



# **Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace – A Guide for Employers**

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# 1. Aims and objectives

## Introduction

This guide will explore how you can develop/review your Mental Health and Wellbeing programme within your workplace/organisation with the aim to offer a service that meets the current needs and demands of all staff.

*“The development and implementation of a workplace mental health policy and programme will benefit the health of employees, increase productivity for the company and will contribute to the wellbeing of the community at large.”*

World Health Organisation

## Objectives

- 1) Reflect on current company practice and explore suggested new ways of working to fit in with the company ethos.
- 2) Prepare a case for a company Mental Health and Wellbeing programme to senior management/executives
- 3) Offer Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training packages to support employee education
- 4) Ensure the suggested programme framework is embedded in current policy and meets required legislative requirements such as:
  - **Disability Discrimination Act 1995, (as amended)** *To be considered disabled under equality legislation, a person must have an impairment that has “a substantial, adverse, and long-term impact on their ability to carry out everyday tasks”.*
  - **Basic human rights** *such as the right to freedom of expression and freedom of association*
  - **Health and safety legislation** *that keeps us safe from hazards, including psychological hazards.*
  - *Most people with ongoing mental health problems meet the definition of disability in the **Equality Act (2010)** in England, Scotland and Wales. This means that people with mental health problems are protected from discrimination and harassment and are entitled to reasonable adjustments to adapt their job or work.*

## Benefits

The World Health Organisation state mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse and stress, are common, effecting individuals, their families and co-workers, and the broader community. In addition, they have a direct impact on workplaces through increased absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased costs.

Mental health problems are the result of a complex interplay between biological, psychological, social and environmental factors. There is increasing evidence that both the content and context of work can play a role in the development of mental health problems in the workplace.

Key factors include:

- > workload (both excessive and insufficient work);
- > lack of participation and control in the workplace;
- > monotonous or unpleasant tasks;
- > role ambiguity or conflict;
- > lack of recognition at work;
- > inequity;
- > poor interpersonal relationships;
- > poor working conditions;
- > poor leadership and communication;
- > conflicting home and work demands.

It is important to make the case for developing a mental health policy in the workplace in order to gain the explicit endorsement and commitment of the employer and other key stakeholders. The employer is more likely to support the development of a policy if its potential cost impact can be demonstrated.

In making the business case, general data showing the link between mental ill-health and reduced productivity and increased costs should be presented. In addition, any readily available data from the workplace itself should be analysed and presented in order to make the business case.

A coordinating body, such as a ***steering committee or working group***, could be established to guide the assessment of the workforce, facilitate consultation with the various stakeholders and coordinate the development of the workplace mental health policy. This body should ensure that all key stakeholders are involved in developing the policy.

The workplace mental health policy needs to be based on a comprehensive understanding of the issues, derived from a detailed assessment of the situation. All available relevant information should be assembled. Such information might include:

- human resources data (e.g. absenteeism records or number of resignations)
- occupational health and safety data (e.g. accidents or risk assessments)
- financial data (e.g. the cost of replacing employees who are on long-term disability leave)
- health data (e.g. common health problems among the workforce).

### **What is ‘Wellbeing’?**

There are many ways to define mental health and wellbeing, for this guide, we define this as referenced in the widely accepted *World Health Organisation* definition of mental health:

***“Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”***

## Why have a Mental Health and Wellbeing policy?

### 1 We all have mental health

Mental health issues are common:

**61%** of UK employees have experienced a mental health issue due to work or where work was a contributing factor



**33%** of the UK workforce have been formally diagnosed with a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime



Business in the Community, 2018: Mental Health at Work summary report



### 2 Cut absences & presenteeism



days of sickness absence caused by mental health issues (including stress, depression and anxiety) in the UK in 2016

Office for National Statistics, 2017: Sickness absence in the labour market: 2016



Costs of presenteeism to UK economy each year

- 1.8x as much productivity/working time lost as absences
- Costs more to employers as prevalent among higher paid staff
- Common with mental health issues due to people not feeling able to come forward or take time off

Centre for Mental Health, 2017:

