

Mental Health Awareness Policy

INTRODUCTION

We understand the positive impact that healthy and engaged employees make to the success of our College, and that mental health plays a significant role in an employee's state of mind.

We appreciate that individuals can experience periods - sometimes prolonged periods - of poor mental health in the same way as with physical health. We commit to providing support for employees experiencing mental health problems because we recognise such employees, like everyone, can provide substantial contributions to the success of the College.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'mental health problem' includes mental health conditions that have been diagnosed by a medical professional, as well as lower level stress and anxiety.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

We understand that, as a College, we must comply with health and safety legislation. We undertake to create a safe workplace in which we will actively take measures to limit risks to mental health and wellbeing.

We also acknowledge our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in respect of making reasonable adjustments for employees suffering from a disability.

Manager Responsibilities

Where a manager is approached by an employee to discuss mental health issues, they will encourage the employee to talk openly about their mental health. The manager will not make presumptions about how the mental health problem is impacting the employee personally or professionally. Initial action may include checking how the employee is getting on at work, and sign posting them to links below, as well as referring them to a Mental Health First Aider, where appropriate.

In a more general sense, managers will strive to create an environment in which employees feel confident approaching them to discuss mental health.

Employee Responsibilities

Any support required by the employee is likely to be known by the employee. We actively encourage employees to be open and honest about their mental health and to inform their manager of any issues at an early opportunity to allow problems to be addressed. There is also an expectation on all employees to conduct themselves in a helpful and open-minded manner towards colleagues who have mental health problems.

Behaviour by an employee which is deemed as being harassing or bullying in nature, which is either a contributory factor to another employee's poor mental health, or is in reaction to another

employee's current situation, is unacceptable, and will be dealt with under the College's disciplinary procedures.

WELLBEING PLAN

Employee action plan

In the event of a problem, a manager will work with their employee to create a personal action plan that provides for proactive management of the employee's mental health. The plan will support ongoing open communication between the manager and the employee and will result in mutually agreed steps being set in place that can be monitored on an ongoing basis. The manager will ask the employee to draft the plan to ensure it meets their requirements, with medical support as necessary, and then the plan will be set in place. Any information in the plan will be kept confidential and reviewed on an ongoing basis by both the employee and their manager. A Mental Health First Aider may assist where appropriate.

Workplace adjustments

We will endeavour to consider all reasonable workplace adjustments for any employee who is experiencing a mental health problem to ensure their situation does not create a barrier to contributing to the workplace. Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

Occupational health referral

With the employee's consent, a referral may be made to an external occupational health expert who will undertake an assessment of the employee's current condition in order to ascertain how we may provide appropriate support to the employee.

Managing absence and return to work

Where the employee is absent for mental health reasons, their manager will communicate with the employee at regular intervals during their absence as agreed with the employee. Our sickness absence policy will apply to the employee's absence as normal, subject to any reasonable adjustments in place for the employee.

Upon the employee's return from absence, a return to work meeting will take place and if appropriate a return to work plan will be agreed to ensure necessary steps can be taken to support the employee to remain in work.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information concerning an employee's mental health is defined as [special category data](#). The College holds sensitive data in the highest regard therefore; information will only be processed in line with current data protection legislation and only disclosed to relevant others where necessary. Employees may read more about the data we hold, why we hold it, and the lawful basis that applies, in the employee privacy notice. If you have any concerns or would like to discuss further, please contact the HR department.

TRAINING

In order to be able to provide support to an employee experiencing poor mental health, managers and other relevant members of staff will receive training in how to support positive mental health, and how to deal with poor mental health in employees, including how to identify the signs of poor mental health, and how to take appropriate measures to proactively deal with it. Training will also include how to determine whether the cause of the concern is work-related. In addition, awareness training will be provided for all employees. This training will aim to raise general awareness of mental health, wellbeing, and difficulties individuals face.

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS (MHFA)

In addition to an employee's Manager, MHFAs give employees reassurance, support and information. They are required to listen, to treat information as confidential, and to withhold judgement. MHFAs encourage employees to consider self-help and other support strategies, as well as seek appropriate professional help. The College will have two trained Mental Health First Aiders. If an employee feels more comfortable discussing their mental health issues with a Mental Health First Aider instead of their manager, they can contact them at any time, but must make their manager aware of these conversations, and keep them updated.

STAFF WELFARE ROOM

A quiet welfare room is available where staff can take some downtime when they are feeling stressed or are experiencing a period of low mood, away from their normal workplace. This is currently situated in 48 Woodstock. Please always let your Manager or Mental Health First Aider know if you need to use it.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Employees with any worries or concerns have access to a confidential 24-hour telephone counselling service on 0800 028 0199. This service can also be accessed online:

<https://wisdom.healthassured.org/> The College code is: **MHA121558**.

FURTHER INFORMATION

<https://www.mind.org.uk/media/8658/mental-health-at-work-commitment-guidance-for-the-higher-education-sector.pdf>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mental-health.htm>

[Mental health and the law - Supporting mental health at work - ACAS](#)

<https://www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk/>