

# Staff Psychological Wellbeing Policy

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Summary of document:

Outline of how to promote employee mental health, resilience and psychological wellbeing, identify and reduce key stressors in the organisation and for individual employees, and how to support staff who may be experiencing difficulties.

Scope:

This policy covers all staff employed by Hywel Dda University Health Board

To be read in conjunction with:

[768 Managing Attendance at Work All Wales Policy](#) – opens in a new tab

[573 All Wales Organisational Change Policy](#)– opens in a new tab

[995 Respect and Resolution Policy](#)– opens in a new tab

[126 Work/Life Balance Flexible Working Policy](#)– opens in a new tab

[511 Carer's Policy](#)– opens in a new tab

[1103 – Performance Management Policy](#) – opens in a new tab

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Not Applicable

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Staff Psychological Wellbeing Policy Group

Executive Director job title:

Lisa Gostling, Director of Workforce and Organisational Development

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Keywords

Psychological Wellbeing, Resilience, Culture of Wellbeing, Staff Support, Stress, Stress Risk Assessment, Mental Health at Work, Counselling

Glossary of terms

**Wellbeing:** A state of being comfortable, healthy or happy. Can refer to both physical and mental health.

**Mental health:** A state of wellbeing in which an 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 (World Health Organisation)

**Resilience:** The process of adapting well in the face of difficult, challenging or traumatic life experiences.

**Stress:** An adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed upon them (Health & Safety Executive).

**Keypoints:**

This policy outlines the health board's commitment to an organisational culture of wellbeing and resilience and supporting the psychological wellbeing of all its employees along with the roles and responsibilities for this.

Sources of information to assist in assessing wellbeing and stress across the organisation are provided, along with an outline of the Stress Risk Assessment process.

Active links are provided for a range of guides and forms to support the Stress Risk Assessment process.

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## Introduction

This policy deals with the development of organisational culture, practices and work environments where the mental health and psychological wellbeing of all its employees are prioritised and valued. It gives information and guidance about the actions needed to promote wellbeing and resilience as well as to prevent and reduce work related stressors, and how to support staff who may be experiencing difficulties.

There is a strong and well-established business case for investing in employee health and wellbeing and NHS organisations that prioritise staff health and wellbeing perform better, have improved patient satisfaction, stronger quality scores, better outcomes and lower rates of sickness absence.

Stress, anxiety and depression continue to be one of the top four most common cause of absence in the UK. Stress is also more prevalent in public service industries (including health) and by occupation, jobs that are common across public service industries (such as healthcare workers and service professionals) show higher levels of stress as compared to all jobs.

The Health Board recognises the contribution of psychosocial factors in the development of musculoskeletal disorders and the link between work-related musculoskeletal disorders and stress.

## Scope

This policy and the principles apply equally to all employees in all settings across the Health Board.

## Aim

This policy aims to

- Acknowledge the link between productive, healthy working conditions and employee mental health and psychological wellbeing
- Emphasise the importance of employee psychological wellbeing across all levels of the organisation and acknowledge that staff health and wellbeing lie at the heart of what we do
- Contribute to the development of organisational culture, practices and work environments where the mental health and psychological wellbeing of all its employees are prioritised and valued
- Promote an approach to psychological wellbeing and mental health at work that is proactive and preventative rather than just reactive and treatment focused
- Help develop a culture that is supportive and non-judgemental of people experiencing stress or mental health problems and reduce the potential for discrimination and stigma in relation to these problems

## Objectives

The aim of this document will be achieved by the following objectives:

- Increasing awareness that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and clarifying responsibilities for promoting and managing psychological wellbeing at work and identifying, preventing and reducing workplace stressors
- Promoting the practice of identifying, minimising and managing work related factors that negatively affect psychological wellbeing before they affect employees wherever possible, through the use of a stress risk assessment process
- Strengthening the role of line managers in promoting the mental wellbeing of employees through supportive leadership style and management practices
- Providing guidance on the resources and support available to managers and employees for promoting and managing psychological wellbeing at work
- Recognising the links between mental health and musculoskeletal problems

## Psychological Wellbeing

Hywel Dda University Health Board (the Health Board) is committed to building an organisational culture of psychological wellbeing and resilience and recognises that psychological health and physical health are inter-related and equally important.

