

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Introduction

Mental wellbeing in the workplace is relevant to all employees and everyone can contribute to improved mental wellbeing at work. Addressing workplace mental wellbeing can help strengthen the positive, protective factors of employment, reduce risk factors for mental ill health and improve general health. It can also help promote the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems and support them once they are at work.

Objectives

The aim of this policy is to describe the organisation's commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of employees, setting out the responsibilities of different functions and specialists and the range of services available to help employees maintain health and wellbeing, as well as how the organisation fulfils its legal obligations.

Bridges' key objectives in relation to mental health and wellbeing are:

1. To identify contributing factors impacting mental health using an annual employee questionnaire
2. To tackle workplace factors that may negatively affect mental wellbeing, and to develop management skills to promote mental wellbeing and manage mental health problems effectively.
3. To develop a culture based on trust, support and mutual respect within the workplace. As an employer we aim to create and promote a culture where employees are able to talk openly about their job and mental health problems and to report difficulties without fear of discrimination or reprisal.
4. To provide support and assistance for employees experiencing mental health difficulties.
5. To support the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems by providing fair and non-discriminatory recruitment and selection procedures.
6. To recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

Responsibilities

Organisation

Bridges has a legal duty of care to employees to ensure health at work, as set out in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The organisation will ensure that its policies and practices reflect this duty and review the operation of these documents at regular intervals.

Line Managers

Line managers must ensure that they take steps to reduce the risks to employee health and wellbeing by:

- Ensuring that a good match is obtained between individuals recruited and job descriptions/specifications;
- Keeping employees in the team up to date with developments at work and how these might affect their job and workload;
- Ensuring that employees know who to approach with work related problems;
- Making sure jobs are designed fairly and that work is allocated appropriately between teams
- Ensuring that work stations are regularly assessed to ensure that they are appropriate and fit for purpose.
- Monitoring the workplace, identify hazards and risks and take steps to eliminate or reduce these as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Ensuring good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Assisting and supporting employees who are known to have mental health problems or are experiencing stress outside work – for example due to bereavement or separation.
- Ensuring staff are provided with the resources and training required to carry out their job.
- Monitoring working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking, and monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Ensuring staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Managing team workload levels appropriately.

Human Resources

The HR Manager will be responsible for the following:

- Develop organisation-wide policies and procedures to protect the wellbeing of employees
- Assist line managers in supporting individuals and liaise as appropriate with occupational health and other medical professionals, with the object of helping employees to maintain good psychological health.
- Organise training and awareness courses on workplace mental wellbeing in conjunction with suitable experts.
- Provide advice and support to employees and managers in relation to this policy.
- Monitor and report on levels of sickness absence which relate to mental health problems including stress-related illness (in conjunction with the occupational health service and departmental managers).
- Provide specialist advice and awareness training on mental wellbeing.
- Support individuals who have been off sick with mental health and stress problems and advise them and their management on a planned return to work
- Refer individuals to workplace counsellors or specialist agencies as required.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to promote mental wellbeing.
- Inform the employer and the health and safety committee of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work

Occupational Health

Occupational health professionals will provide a comprehensive service designed to help employees stay in work, or to return to work, after experiencing mental health problems.

This will include carrying out medical assessments of individuals' fitness for work, liaising with GPs and working with individuals to help them to retain employment.

Occupational health professionals will play a critical part in developing rehabilitation plans for employees returning to work after absences related to mental ill health, and work with GPs and line managers on designing jobs and working environments to ensure that rehabilitation is successful.

Employees

Employees must take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing, by adopting good health behaviours and informing the organisation if they believe work or the work environment poses a risk to their health. Any health-related information disclosed by an employee during discussions with managers, the HR Manager or the occupational health service is treated in confidence.

Health promotion initiatives

The organisation will develop and run a range of health promotion initiatives designed to raise awareness of health and lifestyle issues affecting mental health and wellbeing. The HR and Health & Safety departments will have primary responsibility for leading these programmes, but line managers and employees will be encouraged to participate. These programmes will be evaluated to determine their effectiveness.

Communication

Managers and employees are encouraged to participate in communication/feedback exercises, including stress audits and staff surveys. All employees should be aware of the importance of effective communication and to use the media most appropriate to the message, for example team meetings, one-to-one meetings, electronic communications and organisation-wide methods. The organisation will ensure that structures exist to give employees regular feedback on their performance, and for them to raise concerns.

The organisation will consider special communication media during periods of organisational change.

Training

All Bridges Senior Management will attend Mental Health training to enhance their understanding of mental health and how they can support our employees.

Occupational health support

Line managers and employees can contact the organisation's occupational health nurse via the HR Manager.

Workplace wellbeing services provided by the occupational health nurse include:

- workstation assessments;
- pre-employment screening;
- fitness-for-work assessments;

If employees believe that their work, or some aspect of it, is putting their wellbeing at risk they should, in the first instance, speak to their line manager or the HR Manager.

A referral to the occupational health team will be made if this is considered appropriate after an employee's initial discussion with his/her manager or the HR Manager. Discussions between employees and the occupational health professionals are confidential, although the occupational health team is likely to provide a report on the employee's fitness to work, and any recommended adaptations to the working environment, to the HR Manager.

Other measures available to support employees in maintaining health and wellbeing include:

- an employee assistance programme through Healthshield;
- procedures for reporting and handling inappropriate behaviour (for example bullying and harassment);
- subsidised gym/sports facilities;
- special leave arrangements;
- entitlement to request flexible working;
- support for workers with disabilities; and
- the organisation's grievance policy.

Data Protection

Line managers, human resources and occupational health must ensure that personal data, including information about individuals' health, is handled in accordance with the organisation's Data Protection Policy.