WELLBEING AT WORK POLICY

CONTENTS

Version	Date	Author	Details/ Changes
1	July 2019	Karen Smith, HR Manager	New Policy
2	July 2023	Karen Smith, HR Manager	Sections 5.1&12 – updates to staffing structure and national office terminology

Introduction

The Ministries Council is committed to providing an open, inclusive and healthy working environment for all employees in the MDS staff group by placing value on both physical and mental health. The Ministries Council recognises that it has a duty of care to its employees and that this duty extends to the active promotion of employees' health and welfare in the broadest sense.

1.0   Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Outline the commitment that the Ministries Council (MC) aims to provide a healthy working environment for all where the benefits of positive mental health and wellbeing are understood.
- Promote a culture where employees feel they can be open with colleagues and managers about issues affecting their wellbeing including, but not limited to, stress and mental health
- Promote an organisational responsibility to create, develop and maintain wellbeing for individuals in the workplace
- Ensure that all employees are aware of the provision of support for individuals experiencing the effects of mental ill health
- Provide line managers and work colleagues with guidance on how to respond effectively to early signs of poor mental health
- Manage absence due to mental health problems, and the subsequent return to work, consistently and effectively
- Provide guidance about managing wellbeing and mental health in the organisation, however, it is important to recognise that there will be circumstances where it is more appropriate to encourage the employee to seek professional help.

2.0   Definitions

2.1   Mental Wellbeing

Mental well-being is the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, suffering and disappointment. It is a positive sense of well-being and belief in our own and others' dignity and worth. (Health Education Authority, 1997)

2.2   Stress

Stress is the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed upon them (Health & Safety Executive). It arises when the individual feels unable to cope with those demands and leads to physical, emotional or behavioural changes.

There is an important distinction between 'reasonable pressures' which stimulate and motivate and 'stress' where an individual feels they are unable to cope with excessive pressures or demands placed upon them. It is important to recognise that stress is in itself not an illness, but a state. The effects of stress are wide and varied and can include emotional, behavioural, cognitive and physical effects.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has identified 6 key stressors than can produce or exacerbate stress in the workplace: Demands, Control, Relationships, Change, Role and finally, Support and Training Factors.

2.3   Mental health conditions
The term 'mental health condition' covers many different conditions including:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Psychosis
- Bi-Polar disorder
- Schizophrenia

This is not a complete list and there are varying degrees of severity.

Mental health problems and mental ill-health are also referred to where an individual may be experiencing poor mental health but as yet any condition is undiagnosed.

3.4   Recovery
Mental health problems are a common human experience. People can and do recover. Recovery is a process and more than an absence of symptoms. The Ministries Council acknowledges that the recovery process is different for each individual but may include self-direction, control, responsibility, positive relationships, treatments, support, physical and mental activity.

4.0   Reference
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety Executive Management Standards for Work Related Stress 2004

5.0   Responsibility
5.1   The Ministries Development Manager is responsible for:
- The duty of care as an employer to provide a safe and healthy workplace, and working environment, for all its employees as required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Ensuring that excessive and sustained stresses and pressures in the work environment are reduced as far as possible
- Ensuring that organisational culture promotes a positive attitude to mental wellbeing
- Ensuring that line managers are competent and consistent in their duty of care for employees
- Ensuring that there is good communication between management and employees , particularly at times of organisational and/or other change

5.2 **Human Resources are responsible for:**
- Providing guidance to line managers on this policy and managing health and absence at work
- Making available information and promoting services such as the Employee Counselling Service, Occupational Health services and other signposting as appropriate
- Advising line managers on appropriate courses of action in managing employees with poor mental health or mental illness
- Reviewing and reporting on sickness absence, accidents, counselling statistics, exit information, bullying and harassment
- Providing training and support to line managers on both wellbeing initiatives and mental health awareness
- Ensuring consistency and competence of line managers in managing employee's absence.