Mental health at work: The business costs ten years on



3

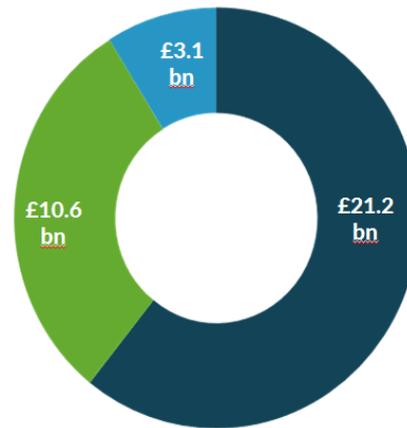
## Cut the costs of mental ill health

# £34.9 billion

cost of work-related mental ill health to UK employers each year

# £3.1 billion

cost of replacing staff who leave their jobs due to mental ill health each year



Centre for Mental Health, 2017:  
Mental health at work: The business costs ten years on

■ Reduced productivity ■ Sickness absence ■ Staff turnover

## **4. Reviewing your current supports**

Explore what you currently offer staff in terms of:

- Line manager support
- Peer support
- Access to health care services (including psychological therapies)
- Staff rewards systems
- HR - review policies and staff performance
- Promoting staff self-care
- Stress management awareness

**Company culture – How do your executives and senior management view this?**

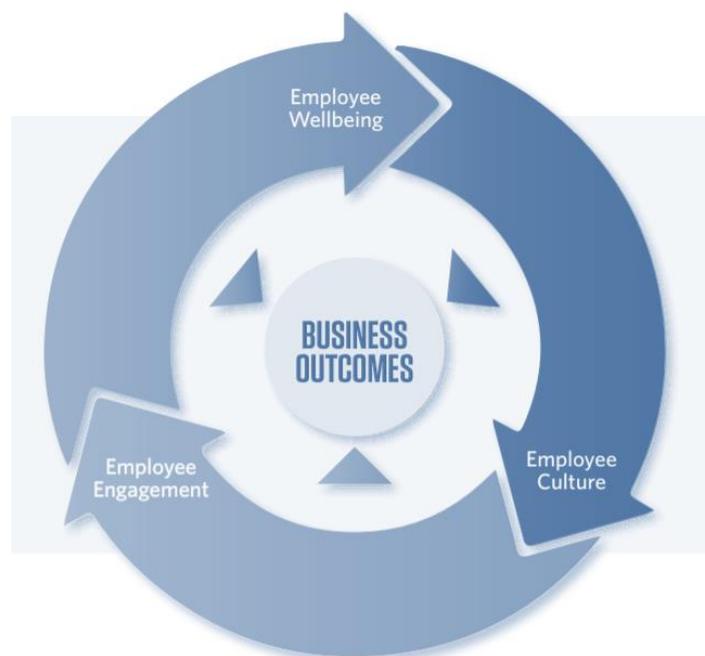
Review your company:

- **PURPOSE**
- **VALUES**

How do these inform your company culture?

In general, employees feel engaged when:

- they are invested in their company's future and culture
- feel like their jobs give them a sense of purpose
- have great relationships with their co-workers



## **4. Comparative Models – case studies**

**"We have for years focused on providing safe environments for our people to operate; Mental Health First Aid allows us to better understand other less visible issues that impact safe and healthy working practices."**

Jason Cotterrell, Managing Director, Exterion Media

Started MHFA Training -December 2016

Staff trained so far - 382

**Exterion Media** is Europe's largest privately owned Out-of-Home (OOH) advertising business, working with a global portfolio of partners, delivering advertising campaigns in the UK and abroad for some of the world's biggest brands. Recognising the importance of supporting the mental health of its 400-strong UK workforce, the organisation has placed significant emphasis on providing Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training as part of its Strategic Labour Needs and Training (SLNT) programme.

2017 was Exterion Media's 'year of focus' on mental health, meaning that workplace wellbeing initiatives, events and training were given top priority. The roll-out of Mental Health Aware Half Day courses for staff in branches in London and Manchester were a central part of this focus. In 2018 they kept this momentum going by promoting awareness, understanding and acceptance of mental health through continued regular training and communication. As a result, Exterion Media has now trained 85% of its entire workforce across the UK.

