



## **MENTAL HEALTH POLICY (2018)**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Ochil View Housing Association recognises that as an employer, it has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that its working environment for all employees is healthy and safe. We also recognise that our duty of care extends to mental health as well as physical health at work. We understand it is our requirement to assess how harmful stress is to employees, but there is also an onus on employees to make the Association aware that they are suffering from stress or mental ill-health.

The Association wishes to ensure that all employees are able to work in a supportive, professional and caring environment, where they are valued and respected and free from bullying and harassment (see Dignity at Work Policy). The organisation expects all staff to apply the core values to all aspects of their work practice, which includes a non-judgemental person-centred approach.

By applying those values to our work practice, we aim to promote mental wellbeing and prevent stress by promoting a supportive workplace environment and culture.

The Association is committed to achieving a healthy workforce by placing value on both physical and mental health. We acknowledge that mental health problems can be triggered by various causes, including stress in the workplace and in the outside world. The Association will identify and detail the factors that may cause increased stress in the workplace by risk assessment. We also recognise that domestic factors (family problems/ bereavement etc) may add to the levels of stress experienced by our staff.

The Association is committed to a plan of action which includes:

1. Managing the return to work of those who have experienced mental or physical health problems associated with poor mental health, including flexible working and phased return to work, in accordance with the sickness and absence policy.
2. Providing information about and increasing staff members' knowledge of the causes of poor mental health
3. Tackling stress and helping staff to manage their mental wellbeing
4. Managing health problems associated with stress by:
  - ✓ Recognising the effects of poor mental health
  - ✓ Managing stress and mental wellbeing appropriately
  - ✓ Providing access to employee counselling
  - ✓ Provision of regular health checks for all staff, including height, weight, body mass index, blood pressure, pulse, cholesterol levels, nutrition and stress

## **2.0 POLICY STATEMENT**

Through our policy we are committed to providing a supportive working environment that maintains and promotes the health and wellbeing of all our employees. This includes the organisational environment through effective and sensitive management; enabling individuals to cope successfully with the demands and pressures of work, and providing support for employees whose health and well-being are affected by stress and poor mental health.

## **3.0 POLICY AIMS**

The aims of this policy are as follows;

- ✓ Not to tolerate any discrimination attached to mental illness, which includes barriers to employment, in accordance with the Equal Opportunities policy.
- ✓ To devise individual risk assessments based on health needs. This will be undertaken in consultation with the employee, the manager and where appropriate, the occupational health service to ensure that reasonable adjustments within the role, workplace and working hours are considered.
- ✓ To provide staff with support if they are experiencing mental or physical health problems.
- ✓ To involve staff in a problem solving approach to tackle stress.
- ✓ To manage stress and mental ill-health through effective and sensitive management.
- ✓ To develop working practices that will reduce the factors which may lead to stress and mental ill-health in the workplace
- ✓ To develop procedures to manage problems that do occur and to support individuals who are stressed.
- ✓ To increase awareness of stress and methods to combat it.
- ✓ To assist employees in managing pressure in themselves and others.
- ✓ To monitor procedures and outcomes, and to assess the effectiveness of the policy.

## **4.0 SCOPE**

This policy will be communicated to and applies to all members of staff.

The organisation will invest in staff by providing a range of mental health training and activities within the workplace. This will be complemented by resources such as information leaflets, posters and journals that provide information and supports available for all relevant health topics.

This policy and its procedures have been developed and agreed through staff consultation, and will be reviewed on an annual basis to incorporate comments from all staff team meetings on the effectiveness of the policy and any improvement measures required.

## **5.0 REFERENCE**

Relevant legislation and regulations relating to mental health include the following;

- ✓ Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- ✓ Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- ✓ Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- ✓ Health and Safety Executive Management Standards for Work-Related Stress 2004
- ✓ Work Positive – Prioritising Organisational Stress (2005)
- ✓ Equality Act 2010

## 6.0 **STRESS DEFINITION**

The Health and Safety Executive defines work-related stress as “**people’s natural reaction to excessive pressure** – it isn’t a disease. But if stress is excessive and goes on for some time, it can lead to mental and physical ill health.”

Pressures can also arise from an individual’s personal life as well as from work. People vary in their capacity and ability to cope with different types of pressure. Some individuals will recognise that their health is affected and will seek help; others will not recognise or acknowledge that they are stressed, although it may be apparent to their manager and work colleagues.

## 7.0 **SOURCES OF STRESS**

Stress may arise from various sources, e.g. in the workplace or away from work. Whilst we have no control over the latter, we are committed to identifying the sources of stress (which can lead to mental ill-health) in the workplace and trying to eliminate them. Workplace stress may arise from the following:

- ✓ Poor physical conditions: noise, poor ventilation, lighting or equipment;
- ✓ Job design: under use of skills, conflicting demands and inconsistent management, unclear setting of objectives;
- ✓ Work relationships: bullying or other harassment, poor management communication;
- ✓ Work organisation and conditions: job insecurity/threat of redundancy, excessive workload, lack of participation in decision making, rigid hierarchy, lack of transparency in procedures, lack of support, reluctance to take/ not taking holidays, sick leave, etc.

## 8.0 **SIGNALS**

The effects of stress/mental ill-health may be physical, psychological, behavioural or a combination. Many effects are a short term response to pressure which disappears once the source of pressure has been removed. If pressure continues it can result in the individual experiencing anxiety, anger and frustration, irritability, intolerance and over indulgence in alcohol or tobacco.

Physically stress/mental ill-health may manifest itself by sleep disturbance resulting in tiredness, tenseness, nausea and dizziness, headaches, weight loss/gain and in extreme circumstances, by chest pains, raised blood pressure and heart disease.

Mentally it may show itself by indecision, lack of concentration, memory loss, lack of judgement, loss of motivation and impairment of perception.

## **9.0 EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

In order to deal positively with stressors/poor mental health in the workplace, the Association recognises the importance of:

- ✓ The link between home and the workplace
- ✓ Identifying particularly vulnerable areas of work
- ✓ The effects of prescribed medication on any individual's work performance

These points will be highlighted in health promotion for staff including;

- ✓ Induction programmes
- ✓ Specific training on mental health in the workplace
- ✓ Monitoring the effectiveness of this policy

## **10.0 RESPONSIBILITIES**

To help combat stress and achieve a well-managed work environment, there will be preventative measures in place at all levels:

### **10.1 Senior Management Team**

The Senior Management Team is responsible for ensuring that:

- ✓ Stress in the work environment, which is likely to lead to ill health, is reduced as far as is practicably possible;
- ✓ The organisational culture promotes a positive attitude to mental wellbeing;
- ✓ Suitable training and support are provided to managers to equip them to undertake the necessary risk assessments in the workplace and implement preventative measures where appropriate;
- ✓ Provide information for staff on positive coping mechanisms and general health-improving activities within the workplace;
- ✓ Provide advice, information and details of how to access support for all staff, including how to recognise the symptoms of poor mental health;
- ✓ Managers are knowledgeable in their duty of care to staff;
- ✓ Supervision and appraisal systems are in place, with confidentiality ensured, where employees can obtain support in dealing with poor mental health;
- ✓ The Association's management plan is implemented to reduce workplace stress and to promote wellbeing.

### **10.2 Line Managers**

All line managers are responsible for:

- ✓ Taking account of potential sources of pressure on employees when planning changes to work organisation and conditions of employment.
- ✓ Providing clear job descriptions which are regularly reviewed.
- ✓ Giving warning of urgent/important tasks and monitor the frequency/duration.
- ✓ Providing clear objectives.

- ✓ Be competent and consistent.
- ✓ Encouraging good two-way communication and employee involvement.
- ✓ Carrying out a suitable and sufficient work-related risk assessment.
- ✓ Implementing controls which are required as a result of the risk assessment e.g. provide training, information, and where necessary, refer the employee for further help to external counselling services e.g. Employee Counselling Service
- ✓ Allowing staff to contribute ideas and have some influence over decision-making, especially regarding their own work, and provide good management support, appropriate training and staff development.

