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**Mental Health Policy**

Mental health problems are believed to be experienced by one in six adults, with mental health concerns being the second most prevalent reason for employee absence. This policy uses the term ‘mental health problem’ to include signs of stress and anxiety, and mental health conditions that have been diagnosed by a medical professional, such as depression or PTSD.

The company understands the positive impact that healthy and engaged employees make to the success of the business. As such, the company pledges to provide initial, and ongoing support and help for employees going through mental health problems. The purpose of this policy is to assist with creating an open and honest workplace where line managers and employees can discuss mental health problems, and to ensure the necessary support is known and offered to employees when needed.

**Legal Obligations**

The company understands the role it has in ensuring the Health and Safety legislation is adhered to. The company undertakes to create a safe workplace where risks to mental health and wellbeing are limited as far as possible. Additionally, the company understands the protection employees with a disability have against discrimination under the Equality Act 2010, including the obligation for employees to introduce reasonable adjustments for disabled employees.

**Recruitment**

Unless it is related to the specific requirements of the job, the company will not ask applicants at any stage of the recruitment process for information regarding any previous health issues, in order to ensure potential employees are not discriminated against because of their mental health history.

**Indicators**

To prevent mental health problems escalating, early intervention is important. In many cases, obvious indicators that an employee is suffering from a mental health problem may not be present, however, early signs can include:

• Behavioural, mood or temperament changes, especially when communicating with others.

• Decrease in productivity and focus.

• Inability to make decisions and problem solving.

• Showing signs of tiredness or being withdrawn and unable to take part in hobbies they usually participate in.

• Reducing intake of food or increasing intake of alcohol, cigarettes etc..

• Line manger responsibilities

When dealing with an employee with mental health concerns, line managers should be open, welcoming, and friendly. They should invite the employee to regular private meeting and ask them to talk openly about their mental health problems. The line manager should not make presumptions about how the mental health problem is impacting on the employee personally and professionally, Initial action should be to check the employee is getting on at work, in the same manner as if the employee was suffering from a known physical health problem.

**Employee responsibilities**

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

**Action planning**

Mind (a mental health charity) recommends that, where a line manager identifies a mental health issue, they should work alongside the employee to create a personal wellness action plan that provides for proactive management of their mental health. This will support ongoing open communication between line managers and employees and will result in mutually agreed steps being set in place that can be monitored on an ongoing basis.

A wellness action plan should cover :

• Actions and measures that can support the employee’s mental health.

• Symptoms and triggers for poor mental health.

• The impact mental health problems have, or could have, on the employees performance.

• Any workplace supported required from their line manager or colleagues.

• Any positive actions the employee can take when suffering from poor mental health.

• A review process to ensure the workplace support is having the required effect.

**Workplace adjustments**

A disability is defined as “a mental or physical impairment that has a substantial long term adverse on an individual’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”. The company will always strive to promote Good Mental Health and aim to make reasonable adjustments where possible.

**Signposting and Support Services**

In first cases, employees should refer to their GP who can offer support and signposting to other services within the NHS that can provide Long-term assistance. However, there are also a number of charities and organisations that can provide support such as MIND (www.mind.org.uk 0300 123 3393) or Samaritans who offer emotional support 24 hours a day, in full confidence. (www.samaritans.org Call 116 123 - it’s free).

There is also the NHS Talking Service available which on the Isle of Wight can be contacted on 01983 532860 or you can complete a Self-referral online at https://www.iow.nhs.uk/our-services/mental-health-services/refer-yourself.htm . If you feel that you or another are in immediate need of mental health support, you can also call 111 or 999.

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