### **Why we train our staff in MHFA**

The advertising industry and its sales-oriented environment can at times engender a high pressure working culture. Although long working hours are not expected, sub-cultures of working late can often pervade, despite agile working policies and investment in training. For example in the OOH industry, outside of the office, fatigue and stress can sometimes affect multimedia technicians - who are responsible for the physical placement of posters and advertising hoardings, and who often work late shifts. Robust mental health training has therefore become an integral part of Exterion Media's developing strategy to support the wellbeing of its workforce and the continued sustainability of the business as a whole.

Discussing the reasons for introducing MHFA training, Employee Relations Manager, Exterion Media, Christopher Temmink, explains:

*"Over the past five years, we've noticed an increase in cases of short-term sickness absence due to mental ill health. We recognised that line managers may be unsure as to how best to manage this and how to offer support. Therefore, we advertised an MHFA course for 25 people on 'Blue Monday' in January 2017. With over 140 employees applying to participate, it was clear that a wider programme of mental health training was needed."*

*"We were never close-minded about mental health, but we simply didn't know where to start. MHFA courses have given us 'permission' to talk."*

Mental Health Aware Half Day courses were identified as an accessible way for the organisation to begin raising and instilling mental health awareness and support skills among employees.

## **Results**

Explaining the impact of the training, Christopher says:

*“Our programme of mental health training has certainly helped to bring about a culture change within Exterion Media. We’ve received some really positive feedback about the part Mental Health Aware Half Day courses have played in this in our ‘Culture and Values’ survey - with people now more likely to talk about mental health openly and come forward to talk to our HR team, who have all attended the MHFA Two Day course and as such are all trained as Mental Health First Aiders. The number of staff accessing our employee assistance programme (EAP) has also increased, suggesting that more people are accessing further support when they need it, which is really encouraging to see.”*

*"Continually highlighting the support channels for us is key - we advertise our own EAP, and the NABS helpline to support employee's in getting quick, independent help and support. Internally we have laptop stickers, MHFA lanyards and posters, we wear the Lord Mayor's green ribbon and also continue to push out information leaflets across the business. We continue to engage our experienced and engaging trainer Steve Metcalf from Robustmind Mental Fitness. He runs monthly courses for external delegates using our office space enabling us to utilise two places for EM staff each month – they are always used."*

## **What the future holds**

With 382 staff now trained across the business, including 36 employees having gone through the ASIST course from LivingWorks Education, all of the courses advertised are regularly oversubscribed. Christopher and his team now plan to step up their evaluation of the training and continue promoting their network of MHFAiders throughout the organisation.

He comments:

*"National Stress Awareness Day in November will see the launch of a new survey to obtain additional feedback on our training programme which will help us further refine and tailor our strategy. Promoting our MHFAiders is an important component of this – at Exterion Media we make sure to display the names of those trained next to lists of physical first aiders in all our offices so our employees know that a supportive conversation is always close at hand. We now look forward to continuing to run MHFA training and other mental health initiatives around national awareness events including National Suicide Prevention Day and Mental Health Awareness Week."*

Further case studies available [here](#).



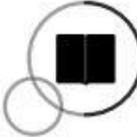
One Hour  
eLearning

### Whole organisation: Mental Health Introduction eLearning

**Ideal for:** Everyone

**Length:** One hour (progress at own pace)

Lay the groundwork by introducing the idea of talking about mental health.



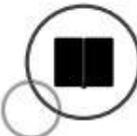
Half Day

### Whole organisation: Mental Health Aware

**Ideal for:** Everyone

**Length:** Half day

Tackle stigma and empower people to access the other initiatives and supports you are putting in place.



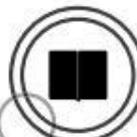
One Day

### Line managers: MHFA Champions

**Ideal for:** Anyone with people management responsibilities

**Length:** One day

Equip all line managers with the skills and confidence to spot when someone on their team is struggling, and to know how and when to offer support.