### 10.3 Employees

Employees will be encouraged to attend stress awareness and stress management courses, so they are better able to handle the pressures they may encounter.

Employees will be reminded that they have a duty, while at work, to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and therefore they have a responsibility to make management aware of pressures they are encountering at work.

Employees will be encouraged to address potential work problems at an early stage by reporting pressures that they are encountering at work by:

- ✓ asking for support from their line manager, departmental manager or Director;
- ✓ contacting the Associations employee assistance programme for support (see section 10.0) Employees will also be encouraged to address personal/non-work issues through any of these sources.

Employees are responsible for:

- ✓ Using the organisational systems (eg, support, supervision, appraisal and employee counselling appropriately, and reporting to their line manager any risk to mental health within the workplace that may pose a risk to themselves or others
- ✓ Supporting any of their colleagues who are experiencing poor mental health, by encouraging them to talk to their manager
- ✓ Seeking support from their GP or other appropriate agencies if they have health problems
- ✓ Discussing with their manager any appropriate measures to make their work less stressful, including use of the flexible working policy
- ✓ Recognising the principles and importance of achieving a work-life balance
- ✓ Exercising their right to attend stress management courses
- ✓ A culture of consultation, participation and open communication will be promoted
- ✓ Becoming actively involved in the risk assessment process

## **11.0 OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH / COUNSELLING SERVICES**

The organisation has a contract with Time for Talking to provide occupational health advice. This provides the following:

- ✓ Support for staff at all levels who may be experiencing the negative effects of poor mental or physical health
- ✓ Provision of a consultation for management referrals and provision of feedback reports to the organisation and the employee, including factors to consider on return to work and any adjustments that are necessary

Time for Talking also contracted by the Association to accept:

- ✓ Self-referrals, which can be made by any staff member who telephones the service
- ✓ Management referrals, which can be made by an employee's line manager if they feel that the employee may be dealing with problems which appear to be having an effect on their mental wellbeing and/or their work practice. Managers will only receive details of the number of appointments that the employee has attended

Employees should be aware that this is a private and confidential service and that;

- ✓ The Association will only receive statistical information about numbers who attend
- ✓ The service provides individuals with a programme of stress management which extends beyond work
- ✓ There is no disclosure by this agency of any information (except statistics) to the Association. Therefore, employees are provided with the opportunity to talk in confidence about problems, whether these are work related or not.

Time for Talking can be contacted on their Free phone number **03302 020 283**

## **12.0 MONITORING**

Any stress or mental wellbeing complaints will be taken seriously, investigated, and resolved if possible. Commitment will be given to ensure problems are not ignored.

To help with this commitment the Attendance Management Policy, Dignity at Work Policy, Conditions of Service, and Health and Safety manual will be addressed.

In addition to these policies, the Association will carry out a work-related stress risk assessment. This is a part of our Health and Safety procedures. All employees will be invited to take part in the risk assessment and will have responsibility to ensure preventative measures to control risks are adhered to. The significant findings of these risk assessments will be written down. Naturally, these preventative measures will be evaluated periodically for effectiveness.

### 13.0 **REVIEW**

The activities that result from the introduction of this policy will be reviewed and amended annually.

Details of the staff consultation process will be evidenced within the Healthy Working Lives award portfolio.

The mental wellbeing and stress risk assessments within each department should be reviewed on an annual basis, or earlier where factors precipitate revision.

This policy shall be reviewed at least every 5 years.

### 14.0 **SUPPORTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:**

The Association has a range of policies which refer to issues associated with mental health and these include the following;

- ✓ Dignity at Work
- ✓ Equal Opportunities
- ✓ Discipline and Grievance
- ✓ Health and Safety
- ✓ Attendance Management

George Tainsh  
Director

**6<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

#### **Policy Review Consultation**

<b>Reviewed by Management Team</b>	<b>6<sup>th</sup> December 2017</b>
<b>Reviewed by the HSEHR Committee on</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup> December 2017</b>
<b>APPROVED BY THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ON</b>	<b>25<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2018</b>
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