

Health and Well Being Policy

Rossendale Borough Council

Health and Well Being Policy

Introduction

The Council has developed this Employee and Wellbeing Policy to manage its obligations to maintain the mental health and wellbeing of all staff. It covers the Council's commitment to employee health, the responsibilities of managers and others for maintaining psychological health, health promotion initiatives, communicating and training on health issues, the range of support available for the maintenance of mental health, and the Council's commitment to handling individual issues.

Objectives

The aim of this policy is to describe the Council's commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of employees in its broadest, holistic sense, setting out how the organisation fulfils its legal obligations, the responsibilities of different functions and specialists and the range of services available to help employees maintain health and wellbeing. The Council 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 Council performance.

Commitment

The Council has legal obligations under health and safety legislation to manage risks to the health and safety of employees. In addition to reducing safety risks, this means operating the Council in a way that minimises harm to employees' mental health, for example by ensuring that the demands of jobs are not unacceptable and having policies and procedures in place to support individuals experiencing mental ill health at work.

The Council will put in place measures to prevent and manage risks to employee wellbeing, together with appropriate training and individual support. It will also seek to foster a mentally healthy culture by incorporating these principles into line manager training and running regular initiatives to raise awareness of mental health issues at work.

Responsibilities

1. Employer

The employer has a legal duty of care to employees to ensure health at work, as set out in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The employer will ensure that its policies and practices reflect this duty and review the operation of these documents at regular intervals.

2. Line managers/Supervisors

Line managers and supervisors will put in place measures to minimise the risks to employee wellbeing, particularly from negative pressure at work. Managers must familiarise themselves with the Council's stress management policy, and use these to mitigate psychological risks in their teams. For example, managers should ensure that employees understand their role within the team and receive the necessary information and support from managers and team members to do their job. Managers must also familiarise themselves with the organisation's policies on diversity and tackling inappropriate behaviour in order to support staff, for example on bullying and harassment issues.

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 employees know who to approach with problems concerning their role and how to pursue issues 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.

People and Policy

The People and Policy Team will develop organisation-wide policies and procedures to protect the wellbeing of employees, assist line managers in supporting individuals, and liaise as appropriate with occupational health and other medical professionals, with the object of helping employees to maintain good psychological health.

Occupational Health

The Council can offer Occupational Health Support. Occupational health professionals provide a comprehensive service designed to help employees stay in work, or to return to work, after experiencing mental health problems. This will include preparing medical assessments of individuals' fitness for work following referrals from People and Organisational development, liaising with GPs and working with individuals to help them to retain employment.

Occupational health professionals play a critical part in developing rehabilitation plans for employees returning to work after absences related to mental ill health, and work with GPs and line managers on designing jobs and working environments to ensure that rehabilitation is successful. Occupational health professionals will also design and implement health promotion and lifestyle behaviour management programmes, including initiatives on managing pressure and ongoing health conditions at work.

Employees

Employees must take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing, by adopting good health behaviours (for example in relation to diet, alcohol consumption and smoking) and informing the employer 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 People and Policy Team or the occupational health service is treated in confidence.

Health Promotion Initiatives

The Council will develop and run a range of health promotion initiatives designed to raise awareness of health and lifestyle issues affecting mental health and wellbeing. The People and Policy Team will have primary responsibility for leading these programmes, but line managers and employees will be expected to participate. These programmes will be evaluated to determine their effectiveness.

These programmes will cover:

- Managing Change effectively.
- Delegation and Conflict Resolution for Managers and Supervisors.
- The management of stress and conducting Stress Risk Assessments.
- Bullying, Harassment and dignity at work
- Lifestyle behaviours, with voluntary screening (for example in relation to smoking, blood pressure checks
- Physical activity and fitness taster sessions

Training and communications

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

Managers and employees are encouraged to participate in communication/feedback exercises, including 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.

Occupational health support

Line managers and employees can refer to the Council's Occupational Health Service via the People and Policy Team. A comprehensive occupational health service is available, from individual health screening to the design of return-to-work plans for those rehabilitating after a period of long-term sickness absence.

Workplace wellbeing services provided by the occupational health team include:

- Pre-employment screening.
- Fitness-for-work assessments.
- Eye tests for users of visual display screen equipment.
- In-work screening for health risks, including hearing.
- Post-incident support.
- Cognitive behavioural therapy.

If employees believe that their work, or some aspect of it, is putting their wellbeing at risk they should, in the first instance, speak to their line manager or the People and Policy Team. The discussion should cover workload and other aspects of job demands, and raise issues such as identified training needs.

A referral to the occupational health team will be made if this is considered appropriate after an employee's initial discussion with his/her manager or the People and Policy Team. Discussions between employees and the occupational health professionals are confidential, although the occupational health team is likely to provide a report on the employee's fitness to work, and any recommended adaptations to the working environment, to the People and Policy Team.

Other measures available to support employees in maintaining health and wellbeing include:

- Special Leave arrangements
- Opportunities for flexible working arrangements including reduction in hours
- Extensive flexitime scheme
- Comprehensive Health and Safety Policies and Risk Assessments
- Bullying and Harassment and Dignity at Work Policies

- Grievance Policy
- Consultation Group
- Availability of mediation

This employee wellbeing policy should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures covering attendance and health, including policies on work-life balance, special leave, flexible working, the management of short and long-term absence, bullying and harassment, violence at work, equal opportunities and staff training and development.

Law relating to this document

Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 SI 1999/3242

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, section 2 requires employers to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to make arrangements to ensure the health and safety of their employees by, for example, performing risk assessments, providing employees with information and training, assessing employees' capabilities and promoting employee wellbeing through effective health surveillance programmes.