Policy Ref - HSW 010

Health and Wellbeing Policy

WITHAM AND HUMBER DRAINAGE BOARDS

A group of four independent statutory Land Drainage, water levels and Flood Risk Management Authorities working collectively under a partnership agreement in accordance with section 11(5) of the Land Drainage Act (1991).

Four Independent Boards:
- *Witham First District Internal Drainage Boards*
- *Witham Third District Internal Drainage Boards*
- *Upper Witham Internal Drainage Boards*
- *North East Lindsey Internal Drainage Boards*

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Date of Approval by Joint Services Committee (JSC) on behalf of North East Lindsey (NEL), Upper Witham (UW), Witham First District (W1) and Witham Third District (W3) IDBs: 09th December 2024

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Policy Owner: Associate Director of Human Resources

Contents7

1.0 - Introduction

The Health and Wellbeing policy incorporates:

- General Health and Wellbeing
- Mental health, including diagnosed medical conditions e.g. PTSD, Bipolar etc.
- Stress

The Boards recognise the importance of a positive working environment both on employees physical and mental wellbeing.

This Policy provides guidance and a framework to support positive health and wellbeing in the workplace. However, it is a framework as each individual diagnosis, or symptoms, coping mechanisms and behaviours will be individual and as such will be addressed and managed on and individual basis.

1.1 – What is mental health:

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.

1.2 – Why support health, wellbeing and mental health

The Boards wish to promote good health and wellbeing for all employees and to make the working environment a good place to be and understand the positive impact that health and engaged employees make to the success of the Board and its activities. Mental health illness is 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.

1.3 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

This Policy does not discriminate against persons based on age, disability, family status, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, as defined as protected characteristics within the Equalities Act 2010.

This policy is an extension of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policies. The Boards recognise and support that Mental Health illnesses are, as, physical illnesses and therefore included in the Equalities Act 2010. To that end, reasonably adjustments may be required and would be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

2.0 – Health and Wellbeing Policy

2.1 – Mental Health due to diagnosed illness or condition

Mental health problems can:

- happen suddenly because of a specific event in someone's life.
- Build up gradually over time
- Be hard to spot as everyone has different signs and signals
- Be hidden because many people find it difficult to take about their mental health
- Change over time which means that an employees ability to cope with the demands of the job might change.

Mental health problems, in this Policy are separated from stress (and anxiety) and mental health in this instance is diagnosed by a medical professional.

Where mental health diagnosis has been confirmed, it is requested that the employee confirms to their line managers to ensure that the appropriate support, or reasonable adjustments can be made.

Examples of mental health problems which may be diagnosed – PTSD, bipolar, eating disorders, neurodevelopment disorders, depression.

Mental health in these situations is managed by open and honest conversation, with assessment of the individual's needs, symptoms and what and how they can be supported. Where possible employees will be supported to stay in the workplace if this is positive to them, however, it is always determined on a case-to-case basis.

2.2 – Stress (and Anxiety)

Stress as defined by the HSE as ' the adverse reaction people have to excess pressures or other types of demand placed on them'/

Workers may get stressed if they feel they don't have the skills or time to meet tight deadlines. Providing planning, training and support can help reduce pressure and reduce stress levels.

Stress affects people differently and what stresses one person may not stress another.

In relation to stress there are 6 main areas of work design which can affect stress levels which need to be managed:

2.2.1 – Demands

Demands include issues such as workloads, work patters and the work environment

2.2.2 – Control

How much say the person has in the way they do their work

2.2.3 – Support

This includes encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line manager and colleagues.

2.2.4 – Relationships

This includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

2.2.5 – Role

Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether they organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.

2.2.6 - Change

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

2.2.7 - Signs of stress in teams:

- Arguments
- Higher staff turnover
- More reports of stress
- More sickness absence
- Decreased performance
- Complaints and grievances

2.2.8 – Signs of stress in an individual

- More time off
- Arrive late for work
- Stay later and do excess hours
- Be more twitch or nervous
- Mood swings
- Being withdrawn
- Loss of motivation, commitment and confident
- Increased emotional reactions – more tearful, sensitive or aggressive

2.2.9 – Stress assessments

WHDB 008 – Corporate Stress Assessment

WHDB 008a – Individual Stress Assessment

WHDB 008b – General individual stress assessment (an aide memoir / conversation tool)

2.3 – Health and Wellbeing in Recruitment

Unless it is related to the specific requirements of the job, the Board 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.

2.4 – Health and Wellbeing 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 may include:

- Behavioural, mood or temperament changes, especially when communicating with others.
- Decrease in productivity, focus or standard of work.
- Increase in sickness absence or being late.
- Inability to make decisions and difficulty in problem solving.
- Showing signs of tiredness or being withdrawn or being less interested in tasks that they previously enjoyed.
- Reducing intake of food or increasing intake of alcohol, cigarettes etc.

2.5 – Health and Wellbeing 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 established 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
- impact mental health problems have, or could have, on the employee's performances
- 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.

To ensure the plan meets the employee's requirements, it should be drafted by the employee themselves, with medical support as necessary, and then set in place with their line manager. Any information in the plan, and the plan itself, should be kept confidential and reviewed on an ongoing basis by both the employee and their line manager.

2.6 – Workplace Adjustments

A disability is defined as "a mental or physical impairment that has a substantial long-term adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities". The

Boards are legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments to an employee's role or workplace if they have a disability that places them at a disadvantage when performing their role. The Boards will endeavour to consider all reasonable workplace adjustments for any employee who is suffering from a mental health issue.