It is the responsibility of the Health Board to minimise as far as possible those risks to mental health and psychological wellbeing which arise from a person's work and to support those who are experiencing psychological problems resulting from work related issues. Due attention needs to be paid to creating and sustaining the conditions at work required for resilience and psychological wellbeing. Identifying work related stress at an early stage can be an effective measure in preventing an escalation in severity and frequency, and can help to ensure that appropriate and timely support is provided.

An outline of the common signs and symptoms of stress can be found in [Appendix 2](#). Research indicates a significantly higher return on investment for proactive and early interventions in preventing and supporting mental health at work.

The Health Board is committed to promoting a culture in which stress or mental health problems are not seen as a sign of weakness and feeling stressed at work is not immediately seen as reflecting any implications of competence to do the job. Employees need to feel able to speak freely about their difficulties and to seek help at an early stage. All information relating to an employee's health will be handled with sensitivity and will remain confidential as far as is possible within the legal responsibilities of the individual and the Health Board.

## Legal Framework

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work regulations 1999 require the Health Board to assess health and safety risks to employees and to

identify measures to reduce risks, including stress. Employees with a substantial and long-term mental health condition (generally considered to be over one year in duration), which may have arisen or been made worse because of work related stress are also likely to be protected under the Equality Act 2010.

In addition to the common law duty of care, the Health Board has an implied duty under the contract of employment to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to protect its employees from foreseeable risks that may harm them physically or mentally. Recent court rulings make it clear that employees who feel under stress at work should inform their employers and give them the opportunity to implement stress prevention and management procedures.

## Assessing Psychological Well Being

To achieve an overall picture of employee psychological wellbeing, data from a range of sources needs to be considered and not just one measure in isolation. Existing sources of information that can be used to assess the overall levels of psychological wellbeing include:

### Across the Organisation

- Sickness absence and turnover (rates, reasons, clusters and trends)
- Thinking of Leaving surveys and Exit interviews
- Grievance/ Disciplinary/ Capability or Respect and Resolution cases
- Ill health retirements (numbers, reasons, clusters)
- Work performance; in terms of output, quality of work and efficiency
- Incident and accident reporting
- Numbers of complaints about staff behaviour and attitude received from patients
- Management referral rates to Occupational Health
- Requests for mediation received by the Workforce teams
- The pace, extent and management of organisational change
- Wellbeing elements of the NHS Staff Survey

### In Teams

- Morale and general attitudes to work
- Levels of participation in discussions
- Team dynamics / relationships

### For Individuals

- General manner and demeanour
- Ability to meet work standards, to organise work load and to meet deadlines or targets
- Ability to concentrate and reason logically
- Take up of holidays and overtime worked
- Information and concerns shared in one to one management meetings and in the PADR process

Additional information can also be obtained by undertaking:

- Staff surveys
- Focus groups
- Team or Individual Stress Risk Assessments
- Information and feedback from wellbeing conversations and from Wellbeing Champions

Information about identifying the signs of stress (for individuals and for teams) and details of Stress Risk Assessment processes are outlined in the [Appendices](#) at the end of this document.

## Identifying the Causes of Stress

Identifying and assessing stress-related hazards and risks are not as easy as identifying and assessing physical hazards and risks. Stress is more difficult to identify because:

- Different people find different things stressful
- People change and the things that cause them stress change
- Problems at home can make work stressful and vice versa
- Causes of stress can be single major events or the accumulation of more minor irritations over a period of time
- It is often difficult to “see” what is going on as individuals or teams may feel reluctant to open up about how they feel and identify the things that are affecting them.

Employees and managers should work together to identify potential causes of work place stress via regular team meetings, personal development plans and risk assessments and take action to reduce, and where possible, to eliminate the source of the stress.

Opportunities to identify potential causes of work related stress include:

- Team meetings
- Wellbeing conversations
- Performance and Development Reviews (PADRs)
- Health and safety risk assessments
- First day absence reporting and return to work interviews
- Referral to Occupational Health
- Notification of a chronic/serious illness
- Notification of a disability under the terms of the Equality Act 2010
- Liaison with trade union representatives

There can be a significant interaction between psychological stress and musculo-skeletal disorders. The outcome following a musculo-skeletal disorder can also be strongly influenced by an individual’s beliefs, general life satisfaction issues, and other sources of psychological distress. Individuals and managers are therefore advised to be aware of the interplay between these two factors and to refer when necessary to Occupational Health Advice on Managing Musculo-skeletal Disorders which can be [accessed here](#) (opens in a new tab).

