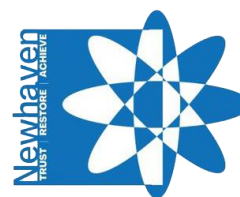


NEWHAVEN SCHOOL: WELLNESS ACTION PLANS



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Introduction

Newhaven School is shifting the focus from reactive management of sickness absence to a more proactive approach of prevention through promoting wellbeing and improving employee engagement.

A Wellness Action Plan (WAP) is a tool which helps all staff manage their mental health and wellbeing at work.

This guide provides information on how to implement a comprehensive approach to managing staff mental health, including how to promote the wellbeing of staff, tackle the causes of work-related mental health problems and support staff who are experiencing a mental health problem.

Helpful definitions

Mental health - We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health, and how we feel can vary from good mental wellbeing to difficult feelings and emotions, to severe mental health problems.

Mental wellbeing - Mental wellbeing is the ability to cope with the day to day stresses of life, work productively, interact positively with others and realise our own potential.

Poor mental health - Poor mental health is a state of low mental wellbeing where you are unable to realise your own potential, cope with the day-to-day pressures of life, work productively or contribute to a community.

Mental health problems - We all have times when we struggle with our mental health, but when these difficult experiences or feelings go on for a long time and affect our ability to enjoy and live our lives in the way we want to, this is a mental health

problem. You might receive a specific diagnosis from your doctor, or just feel more generally that you are experiencing poor mental health.

Common mental health problems - These include depression, anxiety, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). These make up the majority of the problems that lead to one in four people experiencing a mental health problem in any given year. Symptoms can range from the comparatively mild to very severe.

Less common mental health problems - Less common conditions like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder can have a big impact on people's lives: it may be harder to find appropriate treatment and, as understanding tends to be lower, people may face more stigma. However, many people are able to live with, recover from these diagnoses, and manage the impact on their life well.

Work-related stress - Work-related stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them at work. Stress, including work-related stress, can be a significant cause of illness and is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as increased capacity for error.

Stress is not a medical diagnosis, but severe stress that continues for a long time may lead to a diagnosis of depression or anxiety, or more severe mental health problems.

What is a Wellness Action Plan (WAP) and how can it help me?

The WAPs are a personalised, practical tool we can all use – whether we have a mental health problem or not – to help us identify what keeps us well at work, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem at work should you be experiencing one.

It also opens up a dialogue with your line manager in order for them to better understand your needs and experiences and ultimately better support your mental health, which in turn leads to greater work productivity, better performance and increased job satisfaction.

We all have mental health just as we all have physical health, and this WAP has been designed to support us all to manage our mental health, wherever we are on the spectrum.

WAPs are also particularly helpful during the return to work process if you have been off work due to a mental health problem, as they provide a structure for conversations around what support will help you and what reasonable adjustments might be useful to discuss and consider with your manager.

What should a WAP cover?

- Approaches you will take and behaviours you can adopt to support your mental wellbeing
- early warning signs of poor mental health that your manager or supervisor can look out for
- any workplace triggers for poor mental health or stress
- potential impact of poor mental health on your performance, if any
- what support you need from your line manager
- actions and positive steps you and your manager will take if you are experiencing stress or poor mental health
- an agreed time to review the WAP and any support measures that have been put in place to see if they're working
- anything else that you feel would be useful in supporting your mental health

NOTE - The WAP is not legally binding, but is intended as an agreement between you and your manager in order to promote your wellbeing or address any existing mental health needs, including any adjustments you may wish to discuss.

How do I get started with a WAP?

1. Plan some time on your own to fill in your WAP
2. Schedule some confidential time with your manager to discuss it
3. Consider what it would be helpful for your manager to know before the meeting

By completing a WAP, you will be able to plan in advance by gaining an awareness of what works and what doesn't work for you in terms of managing your wellbeing, what support you require from your manager and developing behaviours that support your health.

If you do experience a mental health problem you will then have an idea of the tailored support you need. It also facilitates an open dialogue with your manager – leading to practical, agreed steps which can form the basis for regular monitoring and review.

By regularly reviewing your WAP, you can adapt it to reflect changes in your experiences or new approaches you find helpful, and by being proactive and taking ownership of the process and of the WAP itself, it may help you feel more in control.

The WAP should be written and owned by you, expressing your own personal choices, reflecting your voice, your personal experience, and your needs. Your manager's role is to discuss the plan with you and provide support, including guidance on what is possible for any reasonable adjustments. It should be a collaborative process, but led by you.

Confidentiality

The WAP should be held confidentially by your manager. Make sure you are fully aware of how the information will be used, and only provide information that you are happy to share. If you are filling out a WAP as a result of being unwell, your manager may ask whether you consent for a copy of it to be held with HR, along with any other information about your wellbeing, such as an Occupational Health report or a Return to Work plan.

It is also helpful to seek advice from the health professional involved in your care, such as a GP or Occupational Health expert, on what you might wish to include in your WAP.

In order for your employer to fulfil their duty of care to keep staff safe at work, they will be obliged to break confidentiality if they believe you are experiencing a crisis. If they become aware that you or someone else is at serious risk of harm, they may decide to call the emergency services.

Reasonable Adjustments and the Equality Act 2010

As a result of completing a WAP, you might discuss with your manager whether any reasonable adjustments are needed.

A reasonable adjustment is an alteration that an employer makes which enables an employee to continue with their duties without being at a disadvantage compared to others.

Under the Equality Act 2010, there is a legal duty on employers to make these reasonable adjustments for employees with a disability.

