

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Policy Statement	1
3.	The Purpose of the Policy	1
4.	Definitions and Terminologies	1
5.	Interactions with Other Policies	2
6.	Responsibility of University	3
7.	Responsibility of Staff	4
8.	Other Sources of Support	4
Appendix A – Frequently Asked Questions		6

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Published April 2016 (under review as of October 2023)

The place of useful learning

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University of Strathclyde Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

1. Introduction

The University recognises that mental health is as important as physical health and is aware of statistics which confirm that, on average, one in four people will experience a mental health difficulty in the course of a given year and that such problems can cause real and lasting damage to an individual. The University also recognises that the majority of people who experience mental health difficulties recover or learn to manage their symptoms, especially if they are supported early on.

This Policy applies to all staff of the University of Strathclyde and aims to ensure that staff are appropriately supported in their workplace.

This Policy supports and is aligned with other University policy and guidance which offer further guidance to staff in relation to mental health issues. This Policy is accompanied by an Appendix which lists Frequently Asked Questions in relation to Mental Health and Well Being.

2. Policy statement

It is the policy of the University of Strathclyde to:

- a. promote mental health and wellbeing through its management policies, support services, information networks and regular health promotion campaigns (including alcohol awareness, diet, exercise, self-management), and by liaising appropriately with external agencies;
- b. prevent, so far as is practicable, those circumstances detrimental to mental health and wellbeing;
- c. provide an environment in which staff who have mental health difficulties receive suitable support and adjustments to their work to allow them to achieve their fullest potential.

3. The purpose of the policy

The University's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

- a. supports the effectiveness of its staff to enable them to fulfil the demands of their role
- b. seeks to promote a positive working environment that does not adversely impact on the mental health and wellbeing of staff members;
- c. seeks to ensure that those who support or manage staff who are experiencing mental health issues are themselves supported as they respond to colleagues experiencing these difficulties.

4. Definitions and terminologies

The term "mental health difficulties" is one which encompasses a wide range of experiences which affect an individual's ability to cope with his/her life and/or work responsibilities. The difficulties can range from stress and anxiety through to serious mental health conditions diagnosed and treated by the health services.

Although difficult to precisely define, it is important to avoid the use of negative terms with stigma attached which may deter staff from accessing the support required. The inappropriate use of medical terms which might mislead and label unnecessarily should be avoided.

5. Interactions with other policies

The University's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy interacts with and refines several of its already established policies.

The University's duty of care towards its staff is determined externally by legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Human Rights Act (1998), Data Protection Act (1998) and the Equality Act 2010

The University exercises that duty of care through this Policy and through the following related policies and associated guidance procedures:

- [Occupational Health and Safety Policy](#)
- [Equality and Diversity Policy](#)
- [Dignity and Respect Policy](#)
- [Grievance Procedures](#)
- [Sickness Absence Policy](#)
- [Stress Management](#)
- [Alcohol, Drugs and Substance Misuse Policy](#)

Whilst mental health and well-being issues may be relevant to the application of the above policies, the relationship between this policy and the following other policies, procedures and notes for guidance is especially important:

- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Disability Policy](#)
- [Disciplinary Procedures](#)
- [Capability Procedure \(Ill health\)](#)

5.1 This policy and the University Data Protection Policy

While all dealings with staff are subject to the University's Policy on Data Protection, it must be emphasised that confidentiality is often of paramount importance with regard to those experiencing mental health difficulties. However, it must also be emphasised that confidentiality may be necessarily breached in highly unusual circumstances where the individual is deemed to be a risk either to him/herself or to other people. If there is a conflict between these two statements then the safety of the individual and/or the safety of other members of our community must take precedence over confidentiality.

5.2. This policy and the University Disability Policy

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disability as "a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities" and defines "long-term" as "12 months or more". Certain mental health difficulties may qualify under this definition and could therefore be considered as disability.

Members of the University community are encouraged to declare a long term mental health difficulty (and, therefore, a disability) to their Line Manager in order to facilitate support. The University will consider what reasonable adjustments could be made to the individual's work situation in order not to disadvantage the individual staff member.

However in most instances mental health issues are likely to be of shorter duration and may not qualify as a disability under the Equality Act. Regardless of this, managers should consider temporary reasonable adjustments and the assistance of HR and/or Occupational Health.