Two Day

### Designated Mental Health First Aiders

**Ideal for:** Staff at every level who are interested

**Length:** Two days

Demonstrate your commitment to equality between mental and physical health by training an equal number of Mental Health First Aiders as physical first aiders.

## 5. Wellbeing – proposed service

### Recommendations

- 1) Set up a **Wellbeing Steering Group (WSG)** to discuss and make recommendations for implementing a new Wellbeing Service which is considered ethical and innovative, which in turn will promote the welfare of all employees.

Follow the 5 Ways to Wellbeing initiative after a government commissioned research project by Foresight '[Mental capital and wellbeing](#)' (2008) which considered how to improve everyone's mental capital and mental wellbeing through life. The research suggests that a small improvement in wellbeing can help to decrease some mental health problems and also help people to flourish. [This document](#), produced by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) on behalf of Foresight, sets out 5 actions to improve personal wellbeing:

- connect
- be active
- take notice
- keep learning
- give

- 2) Create/Review your **Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy** (*sample appendix ii*). Once the mental health policy has been developed, strategies are needed to implement it. The strategies are the core of any mental health plan. The first task is to review the options for strategies, which can be divided into five main categories:
  - a. increasing employee awareness of mental health issues;
  - b. supporting employees at risk;
  - c. providing treatment for employees with a mental health problem;
  - d. changing the organization of work;
  - e. reintegrating employees with a mental health problem into the workplace.
- 3) Implement a **Wellness Action Plan (WAP)** for individual staff in need. 'Mind' say that given the high levels of stress and poor mental health we are seeing in the workplace, there is a growing demand for innovative and proactive ways of managing our mental health at work. The WAP is inspired by Mary Ellen Copeland's Wellness Recovery Action Plan® (WRAP®): an evidence-based system used worldwide by people to manage their mental health.

The WAPs are a personalised, practical tool we can all use – whether we have a mental health problem or not – to help us identify what keeps us well at work, what causes us to become unwell and the support we would like to receive from our manager to boost our wellbeing or support us through a recovery. We all have mental health just as we all have physical health and this WAP has been designed to support us all to manage our mental health, wherever we are on the spectrum. As a manager, encouraging your team to draw up a WAP gives them ownership of the practical steps needed to help them stay well at work or manage a mental health problem. It also opens up a dialogue between you and your team member, to help you better understand their needs and experiences and therefore better support their wellbeing. This in turn can lead to greater productivity, better performance and increased job satisfaction.

Employers who choose to introduce new starters to the WAP during the induction process are able to demonstrate their commitment to staff wellbeing from the very beginning, sending out a clear message that proactive management of the wellbeing of their workforce matters. WAPs are also particularly helpful during the return to work process, when someone has been off work due to a mental health problem, as they provide a structure for conversations around what support will help and what reasonable adjustments might be useful to consider.

- 4) Create **volunteering opportunities** and Corporate Social Responsibility programmes that enable staff to get involved in community work.
- 5) WSG propose to **survey staff** on their current feelings towards their own wellbeing support. Use a paper based questionnaire (example attached Appendix.1.) Or set up a web based questionnaire using [Google Forms](#) or [Survey Monkey](#)
- 6) OR Explore the use of the [Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale \(WEMWBS\)](#) to measure current levels. Key benefits of (S)WEMWBS include:
  - a. Widely used and valid in a range of settings including:
  - b. public health - for monitoring population mental wellbeing and evaluating mental health improvement programmes
  - c. workplaces (including in occupational health), educational, local authority and community initiatives, e.g. evaluating work of NGOs
  - d. clinical settings, particularly where promotion of strengths, assets and recovery are important
  - e. Key aspects of psychological functioning are measured: optimism, autonomy, agency, curiosity, clarity of thought; positive relationships: feeling interested in others, close to others, and feeling loved; and positive affect (feelings): happiness, confidence, feeling relaxed, having energy to spare. (N.B. (S)WEMWBS has a narrower coverage with more focus on psychological functioning)
  - f. Facilitates a better understanding of mental wellbeing at both an individual and organisation level
  - g. Can offer greater credibility for mental wellbeing and help drive positive action and change
  - h. Enables comparison of different types of intervention and programmes to improve mental health and wellbeing
  - i. Can be used with whole populations and with targeted groups

Surveying staff will enable you as an employer to gain a baseline assessment so we may measure any new service put in place and produce an evidence report which may be shared as 'good practice'.

