Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace
Guidance for Managers

Introduction

We aim to be sector leading in relation to inclusion and known as a university that acts with respect and integrity creating an environment where employees feel proud, confident, challenged, and supported. We believe that valuing diversity ensures that all employees can flourish and achieve their full potential.

Mental health and wellbeing affect us all. People may fluctuate between thriving, struggling, being well, and being ill, and possibly unable to attend work. We believe that mental health difficulties should not be a barrier to employees reaching their full potential at work.

Poor mental health can affect the way people think, feel, or behave. In some cases, this can seriously limit a person's ability to cope with daily life, which can affect relationships, work, and quality of life. However, many people effectively manage a mental health condition alongside the demands of a job and daily life, sometimes with treatment and support. Others may experience symptoms of poor mental health but never be diagnosed with a condition.

We are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees and supporting their mental wellbeing. As a manager this can mean being able to support a range of mental health concerns, enhancing your understanding of mental health and creating a positive culture around mental wellbeing.

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1. Awareness of mental health problems

It can be helpful to have an awareness and be able to recognise signs of the more common mental health problems. How a mental health problem affects an employee's ability to cope at work will depend upon a variety of factors, including their level of susceptibility, resilience, support systems at home and work, personality, and coping mechanisms.

When people can cope with pressures and demands it can be motivational and help to make life both enjoyable and stimulating. However, too much pressure can have a detrimental effect and result in stress. Stress can become an illness if it is excessive and prolonged. In practice, it can be hard to distinguish when stress turns into a mental health problem and when an existing mental health problem becomes exaggerated by stress at work.

There are many different mental health problems, and they range from common conditions, such as depression and anxiety, to rarer conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Some have similar symptoms, so people may experience the symptoms of more than one mental health problem or have several diagnoses at once. There may be no diagnosis, but people still find things very difficult. Everyone's experience is different and can change at different times.

Further guidance on understanding mental health problems is available at MIND Mental Health A-Z

2. Creating a positive culture in the workplace

You are in a great position to create an open and supportive environment, encourage others to positively support mental wellbeing at work, challenge any stigma or prejudice and get mental health on the agenda at all levels in the University.

Lead by example	Send a clear message to your team members that their wellbeing matters. Actively encourage them to adopt healthier working habits by working sensible hours, taking full lunch breaks, going for walks, planning, and taking regular holidays throughout the year, resting after a particularly busy period, and not sending emails outside working hours. Encouraging exercise and social events can boost staff health, teamwork, and mental wellbeing.
Build your confidence on mental health	Familiarise yourself with the University's Stress Management Policies and Mental Health and Wellbeing Intranet Page so that you know the ways that staff can seek confidential advice and support. Routinely publicise internal and external support pathways to your team members.
Normalise mental health	Speak regularly with your team members to check how they are getting on. Create space for them to ask questions and raise any issues and give them permission to talk about home as well as work issues, if they wish.

Take stock	Include wellbeing as a regular agenda item at team meetings to discuss what factors are affecting it and potentially causing stress. It can be helpful to conduct a planning session to look at issues in detail and develop a team action plan to address any areas of concern.
Build trust and be available	Your team members need to feel there is enough trust within your relationship to be able to share their problems with you. To develop trust, it is essential to express your genuine interest in them and their wellbeing, assuring them that you will not judge. Regular 1:1's can help build trust and maintain good working relationships.
Listen and be supportive	Treat employees with respect, praise good work, offer support if there are skills gaps, and try to use a coaching style of management. Ask for feedback about the support you provide and what support they need to help them achieve their goals.
Involve staff	Be as open as possible and involve your team members in decisions. Empower people by allowing them to be autonomous while ensuring they still feel supported. Make sure people understand how their contribution affects the overall University's strategic objectives and aims.
Create opportunities for coaching, learning and development	Invest in your team, giving them development opportunities wherever possible, to make sure they are confident, well equipped and supported to do their role to a high standard. You can help them gain confidence and skills by being available for regular conversations and utilising the skills and knowledge in the University to develop coaching, mentoring, learning, and training opportunities.
Promote positive work relationships	Support a culture of teamwork, collaboration and information sharing, both within your team and across the University. Role model and promote these behaviours. For example, providing immediate positive feedback can develop a culture of praise which helps staff feel their efforts are recognised and keeps the lines of communication open.

3.   Recognising early signs of stress and poor mental health

You are not expected to diagnose mental health problems, but you know your team members and may be able to recognise potential early signs of changes in mental health and wellbeing. Everyone's experience of mental health is different and there may be no outward signs, which is why the creation of an open and supportive environment where employees feel able to talk, is so important.

Generally, there will be a marked change in usual behaviour, mood, or appearance. Indicators may include:

Physical	Psychological	Behavioural
• Fatigue • Notable appetite/weight changes • Changes in sleep patterns • Visible tension or trembling • Nervous trembling speech • Sweating • Marked change in hygiene • Indication of self-harm	• Anxiety or distress • Tearfulness or feeling low • Withdrawn • Mood changes • Indecision • Loss of motivation • Loss of humour • Increased sensitivity • Distraction or confusion • Lapses in memory	• Increased smoking or drinking • Using recreational drugs • Irritability, anger, or aggression • Restlessness • Intense or obsessive activity • Repetitive speech or activity • Uncharacteristic errors • Increased sickness absence • Over-reaction to problems

	• Appearing illogical or irrational • Poor concentration	• Disruptive or anti-social behaviour • Impaired or inconsistent performance

It is important to note that if you observe one or more of these signs, this does not automatically mean the employee has a mental health problem – it could be a sign of another health issue or something else entirely.   Take care not to make assumptions and always talk to the employee directly. You may be able to help them deal with problems before they escalate into a crisis or sickness absence by listening and signposting to relevant professional services, as appropriate.

4.   Barriers to seeking help

Often employees are anxious about talking openly and telling people about their mental health condition.

- They may not know or understand why they feel the way they do and may be fearful of treatment.
- They may have concerns over confidentiality and worry that people will talk about them.
- They may be reluctant to speak up because they are embarrassed or concerned that people will see them through a new lens and treat them differently.
- Culture, sexual orientation, and gender identity can also be barriers to seeking help for a mental health problem.

5.   Handling a crisis

If you have urgent concerns about an employee, seek HR advice immediately. You do not need to deal with concerns around mental health and wellbeing alone – you will need support.

- ☑ **In an emergency** - for example an overdose, self-harming behaviour, suicide attempt or suicidal thoughts, or behaviour that is threatening or disturbing to others.

  If you are on campus, you should call Security Control on extension 4444. Security Control provide a first-response service to emergencies. They are trained in mental first aid and can liaise with the emergency services to attend, as required. If you are off campus, please contact the emergency services.

- ☑ **Urgent support is needed** – the employee should contact their GP and arrange to see a medical professional as soon as possible.

  The Employee Assistance Programme can provide immediate and confidential support.

  Mental Health Assessment Service (MHAS) is a 24-hour NHS emergency mental health assessment service based in Edinburgh for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

  Edinburgh Crisis Centre provides a 24-hour helpline for those in crisis due to mental health issues.

Edinburgh Samaritans provide a 24/7, free, confidential support and information to help people, who are having a difficult time, are struggling to cope or are worried about someone else.

6.   How to have a conversation with someone about mental health

People worry about how to approach a conversation about mental health. However, as a manager you have the skills required to do this. Using common sense, showing empathy, being approachable and listening carefully are key attributes when having a conversation with someone about their mental health. Creating regular opportunities for employees to talk can enable timely intervention.

If you think that a member of your team may be experiencing a mental health problem, you may need to take the lead and raise it with them if they do not bring it up with you. It is vital to do this in a positive and supportive way. It does not need to be awkward or difficult – just as you would do with physical health, you can start by asking them how they are doing.

It is important to focus the discussion on how the symptoms of a condition may affect their ability to perform well at work and/or how the work affects the condition. This focus is important in seeking to attain the correct balance of gaining necessary information to be able to support them and if necessary, directing them to relevant professional support.

Choose an appropriate place	Be discrete and choose somewhere private and quiet to meet. Switch off phones and ensure colleagues will not walk in and interrupt.
Encourage them to talk	Ask simple, open, and non-judgemental questions and let the employee explain in their own words if they have a mental health problem. Maintain good eye contact, speak calmly, and avoid patronising responses. Try to establish about how any condition manifests itself, what the triggers are and what implications there may be. Be prepared for some silences and be patient.
Ensure confidentiality	You should treat any disclosure of a mental health difficulty with sensitivity and respect for confidentiality. You should not normally disclose information relating to mental health without the employee's prior agreement. There is an exception where it is considered necessary to disclose strictly relevant medical or other information to protect their vital interests or prevent serious harm to people.
Don't make assumptions	Try to put your own assumptions of mental health problems aside, particularly any associated stereotypes. Do not try to guess what symptoms they might have and how these might affect their ability to do their job. Many people can perform their role to a high standard but may require support measures when experiencing a difficult period. It will be easier for employees to talk openly about their problem, if you avoid making assumptions.
Listen actively and carefully	Focus on the person, not the problem. Listen to be able to understand how they feel, what factors are contributing to this and what you may be able to do to help to support them. Adapt your support to suit their needs and involve them as much as possible in finding solutions to any work-related difficulties they are experiencing.

	You may be able to consider the means of addressing internal workplace/environmental factors potentially taking into account professional advice, e.g. from Occupational Health. However, some external factors may be completely outside your influence and in such cases, you should signpost to other sources of support where they can obtain help and advice.
Be honest	If there are specific concerns like a high absence level or impaired performance, it is important to talk about these at an early stage.
Respond appropriately and flexibly	As mental health problems affect people in different ways and at different times in their lives, you may need to adapt the support provided. It may be helpful to work together to develop a Wellness Action Plan. This is a practical tool to outline steps, which you can take to help to support the employee's health at work. ☑ A **template Wellness Action Plan** is available in the appendix If there are any concerns about work-related pressures, you should consider carrying out a Stress Risk Assessment together.
Encourage them to seek advice and support	• It could be useful for them to speak with their GP about how they are feeling. Their GP can advise about available NHS support such as talking therapies and medication. • The University's Employee Assistance Programme is a counselling service that is available 24/7 to provide confidential advice and support. • It may be appropriate to seek a referral to Occupational Health for advice about how best to support their mental health condition at work. • Many national and local charities and organisations provide advice and support about mental health. Resources and sources of support are listed below.
Reassure them	Reassure the employee that they are not alone and that you are there to help and support them. People do not have to disclose a mental health problem and they may not always be ready to talk straight away. It is therefore important that you outline what support is available and tell them your door is always open.
Keep a note	Follow up in writing with them, especially agreed actions or support. Revisit as appropriate.
Seek advice and support yourself	If you are still unsure, if the employee lacks insight or has a particularly complex issue, you should seek advice from the HR team.

Whilst talking about mental health problems may not be easy and you may be afraid of saying the wrong thing, it is important to understand that saying nothing may be more detrimental. By speaking up when there are early signs of changes in mental health and wellbeing, you may be able to prevent matters from escalating.

Types of questions to ask
☑ How are you doing? ☑ You seem a bit down/upset/frustrated/angry – is everything okay? ☑ I have noticed you have been arriving late recently and I wondered if everything was okay. ☑ Is there anything that I can do to help? ☑ Is this an ongoing problem or something that an immediate action could put right? ☑ Are there any problems outside of work that you might like to talk about and/or it would be helpful if I knew about? *(you should not put pressure on the person to reveal external problems)*

> ☑ What would you like to happen? How?
> ☑ What support do you think might help?
> ☑ Have you spoken with your GP or looked for support elsewhere?

7.   Recognising workplace impacts

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) definition of work-related stress is *'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them at work.'* Stress, including work-related stress, can be a significant cause of illness. Stress is not a medical diagnosis, but severe stress that continues for a long time may lead to a diagnosis of depression or anxiety, or more severe mental health problems.

A key part of spotting signs of poor mental health is to be alert to potential workplace impacts, such as:
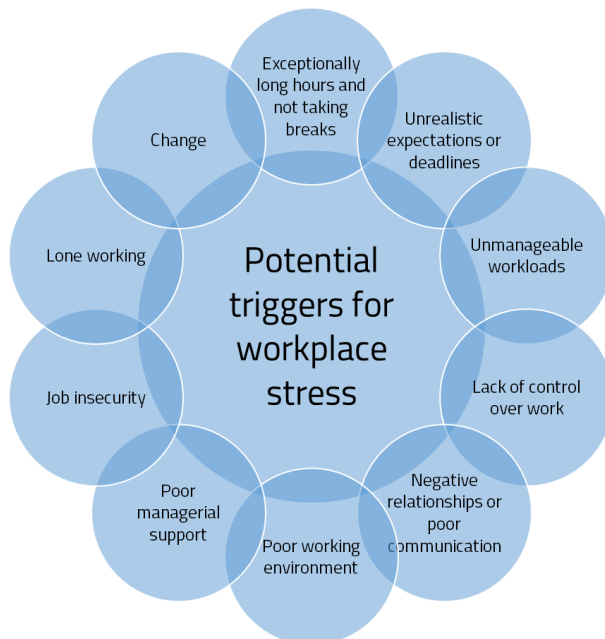
If you or any of your team members have concerns about work-related pressures, you should carry out a Stress Risk Assessment together. The purpose is to identify potential/actual sources of stress and agree appropriate actions to address these.

8.   Providing extra support and making workplace adjustments

You should consider making workplace adjustments or providing extra support for any employees affected by a mental health condition or stress at work. You should explore with the employee their specific needs and be creative when thinking about how to address these issues.

Examples of extra support that may be appropriate include:

- ☑ Increased supervision from you, for example to help the person keep on top of their workload.
- ☑ Providing more positive and constructive feedback.
- ☑ Increased communication of anticipated work priorities and projects to encourage better workload planning.
- ☑ Holding debriefing sessions after particularly difficult meetings, calls or tasks.
- ☑ Putting in place a mentor or 'buddy' system (formal or informal).
- ☑ Identifying a 'safe place' where they can have some time out and access sources of support.
- ☑ Providing self-help information and sharing approaches that have been effective at supporting others.
- ☑ Encouraging the person to work on building up resilience and doing things that support good mental health such as exercise, mediation or eating healthily.
- ☑ Providing regular opportunities to discuss, review and reflect on people's positive achievements – this can help people to build up positive self-esteem and develop skills to manage their triggers for poor mental health better.

Workplace adjustments are wide-ranging and may be on a permanent, occasional, or temporary basis. The following are examples of the types of adjustments that may be considered:

Working hours or arrangements	Facilitating a request to change working hours or patterns, subject to operational requirements.
Workspace	The provision of quieter spaces, dividing screens etc. Examples could include providing a seat with more natural light for a person with seasonal depression or allowing a person with social anxiety disorder to have their own desk instead of hot-desking.
Adjusting the duties or responsibilities of a role	Reallocating some tasks or making changes to the role. Where the changes are minor and do not substantially affect the role, it may be possible to distribute work elsewhere so that the employee can continue in their current role. However, where adjustments to the role are significant, a discussion regarding the impact should take place. It might not be possible to accommodate these.
Training, coaching, or mentoring	Providing appropriate or additional training, mentoring, or coaching that the employee may require.
Redeployment	Consider redeployment to a more suitable vacant role where it is not possible to make adjustments for the employee to continue in their current role safely due to the nature and the impact of their mental health problem, or if adjustments were not effective or are no longer effective.
Time off for appointments	Employees with a diagnosed mental health condition may require, at times, time off for appointments related to their mental health, such as therapy and counselling. Such time off should be recorded via HR Connect.
Phased return to work	Phased returns can help to facilitate a return to work following a prolonged period of sickness absence. OH, can advise on an appropriate return plan depending upon the circumstances.