## HSE Stress Management Standards

The Health and Safety Executive’s (HSE) Management Standards for Work Related Stress define the characteristics or culture of an organisation where the risks of work related stress are being effectively managed and controlled. The Management Standards cover six key aspects of work design that, if not managed properly, are associated with poor health and wellbeing, lower productivity and increased sickness absence.

The six areas are:

- **Demands:** Includes issues like workload, work patterns and the work environment
- **Control:** How much say the person has in the way they do their work
- **Support:** Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
- **Relationships:** Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- **Role:** Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles
- **Change:** How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

Further information about the framework and applying the standards can be found on the HSE website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm> (opens in a new tab).

## Stress Risk Assessments

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, make the need to carry out risk assessments a legal requirement. It is the manager's responsibility to undertake risk assessments in the workplace. The purpose of a risk assessment is to protect the health and safety of those at risk, and to help identify what measures should be taken to achieve this. The process should be systematic and structured, identifying the hazards and those exposed to them and then evaluating the extent of the risks, taking into account any existing precautions and control measures.

Stress risk assessments aim to identify where the biggest problems or risks appear to lie and where they appear to be having the most impact. Once any problems or risks have been identified, appropriate action will need to be taken. The priorities for action should be jointly agreed and it should be clear who has the responsibility for implementing them, within an agreed timetable. Completion of a risk assessment does not in itself reduce work related stress but the actions which it shows can be taken may do so.

Ideally, stress risk assessments are undertaken in a proactive and preventative way, as part of Personal Development Reviews (PADRs) or wellbeing planning in teams. Managers are required to undertake some form of stress risk assessment in collaboration with the individual member of staff when:

- Work related stress is cited as the reason for sickness absence
- A member of staff raises concerns about their own level of work related stress.

Managers are advised to make use of the Health Board's Individual Stress Risk Assessment process and form ([Appendix 5](#)). The risk assessment and any subsequent actions undertaken should be clearly documented.

Before undertaking the assessment, managers are advised to:

- Talk to staff about work related stress and the reasons for carrying out a stress risk assessment
- Explain that it is not possible to eliminate all stress at work but that steps can be taken to reduce it and help staff
- Consider a broad range of information and data which can help identify if there is a work-related stress problem (as listed on page 7)
- Consider carrying out the assessment as a group, involving Trade Union representatives, the Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service or a Workforce Advisor.

Guidance and forms for using individual stress risk assessments can be found in the list of Appendices which are held in the [Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service SharePoint pages](#).

## Accessing Psychological Support

Details of the Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service, a wide range of useful resources and signposting to other services is provided in the Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service intranet pages, which can be [accessed here](#).

## Building a Culture of Wellbeing and Resilience

Building an organisational culture of wellbeing and resilience operates at three levels:

- Creating the conditions for and promoting wellbeing at work / preventing work related difficulties
- Boosting resources and managing
- Treatment of existing difficulties / intervention

Adopting a treatment only approach is no longer a satisfactory or effective way of ensuring mental health and wellbeing at work. A co-ordinated and strategic approach to building a culture of wellbeing and resilience needs to address all three levels - as outlined in the Manager's Guide ([Appendix 1](#)). This aligns with the strategic tiered approach as outlined in the May 2022 NICE Guideline for Mental wellbeing at work.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the effective management of organisational policies relating to Hywel Dda University Health Board employees.

### Health Board Directors

The Director of Workforce and Organisational Development is responsible for ensuring this policy and any associated documentation relating to employee psychological wellbeing and mental health are reviewed and updated in line with future guidance and implemented accordingly.