Whether a mental health problem is defined as a disability or not, employers are encouraged to make adjustments for staff who are experiencing mental health problems.

The types of reasonable adjustments commonly made for people experiencing a mental health problem depends on the symptoms being experienced, and should be tailored to suit you.

It also depends on the organisation's resources, so your manager needs to be aware of what the organisation is able to provide and what is defined as 'reasonable' when entering into a conversation.

Adjustment examples:

- providing written instructions for someone whose anxiety affects their memory
- providing workload support and help with prioritising work
- agreeing the type of work you can handle whilst you are on a phased return to work

- increasing frequency of catch-ups or line management
- flexibility with working hours; allowing a person who has difficulty travelling in crowded trains to start early and finish early in order to avoid the rush hour
- allowing someone who is starting or reducing medication to have a day off if they are experiencing side effects, such as drowsiness
- enabling a person to arrange their hours to permit them to attend a weekly therapy session
- allowing someone to take time out of the office when they became particularly anxious
- enabling part-time working or job-share arrangements for someone who is unable to work full-time
- allowing someone who finds the pressure of large meetings very difficult to have at least 15 minutes between meetings
- a gradual return to work after periods of sickness absence
- the possibility of working from home
- reduction in hours or relief from some responsibilities to prevent the person having to take time off sick during fluctuations in their condition

Adjustments to the physical environment

- arranging for someone who finds the distractions of an open-plan office detracts from their work performance to have a desk in a quieter area
- moving a person's workstation so that they are not placed in very busy areas or with their back to the door
- provide a quiet space for breaks away from the main workspace
- allow for increased personal space

Other types of adjustments

- arranging mediation if there are difficulties between colleagues
- appointing a 'buddy', 'mentor' or 'coach' outside the usual management structure who can show the new employee the ropes and help them settle in

Top tips for staying well at work

Taking action, however small, can improve your life at work or prevent stress developing in the first place.

Develop good relationships with colleagues so you can build up a network of support.

Talk to someone you trust, at work or outside, about what upsets you or makes you feel stressed.

Say if you need help.

Be assertive – say no if you can't take on extra demands.

Be realistic – you don't have to be perfect all the time.

If everything starts to feel overwhelming, take a deep breath.

Try to get away from your desk or situation for a few minutes.

Write a list of what needs to be done; it only takes a few minutes and can help you to prioritise, focus and get things in perspective. It can also feel satisfying to tick items off once they have been done.

Try to take a walk or get some fresh air during the day. Exercise and daylight are good for your mental health as well as physical health.

Work regular hours and try to take the breaks and holidays you're entitled to.

Try not to work long hours or take work home with you. This may be alright in the short term, if the work has a specific purpose and is clearly defined – a team effort to complete an urgent project may be very satisfying. However, working longer hours on a regular basis does not generally lead to better results.

If you are provided with opportunities to have some input, particularly in decisions that may impact you, then take advantage of those opportunities.

If you are working from home, make sure you take breaks from your work, go for a walk or get fresh air.

Maintain a healthy work-life balance – nurture your outside relationships, interests, and the abilities your job does not use.

Make sure you drink enough water and that you eat during the day to maintain your energy levels.

Learn some relaxation techniques (see Newhaven School Website)

Wellness Action Plan Template

A WAP reminds us what we need to do to stay well at work and details what our line managers can do to better support us.

It also helps us develop an awareness of our working style, stress triggers and responses, and enables us to communicate these to our manager.

The information in this form will be held confidentially and regularly reviewed by you and your manager together.

You only need to provide information that you are comfortable sharing and that relates to your role and workplace.

This form is not a legal document but it can help you and your manager to agree, together, how to practically support you in your role and address any health needs.

It is the responsibility of your line manager or HR to ensure that data gathered in this form will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone without the permission of the member of staff.

1. What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?

(For example; taking an adequate lunch break away from your desk, getting some exercise before or after work or in your lunchbreak, light and space in the office, opportunities to get to know colleagues)

2. What can your manager do to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work?

(For example; regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments)

3. Are there any situations at work that can trigger poor mental health for you?

(For example; conflict at work, organisational change, tight deadlines, something not going to plan)

4. How might experiencing poor mental health impact on your work?

(For example; you may find it difficult to make decisions, struggle to prioritise work tasks, difficulty with concentration, drowsiness, confusion, headaches)

5. Are there any early warning signs that we might notice when you are starting to experience poor mental health?

(For example; changes in normal working patterns, withdrawing from colleagues)

6. What support could be put in place to minimise triggers or help you to manage the impact?

(For example; extra catch-up time with your manager, guidance on prioritising workload, flexible working patterns, consider reasonable adjustments)

7. Are there elements of your individual working style or temperament that it is worth your manager being aware of?

(For example; a preference for more face to face or more email contact, a need for quiet reflection time prior to meetings or creative tasks, negotiation on deadlines before they are set, having access to a mentor for questions you might not want to bother your manager about, having a written plan of work in place which can be reviewed and amended regularly, clear deadlines if you have a tendency to over-work a task, tendency to have particularly high or low energy in the morning or in the afternoon)

8. If we notice early warning signs that you are experiencing poor mental health – what should we do?

(For example; talk to you discreetly about it, contact someone that you have asked to be contacted)

9. What steps can you take if you start to experience poor mental health at work? Is there anything we need to do to facilitate them?

(For example; you might like to take a break from your desk and go for a short walk, or ask your line manager for support)

10. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

Employee signature:

Date:

Line manager signature:

Date:

Date to be reviewed: