MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 We are committed to protecting your mental, as well as physical, health, safety and wellbeing and that of all those who work for us. We will endeavour to maintain a working environment in which everyone treats one another with dignity and respect and is able to cooperate with and trust their colleagues and that is conducive to positive mental wellbeing.

1.2 We acknowledge the importance of a supportive environment and working culture, and of identifying and reducing workplace stress and factors that can negatively impact our employees' mental wellbeing.

1.3 We are committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and to bring it to everyone's attention. However, this policy can only be effective if everyone co-operates to achieve its

aims.

1.4 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. We may also vary elements, such as any time limits, as appropriate in any case.

2. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

2.1 We have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that your mental as well as physical health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised**.**

2.2 This policy takes account of our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act etc. 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1998 and Equality Act 2010.

3. WHO IS COVERED BY THE POLICY?

3.1 This policy applies to all employees, directors and other officers, workers and agency workers.

3.2 We also require in any contracts with self-employed consultants or contractors that they comply with this policy. We will ensure they are given access to a copy.

3.3 All individuals covered in sections 3.1 and 3.2 are referred to as 'staff' in this policy.

4. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS POLICY?

4.1 While we ask all managers to take responsibility for making sure this policy is complied with, its successful operation also depends on you. Please take the time to read and understand it, and to go back to your manager with any questions you may have. References to Directors in this policy mean the most senior people within our organisation.

4.2 All managers have a responsibility to recognise potential issues of work-related stress or mental ill health in the staff they manage and:

a) participate in the culture of open communication and encouragement, ensure that the staff they manage receive training, effectively plan and allocate workloads and provide feedback on performance,

b) monitor workloads and reallocate work where necessary,

c) encourage staff to use their annual leave entitlement across the whole holiday year,

d) ensure that staff they manage understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and others and act on behaviour that falls below those standards.

4.3 However, all members of staff are responsible for the success of this policy and are asked to ensure that they:

a) familiarise themselves with the policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives,

b) plan and organise their work to meet personal and organisational objectives,

c) use holiday entitlement across the holiday year,

d) speak to their manager if they experience or are aware of a situation that may lead to a mental health concern, and

e) cooperate with support, advice and guidance they may be offered by their manager.

5. SCOPE AND AIMS OF THE POLICY

5.1 We are committed to identifying, tackling and preventing the causes of work-related mental health issues, and to providing appropriate support and consideration to staff suffering from a mental health condition – whether caused by work-related or external factors – on a confidential basis where appropriate. We will:

a) promote a culture of open communication, participation and encouragement. Through training, effective planning and allocation of workloads and ensuring feedback is provided on performance, we want staff to develop their skills and confidence and to feel able to raise any concerns they have about their work or working environment,

b) use staff development, staff support systems and policies reflecting current good practice to help staff understand and recognise the causes of mental health conditions and to address work-related factors that may relate to these and the impact of external issues on mental health at work,

c) provide a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation,

d) address violence, aggression and other forms of inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action,

e) ensure risk assessments include or specifically address

mental health,

f) maintain an appraisal process to ensure the suitability of workloads, supported by a capability procedure,

g) facilitate requests for flexible working where reasonably practicable in accordance with our Flexible Working Policy,

h) communicate effectively when going through workplace changes, and

i) provide support for staff affected by or absent by reason of mental health issues.

6. EXAMPLES OF COMMON MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

6.1 STRESS

- Stress is the adverse reaction experienced in response to excessive pressures or demands. Stress is not an illness but, sustained over a period of time, it can lead to mental and/or physical illness.
- There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enable individuals to meet their full potential and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure becomes excessive it produces stress.
- Pressures outside the workplace, whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown or financial worries, can result in stress. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.
- We recognise that what triggers stress and the capacity to deal with stress varies from person to person. Individuals react to similar situations in different ways.

6.2 DEPRESSION

- Depression is more than simply feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days. Most people go through periods of feeling 'down' but when a person is depressed, they feel persistently sad for weeks or months rather than just a few days.
- Depression is an illness with real symptoms. It isn't a sign of weakness or something that a person can 'snap out of'.
- Depression affects people in different ways and can cause a wide variety of symptoms ranging from lasting feelings of unhappiness and hopelessness, to losing interest in the things that a person used to enjoy and feeling very tearful. Many

people with depression also have symptoms of anxiety as well as physical symptoms, such as feeling constantly tired, sleeping badly, loss of appetite and aches and pains.

- Many women (around one in five) commonly experience peri-natal or postnatal depression while pregnant or after having given birth.

6.3 ANXIETY

- Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear, that can be mild or severe.
- Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life – for example, prior to sitting an exam or a job interview – and feeling anxious at these times is perfectly normal.
- However, some people find it hard to control their worries. Their feelings of anxiety are more constant and can often affect their daily lives.
- Anxiety is the main symptom of several conditions, including panic disorder, phobias (for example, agoraphobia or claustrophobia) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- General anxiety disorder (GAD) is a long-term condition that causes sufferers to feel anxious about a wide range of situations and issues rather than one specific event. People with GAD feel anxious most days and often struggle to relax or remember the last time they felt relaxed. GAD can cause both psychological and physical symptoms, including feeling restless or worried, having trouble concentrating or sleeping, dizziness and/or heart palpitations.

6.4 OTHER MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Other issues that people may experience include conditions such as:

a) bipolar disorder
b) personality disorders (for example, schizophrenia)
c) eating and body image disorders
d) self-harming
e) obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
f) panic attacks
g) issues arising from drug or alcohol abuse.

7. ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH CASES AT WORK

7.1 If you believe you are suffering from a mental health issue, we would encourage you to discuss this with your manager in the first instance. If you feel unable to do so, you may wish to consider

speaking to another manager, the CEO or HR to advise them of your concerns.

7.2 Europia offers a 24/7 365 day employee assistance programme (EAP) provided by Education Support. Staff can call 0800 371 540 or search via the website: educationsupport.org.uk/onlinesupport

7.3 As well as having access to confidential support via the EAP we also encourage staff to talk to a relevant person within Europia. Once an issue affecting your mental health comes to the attention of an appropriate person, steps will be taken to attempt to address that issue. Those steps may include any of the following:

a) a workload review, reallocation of work, monitoring of future workload or possible redeployment,

b) other temporary or permanent adjustments to work, such as considering a change of working hours/flexible working or a change to tasks and/or responsibilities,

c) where appropriate, investigation under our Disciplinary and/or Grievance Procedures or our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy (in the case of bullying/harassment, etc. towards you),

d) referral for medical advice to be provided by our medical advisers or the GP (and any medical specialist) treating the member of staff concerned,

e) applying our Sickness Absence Policy, for example to ensure a safe return to work is facilitated, and/or

f) applying the Capability Procedure in order to support you in carrying out your role.

8. ABSENCE DUE TO MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

8.1 If you are absent due to your mental health, you should follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained in our Sickness Absence Policy.

8.2 Our Sickness Absence Policy or Capability Procedure will apply in the same way as for any other illness.

9. WELL BEING HOUR

9.1 With effect from 1st January 2023 employees are entitled to a "well-being hour" when they are able to take an hour off work, on a paid basis, to undertake an activity that will enhance your own well-being. The number of "well being hours" available in a year will depend on regular weekly hours worked:

- For those working 21 hours or more per week they are entitled to a monthly wellbeing hour (i.e. 12 times a year)

- For those working 20 hours or less per week they are entitled to a well being hour every other month (i.e. 6 times a year)

9.2 In the employee's 'birthday month' (or month of their choice) they can take a 2 hour wellbeing break.

9.3 The employee must liaise with their line manager and mutually agree when the paid well-being hour will be taken.

9.4 The wellbeing hour must be booked in the employee's Google Calendar to provide an evidence trail of when the wellbeing hour was taken.

9.5 The employee must consider the impact on work and ensure that any key meetings, training, drop ins are delivered.

10. CONFIDENTIALITY

10.1 Confidentiality is an important part of this policy. Every member of staff is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality that is required, whether they are suffering from a mental health problem, supporting a colleague who is suffering from a mental health problem or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a policy or procedure dealing with mental health.

10.2 Any breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action.

10.3 However, there are occasions when matters reported by a member of staff suffering from mental health problems may have to be put to third parties. For example, where duties need to be reallocated within a team or where, as the result of reported bullying or misconduct, a disciplinary or other investigation and/or proceeding is taking place. If this is the case, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.

11. PROTECTION FOR THOSE REPORTING MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS OR ASSISTING WITH AN INVESTIGATION

11.1 Staff who report that they are suffering from a mental health condition, who support a colleague in making such a report or who participate in any investigation connected with this policy in good faith will be protected from any form of intimidation or victimisation.

11.2 Any member of staff who considers that they have been subjected to any such intimidation or victimisation should seek support from their manager. They may alternatively or additionally make use of our Anti- harassment and Bullying Policy or raise a complaint in accordance with our Grievance Procedure.

11.3 Any member of staff who is, after investigation, found to have acted in bad faith or to have provided false information will be subject to action under our Disciplinary Procedure.

12. SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

- www.mind.org.uk
- www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health - services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/
- www.mentalhealth.org.uk/
- Greater Manchester Greater Resilience Hub Greater Manchester Resilience Hub :: Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust

13. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE POLICY

13.1 We will monitor the development of good practice in relation to mental health in the workplace and recognition of the symptoms of stress, and continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.

13.2 The policy is next due for review April 2026