Examples of adjustments include:

- adjusting hours of work or the location of work, including within the building itself
- adjusting or reallocating duties of the job role
- making amendments to the workplace environment, for example adjusting lighting in the employee's office
- amending absence triggers before disciplinary action is triggered.

Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

2.7 – Managing absence and return to work

Where the employee is absent by reason of their mental health concerns, their line manager will communicate with the employee on a regular basis during their absence. The employee returning to work may help with their recovery, so early intervention and support from the Boards is important. The 4 Boards' sickness absence policy will apply to the employee's absence as normal, subject to any reasonable adjustments in place for the employee.

Upon the employee's return from absence, a return to work plan will be discussed and agreed between the line manager and the employee to ensure necessary steps can be taken to support the employee to remain in work. This may include introducing a temporary return on amended working hours, removing stressful duties during a phased return, and providing additional workplace support, as necessary.

2.8 – Confidentiality

Information concerning an employee's mental health status is classed as a special category of personal data. This information will only be disclosed to others in line with the Board's policies on General data protection.

3.0 – Health and Wellbeing Statement

As such, the Boards pledge to provide initial, and ongoing, support and help for employees experiencing mental health problems. The purpose of this policy is to assist wellbeing by creating an open and honest workplace, where line managers and employees can discuss mental health problems, ensuring necessary support is recognised and offered to employees when needed. The Boards will comply with the policy by:

- Making this policy easily accessible.
- Offering an open and kind workplace to raise awareness and be available.
- Support any individual to aid with signposting and considering and working to consider appropriate reasonably adjustments.
- By training Mental Health First Aid responders and first aiders.
- By providing an open and secure environment to allow people to be open and honest about their own mental health.

4.0 - Glossary / Definitions

Word/ term	Definition
Mental Health (Young Minds)	Can be understood as a person's emotional, psychological and social wellbeing.
PTSD (dictionary)	Short term for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Such PTSD develops when a person has experienced or witnessed as scary, shocking, terrifying or dangerous event.
Stress (HSE)	The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them. Note – some stress can be a 'buzz' but it is when workers feel they can't cope with pressure and other issues.
Anxiety (NHS)	Anxiety is often described as a feeling of fear or unease – and it's something everyone experiences at times. Feeling anxious is a perfectly natural reaction to some situations. Anxiety can help us to focus or take extra care when needed, but if it gets too much or goes on for a while, it can affect our daily life.
Health & Wellbeing (NHS)	Mental and emotional health, physical health and a healthy lifestyle which contributes to an individual's health and wellbeing.

5.0 – Legislation

- The Equalities Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

6.0 - Main policy Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Arrangements for roles and reporting lines

The arrangements and organisational responsibilities for implementing the policy are detailed in this section.

6.1.1 – Board Members

- Approve and support the Senior management Team with this policy.
- Support the Chief executive Officer and SMT in following the Policy.

6.1.2 – Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Senior Management Team (SMT)

- Lead by example.

- Offer guidance and support to any team members who may require it.
- Associate Director of HR to lead the Policy as necessary.

6.1.3 – Risk Manager

- Support SMT with the review and update of this policy.

6.1.4 – Line Managers / Supervisors / Foremen

- Support the CEO & SMT to cascade the policy.
- When dealing with an employee with mental health concerns, line managers should be open, welcoming and friendly Support team members with queries pertaining to the policy.
- Invite the employee to regular private meetings and ask them to talk openly about their mental health problems.
- Line manager's should not make presumptions about how the mental health problem is impacting on the employee personally and professionally.
- Initial action should be to check how the employee is getting on at work, in the same manner as if the employee were suffering from a known physical health problem.
- Contact Associate Director of HR for further support.

6.1.5 – Mental Health Responders and First Aiders

- Endeavour to be aware, and ask if 'you are ok'.
- Will support and provide confidential signposting.
- Are available to listen and where appropriate, aid with next steps.

6.1.6 – Staff members

- Support required by the employee is likely to be known by the employee themselves.
- The Boards encourage employees to be open about their mental health and wellbeing. Inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity to allow support to be provided.
- All employees are to conduct themselves in a helpful and open-minded manner towards colleagues who are experiencing mental health problems.
- Be kind – if your colleague isn't themselves, ask if they are ok.

7.0 - Document review:

Version	Date	Reviewed by	Changes	Approved by/ date
3.00	2020	Ass Director for HR	• Board approved Health and Wellbeing Policy	JSC July 2020
2.00	2020	Ass Director for HR	• Board approved Special Leave Policy	JSC July 2020
4.00	2024	Risk Manager	• Updated lay out, general review	JSC December 2024

			• Incorporating V3 Health and Wellbeing Policy and Special Leave Policy	

This policy is due for review at 5 yearly intervals, unless a review is required before e.g. change to management, process or anything which may affect the contents of this policy.

8.0 - Supporting documents

Website – YOUTUBE – I had a black dog, his name was depression

HSE – stress overview

Mind: Mental health charity

Every mind matters – Better health NHS

Annex 1 – WHDB 008 - Corporate Stress Risk Assessment

WHDB 008
Corporate Stress Ris

Annex 2 – WHDB 008a – Individual Stress Assessment (RTW or general)

WHDB 008b
General Individual S

Annex 3 – WHDB 008b – General Individual Stress Assessment

WHDB 008a
Individual Stress Ass