- 7) Identify staff to be trained to fit within the **MHFA Mental Health First Aid Training** framework. (see [Consultant website](#) for further details)
  - a. Recommended 16 members of staff to become MHFA mental health first aiders (2 day course)
  - b. Recommend 16 members of staff become MHFA mental health champions (1 day course)
  - c. All staff to complete the MHFA 1 hour e-learning module

- 8) Utilise the [Action for Happiness](#) 10 keys to happier living resources along with the monthly wellbeing calendars:

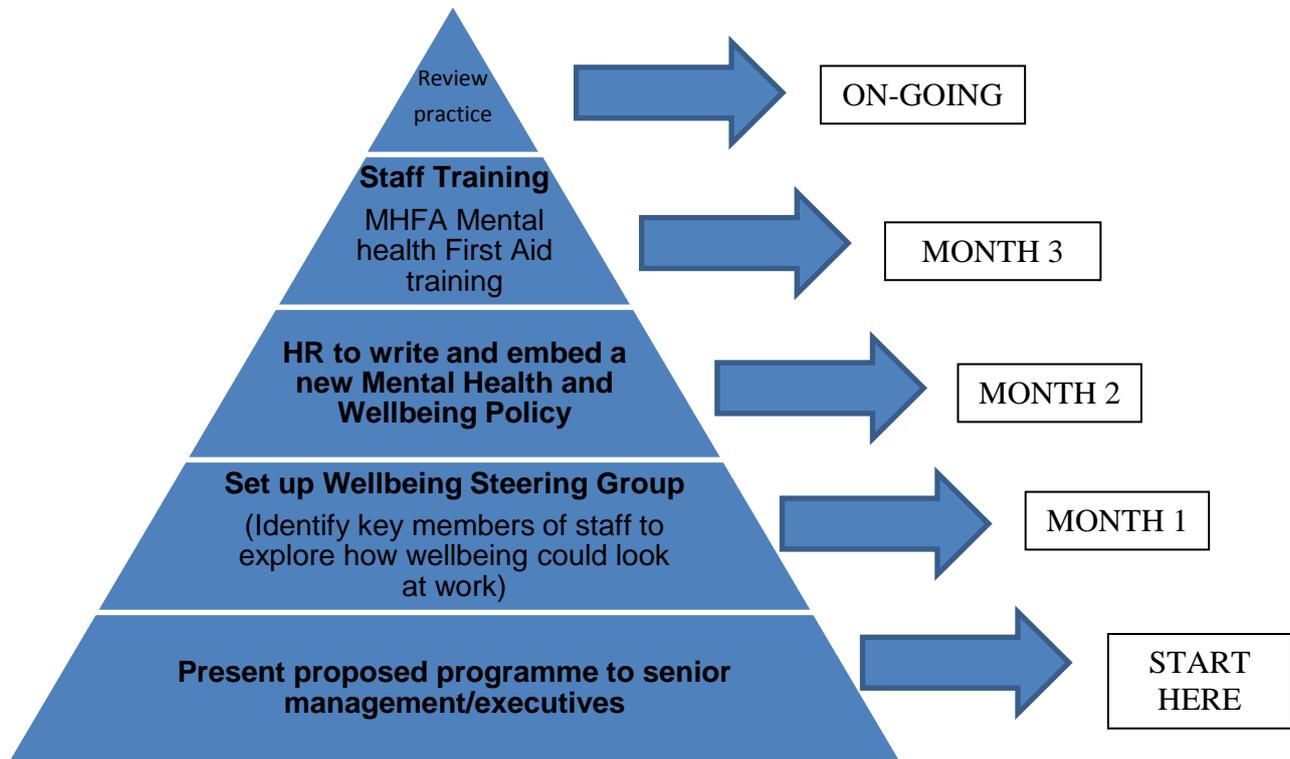


**Table 5. Obstacles to the introduction of a mental health policy in the workplace and some solutions**

Obstacles	Possible solutions
Concern that mental health policy will reduce profits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Provide information to employers on mental health and productivity</li> <li>&gt; Encourage employer organizations to become involved in mental health activities</li> </ul>
Belief that the workplace is too small for a mental health policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Encourage employer organizations to provide assistance to small workplaces</li> <li>&gt; Encourage links between small workplaces and primary health care services</li> </ul>
Resistance from stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Provide information to stakeholders</li> <li>&gt; Use influential people in the workplace to champion mental health</li> <li>&gt; Arrange demonstration project</li> </ul>
Insufficient resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Develop low-resource strategies</li> <li>&gt; Explore opportunities for redirecting resources from other activities</li> <li>&gt; Explore opportunities for external funding</li> </ul>
Employers are afraid that focusing on mental health problems will have unforeseeable consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Provide relevant information on the impact of mental health issues in the workplace.</li> <li>&gt; Provide evidence of effective mental health interventions</li> <li>&gt; Show how other businesses have successfully implemented mental health programmes</li> <li>&gt; Introduce activities slowly</li> </ul>
Stigma: some employers and employees may feel that employees with mental health problems are weak, unreliable, potentially dangerous and less productive than other employees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Show evidence that challenges the myths of mental illness.</li> <li>&gt; Invite a speaker who has had experience of a mental illness to speak with staff to educate the workforce</li> </ul>
Employers do not want to employ people with mental health problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Provide information to employers on mental health problems</li> <li>&gt; Make sure that employers know about their legal responsibilities</li> <li>&gt; Use experiences from other businesses to illustrate positive impact of employing people with mental health problems</li> </ul>
Employees do not attend activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Make sure that the activities reflect employees' concerns</li> <li>&gt; Involve employees in the planning of activities</li> <li>&gt; Ensure that information about the programmes is distributed to employees</li> <li>&gt; Ensure that employees are given the time to attend the programme</li> </ul>

*WHO guidelines for overcoming any obstacles*

## 6. Service goals – suggested delivery time scales



## **7. Conclusion**

By reviewing current processes and considering the recommendations within this guide demonstrates your commitment to support your employee's wellbeing. Workplaces and employee needs are changing; we are living in a transient society where social needs are constantly changing. A review of this genre allows these changing needs to be explored and addressed. There are many pressures living in modern society and therefore the need to support the effects of this pressure is felt deeply amongst responsible employers.

Mental dis-ease is the new epidemic of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Being able to give employees the tools to increase their emotional literacy and wellbeing is imperative in the workplace. More and more research is finding that the implementation of workplace mental health and wellbeing programmes have excellent outcomes on staff morale and job satisfaction.

ACAS state there is growing recognition of the importance of individual wellbeing inside and outside the workplace. In working to get the very best out of their organisation, many managers are choosing to adopt practices to increase the wellbeing of their staff.

A recent and comprehensive study (GOV.UK - Review of evidence on employee wellbeing and its potential impact on workplace performance) suggests improvement in wellbeing will result in improved workplace performance: in profitability (financial performance), labour productivity and the quality of outputs or services. Job satisfaction - including aspects such as satisfaction with training, skills development opportunities, how much autonomy employees have in their role, and how much scope they have to use their own initiative and influence decisions, show a strong and positive link with workplace performance.

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- MHFA England –Workplace Mental Health First Aid <https://mhfaengland.org/organisations/workplace/> accessed 9/4/19
- Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/med/research/platform/wemwbs/> accessed 9/4/19

APPENDIX.i.