5.3 **Line Managers are responsible for:**
- Ensuring effective and regular communication with employees
- Monitoring workloads to ensure that employees are not overloaded
- Encouraging a culture where mental wellbeing and physical wellbeing are treated as equally important
- Considering implications for employees of any changes in working practices, ways of working and new activities, and the need for appropriate training
- Working with HR to ensure absence due to mental ill-health is managed effectively, consistently and sensitively
- Proactively reviewing working hours of employees to ensure that these are not consistently excessive and where potential issues exist, they are addressed quickly and at an individual level
- Ensuring that employees have the opportunity to use their holiday entitlement

5.4 **Individuals are responsible for:**
- Raising any issues of concern with their line manager or HR and to escalate any issues as appropriate to ensure that action can be taken
- Recognising the principles and importance of a healthy work-life balance
- Recognising the values of MDS (service to others; spirituality; teamwork; passion; integrity; authenticity; commitment and dedication; compassion) and the working culture of inclusiveness and support
- Seeking support either internally or externally if they have health concerns or problems
- Proactively managing working hours and discussing with their line manager or HR any areas of concern or excessive working
- Planning time away from work using leave entitlements

6.0 **Mental Health in the Workplace**

Line managers can and should have a key role in identifying and addressing the barriers to normal working life that an employee may be experiencing. However, it is not the role of the workplace to "diagnose" mental illness or ill health. Regular work planning sessions, performance reviews or informal meetings about progress and the use of open questions

are all normal management processes which provide neutral and non-stigmatizing opportunities to find out about any problems that an employee may be experiencing. If there is a specific concern, such as a decline in performance or very different behaviour, it is important to address these at an early stage.

Line managers should be aware at all times of their duty of care to employees and the impact of managing or not managing behaviours and situations. Should any line managers feel that they need additional support or development then they should speak to the HR department.

7.0   Employing People with Histories of Mental Health Problems
The MC will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and will not discriminate against people with mental health problems. It is committed to ensuring that the recruitment process is fair.

The MC recognises that a history of, or current, mental illness is not necessarily a barrier to effective working.

The MC does not use pre-employment questionnaires and recognises that it is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 to ask for health or disability information during the recruitment process. If a potential employee does disclose a mental health condition after the job offer has been made, HR will work together with the line manager and the potential employee to look at any reasonable adjustments to the workplace environment that could be implemented before they start.

8.0   Support for People suffering from Mental Health Problems
8.1   Line Manager Support (Absence)
Where an employee is absent with a mental health problem, the line manager should agree contact and how this is going to be done during the period of absence. It is important to agree a contact plan which is clear and achievable early into the absence. As part of the contact plan, absence should be managed as detailed in the Sickness Absence policy. Line managers can also offer support through the employee assistance programme during this period.

The line manager should also consider the return to work process and put in place an action plan with the employee, seeking support from HR as necessary. This may include reasonable adjustments to working practices, a phased return to work and ongoing support. It may also be necessary, during the return to work period, to take into consideration any medication and/or side effects that the employee discloses and how these might affect their working arrangements, and those of others.
Line managers should be aware that an employee who has been absent from work because of mental health problems may feel anxious about returning to work. It is essential that line managers do everything that they can to make the transition back into the workplace as easy as possible.

Support whilst the employee is actively working is also important. For many people, working and employment is a key element of not only recovery, but managing their mental health.

Employees with a history of mental health problems may find it useful to draw up an "advance statement" with their line manager. This is a voluntary statement of how they would like to be treated if they become ill. This may include information about symptoms to look out for, who to contact, what support is helpful/unhelpful.

8.2   Support whilst working

Some people will experience mental health problems whilst working. Some may have their condition managed and adequately supported whilst others may experience problems which are new to them, and may need some time to adjust. The MC wishes to create an environment where people can openly share concerns if they wish to and where people experiencing difficulties and wish to remain in the working environment feel supported.

There are a range of supports that the MC offers to employees including an Employee Counselling Service and Occupational Health Services.

8.2.1   Employee Assistance Programme

The MC has an employee assistance programme in place which provides a 24hour confidential telephone helpline service. All MC employees can access this service. No details are provided to the organisation other than the user statistics on an annual basis. The current provider is Unum LifeWorks who can be contacted through 0800 048 2702 using User ID: unum Password: lifeworks and there are online resources accessible through www.unumlifeworks.co.uk

8.2.2   Occupational Health Services

The MC have contracts with occupational health providers and can make referrals as necessary. Anyone wishing any information on this should speak to HR in the first instance.

8.2.3   Pastoral Support

The Ministries Council's Pastoral Support Team includes two members of staff available for direct pastoral consultation. The team works closely with the Pastoral and Vocational Care Task Group to develop and deliver pastoral support services, while also monitoring and researching their effectiveness. To contact the Pastoral Support Team, email: **pastoralsupport@churchofscotland.org.uk** or phone **0131 225 5722**. The Team can also make referrals to and advise you about external support options, some of which are listed below. Support is also available at a local level from your Presbytery, usually through Presbytery chaplains or pastoral advisers. This provision varies from Presbytery to Presbytery; you can contact your local Presbytery office to find out what is available. The Ministries Pastoral Support Team continues to work with Presbyteries to build effective local support.

Pastoral supervision offers a regular, intentional and boundaried space in which

a practitioner skilled in supervision (the supervisor) meets with one or more practitioners (supervisee) to look together at the supervisee's practice. It is a relationship characterized by trust, confidentiality, support and openness that offers freedom and safety to explore issues arising in your work as MDS.

If you would like to receive supervision, please contact the Pastoral team to discuss this further.

8.2.4   Coaching

The Pastoral Support Team can advise you about coaching and help you to find a suitable coach. The Church has a small team of coaches who offer their services free of charge to Ministries Development Staff and the Pastoral Support Team can put you in touch with one of the coaches. There is more information about coaching on the Ascend website: https://ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/services/coaching/

8.2.5   Spiritual Direction

The Council has access to a network of people specifically trained in the ministry of Spiritual Direction (also called Spiritual Accompaniment). Individuals seeking direction or accompaniment will have to pay for this themselves, however the Pastoral Support Team will be able to guide you.

9.0   Work Life Balance – Working Hours and TOIL

Due to the differing needs of every local situation, MDS contracts state the weekly contracted hours but that the working pattern should be agreed locally. It is understood that due to the nature of the work, there may be weeks MDS work more than their contracted hours (adhering to the Working Time Directive) and less other weeks, the timesheet can be used to record the accrual and taking of TOIL.

Completing timesheets can help with where time is being spent, if this is the best use of time and for work/life balance review.

It may be necessary for some MDS workers to work on a Sunday which would count towards their weekly working hours. It is also important to note that it is not necessary for every MDS post to work on a Sunday depending on the nature of the role and where time is best spent.

10.0   Confidentiality

Confidentiality is assured unless this compromises the safety of the individual or of others. Information shared by colleagues with colleagues should be treated in confidence unless otherwise discussed. Procedures used to record any information about employees conform to GDPR regulations.

11.0   External Sources of Information and Support

Action in Mind	www.actioninmind.org.uk
Breathing Space	www.breathingspacescotland.org.uk or call 0800 838 587

Disability Rights Commission	www.drc-gb.org
Health and Safety Executive	www.hse.gov.uk/stress/indix.htm
Healthy Working Lives	www.healthyworkinglives.com
Samaritans	www.samaritans.org.uk or call 08457 909090
See Me	www.seeme.org.uk or call 0131 624 8945

12.0   Review

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis by HR, The Hub and Faith Action senior managers to ensure adherence to best practice, and any related legislation. If necessary, the policy will be taken to the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team (Ministries Council is the employing body of FAPLT) as part of a consultation process.