Safe Environment

6.1 It is well recognised that some working conditions and practices can adversely affect employees' mental health. GWS will identify those aspects of work organisation and management, as well as environmental, social, and organisational conditions that could give rise to psychological as well as physical harm, and take action to ensure that risks to staff are minimised.

6.2 GWS will ensure compliance with Health, Safety, and Welfare regulations.

6.3 GWS will ensure:

- The promotion of a culture of respect and dignity for everyone, ensuring staff are trained to recognise and be sensitive to mental distress or disability in others
- A demonstration to take positive steps to ensure that people with mental health problems are not disadvantaged
- That no one is refused employment on the grounds of mental illness or disability
- The induction process provides new employees with an understanding of the organisation, the policies and procedures that are in place, and their role in ensuring that these are adhered to
- Employees have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and are provided with good management support, appropriate opportunities for training/personal development, and adequate resources to do their job
- Jobs are designed in such a way as to ensure that employees are set achievable targets that do not require them to work unreasonable hours
- To support employees if they have a problem and make reasonable adjustments to the work environment for people with mental health and stress-related problems to enable them to carry on working
- Employees are able to influence how they do their jobs, with scope for varying conditions, and opportunities to make full use of their skills
- To make sure their employees understand mental health issues and make them aware of the steps that can be taken to preserve and maintain their own and others' mental well-being
- Employees are provided with regular opportunities to discuss their work with their line managers, and that the Trust Appraisal and Performance Review system is used appropriately

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- There is effective communication in both directions enabling all employees to be involved in decision making and planning, especially during periods of organisational change
- They will not discriminate against an employee because they have a mental health or stress-related problem
- Bullying and harassment are not tolerated, and that any instances of either are handled within the terms of the existing GWS policy
- There are effective ways of dealing with interpersonal conflict, supported by and supporting the Trust's existing Grievance Procedure, together with a commitment to investigate complaints appropriately

6.4 GWS will aim to raise awareness of mental health issues amongst all employees by:

- ensuring specific reference to promoting and maintaining mental health in induction programmes, and other in-house training opportunities as appropriate (e.g. recruitment and selection training, performance review and appraisal training)

7. Supporting Staff affected by Mental Health Problems

7.1 Where mental health problems have arisen or are being worsened by employment issues and practice, GWS will take steps to identify the cause and implement actions designed to minimise the risk of harm to individuals or groups of employees.

7.2 GWS will ensure that individuals experiencing mental health problems are treated fairly and consistently, by ensuring that:

- Confidentiality is protected at all times, and that disclosure of an individual's circumstances will occur only on a 'need to know' basis and with the full knowledge and consent of that individual
- If working conditions or other factors within the workplace are contributing to the mental health problems, these are promptly and fully investigated and remedied where possible
- All sickness absence is managed within the terms of GWS's Sickness Absence Policy, including identification of suitable alternative employment or workplace adjustments (which may be temporary or permanent) in consultation with the employee

8. Employing People with Mental Health Problems

- GWS ensures that recruitment and selection processes encourage applications from people with mental health problems
- Existing policy and practice relevant to these areas will be kept under review to ensure that people with mental health problems are not disadvantaged, whether during the recruitment and selection process or afterwards.
- GWS will seek to raise managers' awareness of the positive contribution that people who have experienced mental health problems can make to the work of the organisation.

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9. Accountabilities

This policy is an integral part of GWS's Health and Safety policy framework. Therefore:

- the Chief Executive of GWS is ultimately accountable for its implementation and will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate training and awareness is available for all staff
- all managers are responsible for monitoring the workplace, identifying hazards and risks to employee stress and mental health, and taking steps to eliminate or reduce these as far as is reasonably practicable
- all managers have a responsibility to provide appropriate advice, support, and assistance to employees who have mental health problems
- all Directors and Senior Managers have a responsibility to ensure that staff who are involved in the line management or supervision of other staff are competent to fulfil that role in a way that is consistent with protecting mental health and well-being amongst the workforce
- risk assessment within the workplace needs to explicitly cover risks to mental health and well-being
- all employees are responsible for reporting any risks to health, including mental health, that they identify, to their appropriate manager

10. Implementation & Training

10.1 This policy will be brought to the attention of all staff during induction, and will be readily available in hard copy and on the GWS intranet.

10.2 Mental health awareness will be incorporated into relevant training programmes (e.g. Recruitment and Selection, Management of Sickness Absence, Developing and Managing Performance). Where appropriate, specialist workshops focusing on mental health will be offered, but the general aim is to ensure that coverage of mental health issues is integrated within generic programmes as far as possible.

11. Legislation

Equality Act 2010
Data Protection Act 1998
Disability Discrimination Act 1995
Mental Health Act 1983

12. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually.

13. External Help

Anxiety UK	08444775774
Sheffield Mental Health CAB	0114 2718025
MIND	0114 2584489
Samaritans	0114 2767277
No Smoking Quit line	0800 002200

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Alcohol problems advisory service	0115 9414747
Relate (marriage guidance)	0115 9507836
National Aids Help line	0800 622738
Alcoholics Anonymous	01159 417100
Rape Crisis Centre	0115 9410440
Sheffield Central Counselling	01142810387
Sheffield Women's Counselling	01142752157



Signed: (Chair)

Date: 20th February 2015



Signed: (Executive Director)

Date: 20th February 2015

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