**SAMPLE**  
**Wellbeing Review Questionnaire**

**1. Please circle how you rate the CURRENT support:**

	Subject	Rating – please circle						
1	Staff mental health	<i>Not at all supported</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5 <i>very supported</i>
2	Management support	<i>Not at all supported</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5 <i>very supported</i>
3	Supervision	<i>Not at all supported</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5 <i>very supported</i>
4	Training on mental health	<i>Not at all supported</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5 <i>very supported</i>
5	Workload stress	<i>Not at all supported</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5 <i>very supported</i>
6		<i>Not at all supported</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5 <i>very supported</i>
7		<i>Not at all supported</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5 <i>very supported</i>
8		<i>Not at all supported</i>	0	1	2	3	4	5 <i>very supported</i>

**2. All about you:**

<b>How confident I feel in dealing with a mental health issue with a work colleague:</b>	<b>How I rate my own self awareness in terms of my own wellbeing needs.</b>
Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 high	Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 high
Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 high	: Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 high
: Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 high	: Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 high
: Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 high	: Low 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 high

**3. What does ‘Wellbeing’ mean to you?**

**4. What would assist you in supporting your own social, emotional or mental well health at work?**

**5. Have you ever practiced Mindfulness meditation?**

Appendix .ii.

## **Mental health and wellbeing policy template**

**{Remove this section once your policy is complete}**

This template will help you develop a mental health and wellbeing policy for your organisation. Feel free to adapt the policy to suit the needs of your organisation and your specific goals around mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. There are also prompts throughout in **red** where you can personalise the policy.

All employees should have an opportunity to review and comment on your organisation's policy. Involve your people in the development process, get their ideas, get their feedback and get your entire workplace talking about mental health and wellbeing. The commitment and participation of your employees is essential to creating a supportive, responsive and productive working environment that benefits everyone.

Once you have finalised your policy and it has been approved by senior management, ensure you circulate the approved policy to all current employees and incorporate the policy in to any new employee induction processes.

# Mental health and wellbeing policy

**{Insert organisation name}**

## About this policy

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is for **{insert organisation name}** to establish, promote and maintain the mental health and wellbeing of all staff through workplace practices, and encourage staff to take responsibility for their own mental health and wellbeing.

**{Insert organisation name}** believes that the mental health and wellbeing of our staff is key to organisational success and sustainability.

### Goals

**{Insert organisation name}**:

- To build and maintain a workplace environment and culture that supports mental health and wellbeing and prevents discrimination (including bullying and harassment).
- To increase employee knowledge and awareness of mental health and wellbeing issues and behaviours.
- To reduce stigma around depression and anxiety in the workplace.
- To facilitate employees active participation in a range of initiatives that support mental health and wellbeing.

### Scope

This policy applies to all employees of **{insert organisation name}**, including contractors and casual staff.

### Responsibility

All employees are encouraged to:

- understand this policy and seek clarification from management where required
- consider this policy while completing work-related duties and at any time while representing **{insert organisation name}**
- support fellow workers in their awareness of this policy
- support and contribute to **{insert organisation name}**'s aim of providing a mentally healthy and supportive environment for all workers.

All employees have a responsibility to:

- take reasonable care of their own mental health and wellbeing, including physical health
- take reasonable care that their actions do not affect the health and safety of other people in the workplace.

Managers have a responsibility to:

- ensure that all workers are made aware of this policy
- actively support and contribute to the implementation of this policy, including its goals
- manage the implementation and review of this policy.

## Communication

**{Insert organisation name}** will ensure that:

all employees receive a copy of this policy during the induction process  
this policy is easily accessible by all members of the organisation  
employees are informed when a particular activity aligns with this policy  
employees are empowered to actively contribute and provide feedback to this policy  
employees are notified of all changes to this policy.

## Monitoring and review

**{Insert organisation name}** will review this policy **{six/twelve}** months after implementation and annually thereafter.

Effectiveness of the policy will be assessed through:

feedback from workers, the Health and Wellbeing Committee (if applicable), and management  
review of the policy by management and committee to determine if objectives have been met and to  
identify barriers and enablers to ongoing policy implementation.

### Staff member

**Title** {e.g. Health and Wellbeing Coordinator}

**Signature**

**Date**

**Manager**

**Title** {e.g. CEO, General Manager}

**Signature**

**Date**

**Date of next review**