5.3 This policy and the University Disciplinary Procedures

The behaviour of some individuals experiencing a mental health difficulty may be disruptive and may contravene disciplinary codes and/or be detrimental to the wellbeing of other members of the University. Formal action may be temporarily suspended where an individual has declared a mental health difficulty to the University in order to bring to the individual's attention the effects of the behaviour, and to seek to identify suitable support to moderate that behaviour.

5.4 This policy and the Capability Procedure

The Capability Procedure ensures that appropriate support mechanisms and procedures are considered to assist staff with significant health problems where continued employment has become unsustainable and ill health retirement is not available.

6. Responsibility of the University

The University is responsible for:

- Promoting good mental health and wellbeing and the consideration of this goal within all relevant aspects of its operation.
- Providing support and advisory services through the occupational health service on campus.
- Ensuring that there is advice and guidance on procedures to support staff experiencing mental health issues and their colleagues/line managers. Key support services, which include HR, Occupational Health and Disability Services, will offer information, guidance and training to staff.
- Ensuring that mental health awareness training is available for staff.
- Encouraging a non-stigmatising work environment for all staff within the University.
- Ensuring sensitivity in disclosure and maintaining confidentiality unless it is clearly unsafe to do so (see 5.1).
- Monitoring the effectiveness of this policy through regular review and using the annual equality monitoring process and the provision of other management information on disability equality.

7. Responsibility of staff

7.1 Responsibility of Heads of Department/equivalent

- Promote good mental health and wellbeing and consider this goal within all relevant aspects of their Department/Directorate.

- Ensure that any member of their staff who is affected by mental health issues is appropriately and sensitively supported.
- Ensure that they are aware of the provision of central support and advisory services.
- Ensure that they are aware of guidance and policy in relation to mental health and wellbeing.
- Ensure that they attend, and ensure that appropriate members of their staff attend, training on mental health and wellbeing.

7.2 Responsibility of all staff:

- Inform the University of their mental health difficulties in order that the organisation can deal fairly with them and support them as appropriate.
- Contribute towards a non-stigmatising culture.
- Treat each member of staff with a mental health difficulty with dignity and respect.
- Take advantage of training and information resources.
- Uphold confidentiality (wherever safety is not compromised).
- Support peers within appropriate limits and boundaries.

7.3 Responsibility and resources for staff who provide support for others

The University recognises that where staff members support or line manage a colleague who is experiencing mental health difficulties, each person has boundaries or limits to his/her knowledge, responsibilities and competence. To assist staff who support or line manage others experiencing mental health difficulties, the University will provide suitable advice and training on:

- identifying mental health difficulties and making initial responses to individuals;
- recognising the need to refer an individual to support services;
- accessing the University's support services.

The University's support services also have a limit on what they can appropriately offer and in this regard the University is committed to working closely with local health services to increase awareness, support and resourcing from relevant bodies.

8. Other sources of support

Internal support is available from:

Human Resources

HR offer an accessible, constructive and responsive source of information and advice on all staff related matters.

Website: www.strath.ac.uk/hr/

Optum Employee Assistance Programme

University Counselling Service - confidential advice, support, information and telephone counselling 24/7 and face to face counselling available to all staff. Access to Optum on line resource

Telephone: 0800 282 193

Website: livewell.optum.com

Occupational Health Service

For confidential support and advice on work related health issues

Email: www.strath.ac.uk/wellbeing/occupationalhealth/

Centre of Sport and Recreation

Advice on how best to integrate exercise into your routine to improve your mental health.

Telephone: (0141 548) 2446

Email: www.strath.ac.uk/sport/

Organisational and Staff Development Unit

Offer a range of training opportunities to support personal and professional development

Email: www.strath.ac.uk/hr/learninganddevelopment/

Equality and Diversity

Equality and Diversity provides information on promoting equality of opportunity supporting positive relations between people, and developing a culture of respect at the University.

Website: www.strath.ac.uk/equalitydiversity/

Mental Health Training opportunities

The University provides specific mental health training and awareness events such as safeTALK - suicide alert training and Mental Health First Aid. Information will be advertised across the university

External and Community links include:

Breathing Space

Breathing Space offers a confidential phone line for anyone in Scotland, feeling low, anxious or depressed.

Telephone: 0800 83 85 87

Website: breathingspace.scot

See me

See Me is Scotland's programme to tackle mental health stigma and discrimination.

Website: seemescotland.org

NHS inform

Scotland's Health information service - NHS Inform provides a co-ordinated, single source of quality assured health and care information for the people of Scotland.