In acknowledging the importance of building an organisational culture of wellbeing and resilience Health Board Directors will:

- Embed employee psychological wellbeing in organisational culture, systems and infrastructure, demonstrating its importance through role modelling, behaviour and decision making
- Strengthen the role of line managers in promoting psychological wellbeing through compassionate leadership style and management practices
- Be proactive in challenging any stigma attached to the experience of work related stress, mental health problems or the use of support services

### **Senior Managers and Line Managers**

All managers need to promote psychological wellbeing and managing stress in the following ways:

- Actively work to provide the necessary conditions to support wellbeing and resilience in the workplace (as outlined in the HSE Stress Management Standards framework)
- Ensure that local systems are in place for identifying and addressing stress in the workplace and that any actions taken are monitored and reviewed
- Adopt a compassionate leadership style and embed psychological wellbeing in team culture, demonstrating its importance through role modelling, behaviour and decision making
- Proactive use of wellbeing conversations and the Stress Risk Assessment process

Further detail is provided in the Manager's Guide ([Appendix 1](#))

### **All employees**

The way that employees treat each other has a powerful effect on psychological wellbeing and on raising or lowering pressure and stress levels at work. It is essential that as employees, we work with each other in ways that help control uncomfortable pressure. All employees have a responsibility to contribute to a supportive and psychologically healthy work environment by upholding the values of Hywel Dda.

- Be respectful and considerate of others, listening to concerns and be willing to offer help or when needed
- Raise any concerns about stress at work early on and take part in stress risk assessment procedures when these are required

Any employee may self-refer to the Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service or Occupational Health at any time for advice or support relating to work or personal issues.

### **Workforce and Organisational Development Directorate**

- Assist in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to promote psychological wellbeing and address stress by collating sickness absence statistics
- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals and encourage referral to the Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service or to Occupational Health where appropriate
- Ensure that the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems is positively encouraged by providing fair and non-discriminatory recruitment and selection procedures and that employees who experience mental health difficulties are not discriminated against
- Participate with managers in resolving work related stress issues and associated conflicts including mediation and signposting.

- Provide learning and development opportunities for leaders and managers on building a culture of wellbeing and resilience and supporting staff with mental health problems

### **Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service**

- Provide an organisational lead on issues relating to employee resilience, psychological wellbeing and mental health at work
- Provide specialist advice, consultation and learning opportunities on building a culture of wellbeing and resilience at work for leaders, teams and individual employees
- Provide consultation and support on conducting stress risk assessments and psychologically informed organisational health interventions to build a culture of wellbeing and resilience
- Provide a range of appropriate psychological interventions including access to an equitable confidential advice and psychological therapy / counselling service for all employees
- Provide referrals and signposting to Hywel Dda UHB Local Primary Mental Health Care Support Services or outside specialist agencies where required
- Support individuals who have been off sick with psychological or stress related difficulties and provide specialist advice on return to work plans within the agreed limits of confidentiality

### **Occupational Health Department**

- Proactively promote employee health and wellbeing in alignment with wider public health and health promotion strategies
- Provide advice, support and guidance to managers and employees on wellbeing at work
- Encourage employees to access the Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service where appropriate

### **Wellbeing Champions**

Any employee can become a Wellbeing Champion with the support of their line manager. Time dedicated to this is voluntary and in addition to your usual role so will need to be agreed with line management. The extent of contribution can therefore vary and may include the following:

- Promote health and well-being within the workplace
- Publicise health and well-being initiatives, awareness days and calendar events
- Advise and sign post staff to appropriate support services
- Help us understand the needs of staff to help shape our staff health and wellbeing agenda

### **The Health and Wellbeing Steering Group**

- Develop, agree and support the implementation of a plan of action to implement the key health improvement areas within the Corporate Health Standard award criteria, including Mental Health Promotion
- Provide a forum for the sharing and implementation of ideas, evidence based practice and policy guidelines relating to psychological wellbeing at work
- Promote awareness of the complexity of issues which affect wellbeing to enable an effective and strategic approach to their management including workplace culture, stress at work, physical environment, work-life balance and communication
- Ensure that all initiatives relating to psychological wellbeing and mental health at work have a robust evaluation component built in from the outset
- Monitor activities arising from the plan and report on progress including evaluation, to the People, Organisational Development and Culture Committee.

- **List of Appendices:**

The following Appendices are held in the Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service SharePoint pages: and can be accessed using the links below:

1. [Manager's Guide to Promoting a Culture of Wellbeing and Resilience](#)
2. [Signs and Symptoms of Stress \(In individuals and teams\)](#)
3. [Guidance on using the Individual Stress Risk Assessment process](#)
4. [Individual Stress Risk Assessment – Flowchart](#)
5. [Individual Stress Risk Assessment form](#)
6. [Individual Stress Risk Assessment Action Monitoring Form](#)
7. [Potential Solutions to support the SRA process](#)