

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Policy brief & purpose

Our Mental Health and Wellbeing policy outlines our provisions to prevent and address mental health issues among our employees.

Mental health is just as important as physical health. Mental illness may be detrimental to a person, as it impacts happiness, productivity and collaboration. There is societal recognition that mental health and wellbeing should receive more attention and support. There are opportunities to learn from the pandemic experience and create enhanced workplace arrangements to support staff, including when there are challenging and abnormal pressures.

Mental health concerns include stress, depression, anxiety, bipolar and schizophrenia. While not a medical condition, problematic stress in this context can be an adverse reaction to excessive pressure or other types of work-based demand and can lead to mental health problems. Mental health problems manifest in different ways. Some employees may suffer with no physical side effects, while others may experience physical symptoms (e.g. increased blood pressure, lethargy, changes in eating habits.)

With this policy, we aim to support our employees and create a healthy and happy workplace. We want everyone to feel appreciated and be treated fairly.

Scope

This policy applies to all our employees. The Town Clerk in liaison with Council's Personnel Committee is primarily responsible for communicating this policy and overseeing its implementation.

This staff welfare and wellbeing policy covers the following areas:

Mental wellbeing

Promoting mental wellbeing by:

- Providing information and raising awareness of mental health issues
- Promoting policies and actions that support mental wellbeing in the workplace
- Equipping employees with the skills to support their own mental health

Physical wellbeing

Encouraging good physical health by:

- Promoting physical activity across the business
- Supporting a healthy, balanced diet in the workplace

Management and leadership

- Equipping managers and leaders with the skills to: Identify and assist those with mental ill health
- Raising awareness of mental and physical wellbeing across the Town Council

Support for employees

Offering support to employees by:

- Creating a culture that supports the wellbeing of all employees
- Offering help, support and guidance to those with a mental health issue
- Assisting those returning to work after a period of mental ill health

Employment for those with mental health issues

Supporting those coming back to work by:

- Making any reasonable adjustments to the role/environment
- Retaining and supporting staff who develop mental ill health

Objectives

1. Mental health and wellbeing

- a) To create a supportive workplace culture, tackle factors that may have a negative impact on mental health, and ensure managers have the right skills to support staff

Policy actions:

- Deliver non-judgmental support to any staff member experiencing a mental health issue
- Deliver a thorough induction for all new starters, providing an outline of the organisation, the policies and the role they are expected to play
- Provide ways for staff to support their own mental wellbeing, for example through lunchtime activities and social events
- Offer employees flexible working hours for work life balance.
- Set realistic targets and deadlines for staff to prevent long working hours
- Deal with any conflict quickly and make sure the workplace is free from bullying, harassment, racism or discrimination
- Ensure all staff have clear job descriptions, objectives and responsibilities, as well as the training to do their job well
- Ensure good communication between managers, staff and teams

- b) To provide support and guidance for any member of staff experiencing mental health issues
- Check how working conditions and the organisation's policies are having an effect on mental health
 - Ensure staff members with mental health issues are treated fairly and without judgement
 - Encourage staff to talk to a counsellor or their GP.
 - If a team member has been on long term sickness absence, ensure a gradual return to work with support at each stage
 - Treat all matters relating to staff mental ill health in the strictest confidence, and only share information with prior consent from the individual concerned
- c) To encourage the employment of people who have experienced mental ill health
- Show a positive attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues.
 - Ensure that all staff involved in the recruitment process are aware of mental health issues and the Disability Discrimination Act
 - Do not assume that those with a mental health issue will be more susceptible to workplace stress, or will necessarily take more time off than other applicants
- d) To recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue.
- Identify workplace stress factors/scenarios.
 - Provide training in good management practices
 - Provide resources to help managers implement the organisation's workplace mental health and wellbeing policy
 - Offer support through a confidential counselling service, or qualified mental health first aiders

2. Physical activity

- a) To raise awareness of the importance of physical activity for managing stress and maintaining mental wellbeing
- Provide courses and talks on the ways that physical activity can help staff manage stress and back pain, as well as improving mental alertness and concentration
- b) To recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue
- Provide information on local gyms, classes and sports facilities
 - Encourage lunchtime activity away from the workplace.
 - Provide details on the UK's Cycle to Work Scheme

3. Healthy eating

- a) To raise awareness of the importance of healthy eating for both physical and mental wellbeing
 - Provide information and resources on how healthy eating can contribute to mental health, for example, increasing levels of concentration and the ability to cope with everyday stresses
 - Provide courses and talks on the benefits of healthy eating
- b) To encourage and support staff in making healthier eating choices
 - Provide food storage and preparation areas for lunchtime meals
 - Provide easy access to cold water in all offices and workplaces
 - Encourage staff to eat lunch away from their desks

Commitment

Felixstowe Town Council is committed to the wellbeing of its staff. This commitment is based on its moral and legal duty of care to staff, and also recognises that factors such as retention, attendance, skills development and achievement levels are affected by wellbeing. Mental health problems are common and merit Council taking a proactive and open approach to staff wellbeing.

Felixstowe Town Council will ensure the provision of a safe, inclusive and supportive working culture and environment, with staff protected from discrimination. This includes the provision of suitable resources, facilities and training.

Felixstowe Town Council will maintain in this and any successor policies, its positive and proactive approach to wellbeing, with an appropriate resource allocation. It will also maintain equality and diversity and health and safety policies and will have appropriate staffing and recruitment procedures.

The Personnel Committee will:

- Promote a culture which is positive about staff wellbeing
- Receive reports from the Clerk on staff wellbeing
- Review this policy and the related staff wellbeing delivery at least annually
- Encourage initiatives and events which promote staff wellbeing

The Clerk will ensure that the following matters, as relevant, are duly considered and incorporated in the context of mental wellbeing, including through day-to-day management, informal support/meetings, and formal appraisal and other review processes:

1. Reasonable adjustments i.e. the required reasonable adjustments for disabilities
2. Individual adjustments i.e. enhancements, where reasonable, to take account of individual staff characteristics to enable their positive and productive work
3. Resilience and responsibility i.e. individual responsibility for own health and wellbeing
4. Demands i.e. workload, work patterns and the work environment
5. Control i.e. how much say the person has in the way they perform their work
6. Support i.e. the level of encouragement, resource, training and support provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
7. Relationships i.e. promoting positive working, the avoidance of undue conflict, and addressing unacceptable behaviour
8. Role i.e. the understanding of their role and how this fits with the roles of colleagues
9. Change i.e. how organisational change is managed and communicated within the organisation
10. Work environment i.e. the workstation, sites and equipment for required work

The Clerk and any managers will receive suitable training to enable them to fulfil their functions and will continue to ensure that there is a trained staff Mental Health First Aider and Mental Health Champion. This will support the delivery of this Policy, the identification of early warning signs of poor mental health, the identification and amelioration of workplace triggers for poor mental health or stress, and the signposting to sources of support.

The Clerk will ensure that the Council is advised of any resources and support required for the fulfilment of this policy.

Communication

All employees will be made aware of the workplace mental health and wellbeing policy - and the resources that are available to them. The workplace mental health and wellbeing policy will be included in the Employee Handbook, as well as in induction packs.

All staff will also be made aware of their own responsibilities in implementing the policy actions. Including, raising any issues or concerns, and seeking help from a line manager or the Town Clerk.

Policy Approved: Personnel Committee

Review Body: Personnel Committee

Review Period: Annually

Next Review: Personnel Committee (October 2024)