Telephone: 0800 22 44 88

Samaritans

The Samaritans provide confidential non-judgemental emotional support 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Telephone: 08457 90 90 90

APPENDIX A

Frequently Asked Questions

What support is available to staff who may have mental health difficulties?

- All staff are encouraged to declare any mental health issues to their line manager so that they can be offered appropriate support.
- Staff who declare mental health difficulties may be offered adjustments to their duties or hours to support them at work if operationally feasible.
- All staff have access to the confidential counselling service via Optum and to the other confidential University support services specified.
- Line Managers have a responsibility to ensure that their staff members are aware of the support available to them. Line Managers should also familiarise themselves with information on mental health issues/procedures to ensure that they can offer the required support.
- A range of mental health awareness training, events and initiatives are promoted at the University

What support is available for staff reporting work related stress?

- Refer to University guidance on [managing stress at work](#)
- Regular training is available on managing work related stress and stress awareness.
- The University has adopted the Stress Management Standards approach developed by the Health and Safety Executive to tackle workplace stress through risk assessment.
- All staff have access to the confidential counselling service via Optum and to other confidential University support services as listed.

What do I do if I begin to suspect that a colleague may be starting to develop symptoms of mental distress?

- If you feel comfortable about doing so, you could engage the individual in conversation about how they are. If you have experienced them as slightly disengaged or distressed you could mention that they “do not seem their usual self” and you were wondering if anything was the matter and whether you could be of any help at all.
- Depending on what they say you could suggest a strategy for support, which may involve them contacting the Employee Assistance Programme, Optum, seeking advice from any of the University’s support services and referring them to this policy.
- Always advise them to seek advice from their GP

What do I do if someone has a panic attack?

- A panic attack can be short lived or last up to 20 minutes. The stress which has triggered the attack may have caused hyperventilation, which will have lowered the person’s carbon dioxide levels, causing dizziness, difficulty breathing and/or chest pains. It can be extremely frightening for the person experiencing it.
- Stay calm, reassure them as much as possible and call a first aider (via Security on 3333) if you feel you need support.
- If possible escort them to a private area.
- Encourage them to sit down or stand still and breathe slowly and evenly, in through the nose and out through the mouth. Cupping their hands over their nose and mouth might help them to do this.
- Once the attack has subsided advise them to seek help from their GP or the Employee Assistance Programme

What do I do if someone is threatening suicide?

- This is a serious situation and should be responded to.
- Just being there for the person and listening in an accepting way can be extremely helpful to the person, reducing their fear and isolation, but it is important to seek professional help.
- The person should be advised to see their GP as soon as possible and/or contact Optum, the staff counselling service. Should the person be unwilling to cooperate and you have serious concerns for their immediate safety, seek advice from one of the University support services or call security on 3333.
- Information regarding concerns about a student is available from the Distressed Students Guide.

What do I do if someone is being seriously confrontational?

- This kind of crisis situation is rare. Assuring the safety of yourself and others, including the person in crisis, is paramount.
- Remain calm and non-threatening which may help reduce the risk of worsening the situation.
- Engage with the person in crisis, reassuring them that they are not going to be harmed and advise them you are going to get help from Security and call 3333
- If the individual becomes severely disorientated or dangerous, then Security may need to call a GP, the local accident and emergency service or, if necessary, the police.
- This could be a difficult, frightening and distressing experience for you. Make sure you talk with a colleague about it afterwards and find appropriate support for yourself.

What do I do if someone bursts into tears?

- Don't be alarmed. This is likely to be an appropriate reaction to a life event or an accumulation of stresses.
- Stay calm and clear and try to find a private area and reassure them you will stay with them.
- Allow them time to calm down and try to get them talking about what is distressing them.
- Talking to someone may be all they need, however, the difficulties may be ongoing and of a more serious nature. Suggest that they may benefit from contacting Optum (the Employee Assistance Programme) or if it is work related to seek advice and support from their manager.

What if a member of my staff is returning after a prolonged absence due to mental health difficulties?

- The staff member should be referred through HR to the University's Occupational Health Service prior to their return to work for advice on how they can best be supported and possible adjustments to consider on their return as per the sickness absence management procedure.
- It is important to meet with the individual and to discuss with them the advice from Occupational Health/HR.
- Regular one to one meetings for the first few weeks should be planned to ensure that the individual has the support which they need for a successful return to the workplace.