Each case should be considered on its own merits, taking a holistic view of the most reasonable and appropriate adjustments for the employee, whilst considering the needs of the University. You should consider the following when you are considering whether an adjustment is reasonable and proportionate:

- ☑ The extent that the adjustment will benefit the employee.
- ☑ The practicality of the adjustment and any health and safety considerations.
- ☑ Resource implications - cost of making the adjustment and available resources.
- ☑ The extent to which an adjustment will cause operational disruption.

When you agree an adjustment, a **Disability Reasonable Adjustments Agreement** should be completed and shared with HR who will record the details in the employee's file. Regular reviews of the provision should be undertaken (at least every 12 months) to ensure that the support continues to be the most appropriate for their condition.

9.   Support and resources

Various sources of support and information are available to help employees manage their mental health, maintain their health and wellbeing, and help managers support an employee with a mental health condition.

University support and resources

Human Resources	Human Resources (HR) can provide support and advice. Call the team on x3344 or email HumanResources@napier.ac.uk
Trade Unions	Employees who are members of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) or UNISON can receive support and advice from their trade union representative.
University's Mental Health & Wellbeing Intranet Page	The University's Mental Health and Wellbeing Intranet Page contains several resources to support the wellbeing of staff.
Employee Assistance Programme	Free, external, and confidential wellbeing service that provides emotional, practical and physical support across a wide range of areas for all employees to access.
Occupational Health	Provides information about potential support measures to support an employee with a mental health condition in the workplace.
Stress Risk Assessment	Can help to facilitate the identification of potential/actual sources of stress and appropriate actions to mitigate/reduce impact and address any areas of concern.
Togetherall	Provides 24/7 peer-to-peer and professional support from experienced clinicians who are always online, plus a range of courses and tools to help people self-manage their wellbeing. The service is safe, anonymous, and free. University staff can sign up under 'Join Us' and 'Organisation' with their staff email address.

Silvercloud	Free online training to support mental health and wellbeing. Silvercloud is an easy to use platform where you can make space for your mental health at a time that suits you.

External mental health resources

Stress management competency indicator tool	The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), in association with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has developed a series of tools to help managers assess whether they currently have the behaviours identified as effective for supporting employees' mental health and reducing stress at work; the aim is to help managers reflect on their behaviour and management style.
Standards on Managing Workplace Stress	HSE resources for helping people manage stress in the workplace.
Mental Health Resources for Managers (MIND)	MIND is a mental health charity who have provided resources for managers to help them take care of their staff.
Guides to Mental Health Support and Services (MIND)	Practical information about mental health services.
NHS Moodzone	Practical information, interactive tools, and videos from the NHS for looking after mental health and avoiding common problems like depression, anxiety, and stress.
Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH)	SAMH provides a range of services based on an ethos of recovery.

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Appendix – Wellness Action Plan

MIND has developed a framework to assist people to manage their mental health and wellbeing at work. A Wellness Action Plan (WAP) can help people to support their mental health by reflecting on the causes of poor mental health and by taking ownership of practical steps to address them. It also helps to open dialogue about mental health between employees and their managers leading to an improved understanding of needs and experiences, which potentially results in the provision of better support.

A WAP can be completed at any time. They are optional and employees should only provide information that they are comfortable sharing. They can be particularly helpful during any period of sickness absence or phased return to work process where the employee has been off work due to a mental health problem. They provide a structured framework for conversations around what support might help them and help them stay well.

1. How does your mental health problem affect you? How might your symptoms affect your work?
2. Are there any situations at work that can trigger poor mental health for you and early warning signs that we might notice?
3. What support or adjustments could we put in place to minimise triggers or support you to manage your symptoms at work? Is there anything we should try to avoid doing?
4. If your health deteriorates, or we feel we have noticed early warning signs of distress, what should we do? Should we talk to you discreetly or contact someone else? *Please include contact names and numbers for scenarios when your health changes in a minor way and you are still able to get into work.*
5. What steps can you take? Is there anything we can do to facilitate them?

Employee Name and Date	
Manager Name and Date	