

# **Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy and Procedure (GWHR80)**

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***This policy & procedure applies to all Groundwork South and North Tyneside and TENNE Staff / Trustees / Volunteers / Consultants and Placements as well as any Trading Subsidiaries***

## 1. INTRODUCTION

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 employees is important for individuals' physical health, social wellbeing and productivity. Groundwork recognises that wellbeing and performance are linked. Improving employees' ability to handle pressure and to balance work and home life will ultimately lead to improved individual and organisational performance.

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.

Important aspects of mental health and wellbeing includes providing information and raising awareness, developing management skills to deal with issues around mental health and stress effectively, providing a supportive work environment, offering assistance, advice and support to anyone experiencing a mental health problem or returning to work after a period of absence due to mental health problems.

## 2 POLICY AIMS

The primary aim of this policy is to provide a framework for creating a safe, healthy workplace where the mental health and physical health of our employees are valued equally.

We would like to provide all employees with information to support their own mental health and that of their colleagues and encourage everyone to access timely support when needed.

We will also seek to incorporate these principles into line manager training and raising awareness of mental health issues at work.

Our commitment within Groundwork SaNT is to create and nurture an open and supportive culture around mental wellbeing.

## 3 OBJECTIVES

3.1 To develop a supportive culture, address factors that may negatively affect mental wellbeing, and to develop management skills in supporting mental wellbeing:-

- Reduce discrimination and stigma by increasing awareness and understanding.
- Give employees information on and increase their awareness of mental wellbeing.

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- Give non-judgemental and proactive support to individual staff that experience mental health problems.
- Include information about our mental health and wellbeing policy in our induction programme for new employees.
- Communicate opportunities for employees to look after their mental wellbeing, for example through physical activity, stress reducing activities and social events.
- Set employees realistic targets that do not require them to work unreasonable hours.
- Ensure all employees have clearly defined job descriptions, objectives and responsibilities and provide them with good management support, appropriate training and adequate resources to do their job to support engagement of employees in their work.
- Manage conflict effectively and ensure the workplace is free from bullying and harassment, discrimination and racism.
- Establish good two-way communication to ensure staff involvement, particularly during periods of organisational change.
- Continue to deliver the Better Health at Work standard and engage employees in related activities and projects.
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- 3.2 To provide support for employees experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Ensure individuals suffering from mental health problems are treated fairly and consistently.
- Ensure employees are aware of the support that can be offered; through mental health first aiders, telephone counselling, their own GP, or external support services.
- In cases of long-term sickness absence, put in place, where possible, a graduated return to work.
- Make efforts to identify suitable alternative employment, in consultation with the employee, where a return to the same job is not possible due to identified risks or other factors.
- 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.

### 3.3 To encourage the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems:-

- Show a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues.
- Ensure that all staff involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health issues and the Disability Discrimination Act, and are trained in appropriate interview skills.
- Do 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.
- Ensure all line managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace.

### 3.4 To recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue:-

- Identify all workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety matter.
- Provide training in good management practices.
- Support access to confidential counselling.
- Align with other relevant policies and procedures such as equality and diversity, anti-harassment, flexible working, sickness absence and employee handbook.

## 4 SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES

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#### 4.1 Line Managers

In particular, line managers must ensure that they take steps to reduce the risks to employee health and wellbeing by:-

- ensuring that the right people are recruited to the right jobs and that a good match is obtained between individuals recruited and job descriptions/specifications;
- keeping employees in the team up to date with developments at work and how these might affect their job and workload;
- ensuring that employees know who to approach with problems concerning their role and how to take issues forward with senior management;
- making sure jobs are designed fairly and that work is allocated appropriately between teams; and
- ensuring that work stations are regularly assessed to ensure that they are appropriate and fit for purpose.

#### 4.2 Human resources

The HR department will develop organisation-wide policies and procedures to protect the wellbeing of employees, assist line managers in supporting individuals, and liaise as appropriate with medical professionals as well as other support agencies and partners, with the object of helping employees to maintain good psychological health.

#### 4.3 Employees

Employees must take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing, by adopting good physical and mental health behaviours (for example in relation to diet, physical activity, stress management and coping strategies, alcohol consumption and smoking) and informing the organisation if they believe work or the work environment poses a risk to their health. Any health-related information disclosed by an employee during discussions with managers, the HR department is treated in confidence.

### 5 COMMUNICATION

All employees will be made aware of the mental health & wellbeing policy and the support available. This policy will be outlined during induction to all employees and regularly reviewed.

Managers and employees are encouraged to participate in communication/feedback exercises, including any stress audits and staff surveys.

All employees are expected to be aware of the importance of effective communication and to use the media most appropriate to the message, for example team meetings, one-to-one meetings, electronic communications and organisation-wide methods.

The organisation will ensure that structures exist to give employees regular feedback on their performance, and for them to raise concerns.

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Line managers and employees will regularly discuss individual training needs to ensure that employees have the necessary skills to adapt to changing job demands. An examination of training needs will be particularly important prior to, and during, periods of organisational change.

Regular updates will be provided to all employees via their line management.

Employees participating in any mental wellbeing activities will be asked for feedback.

The HR Team will be responsible for reviewing the mental health & wellbeing policy and for monitoring how effectively the policy meets its aims and objectives.

The policy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains relevant.