



Mental Health & Well-Being Policy

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Recognised by the Inland Revenue as a Scottish Charity - No. SCO 17286

Voluntary Action Shetland

MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The term 'mental health problems' is one that encompasses a range of experiences and situations. Mental health might usefully be viewed as a continuum of experience, from mental well-being through to a severe and enduring mental illness. We all experience changes in our mental health state, influenced by social, personal, financial and other factors. Major life events such as a close bereavement, or leaving home, can impact significantly on how we feel about ourselves, for example, leading to depression and anxiety.

A minority of people may experience mental health problems to such a degree that they may be diagnosed as having a mental illness, requiring the involvement of specialist services and support. The majority of people will not experience mental illness, but will undoubtedly experience mental health problems at different times in their lives. Our mental well-being is an issue for all of us to consider all of the time, as we might consider our physical well-being.

Given support and information people experiencing mental health problems can make positive changes and improvements. Only a small minority of people do not respond to appropriate help and therefore need more specialist involvement.

Voluntary Action Shetland recognises the importance of the health and well-being of all its employees and is committed to supporting their well-being.

Mental ill health or distress is a major cause of sickness absence from work, reduced productivity and staff turnover. Nearly 3 in every 10 employees will have a mental health problem in any one year.¹

VAS recognises a positive working environment and appropriate support at work has a significant impact on improving long term outcomes for employees experiencing mental ill health and reducing stress related sickness absence.

AIMS

VAS is committed to:

- Improving the mental health and well-being of staff regardless of grade, experience or role within the organisation.
- Promoting positive mental health and well-being for all staff.
- Identifying and tackling organisational issues that negatively affect mental health.

- Providing assistance to staff experiencing mental health problems which includes information on support systems available.
- Removing or reducing barriers to employment for people with a history of mental health problems.

LEGAL REQUIREMENT

VAS has a statutory responsibility to employees, under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to promote a positive working environment and appropriate support at work to employees experiencing mental health problems.

Disability is defined as a person who “has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities”²

This policy recognises the following legislation:

Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.
 Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
 The Common Law Duty of Care.
 Data Protection Act 1998.
 Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Links To Other Policies

Absence Management Policy.
 Equal Opportunities Policy.
 Health & Safety Policy.
 Protection of Vulnerable People Policy.
 Substance Misuse Policy.

RESPONSIBILITY

Management

To promote and maintain a healthy workforce VAS will:

- Respect and value staff.
- Provide meaningful consultation and staff involvement in decision-making.
- Provide relevant education\training sessions to raise awareness of mental health issues.
- Support staff who are suffering mental ill health as far as is reasonably practicable.

- Know what appropriate interventions are available and how, when and where to access them.
- Where an employee discloses information, confidentiality will be assured, unless individual or colleague's safety is compromised.
- Manage sickness and return to work programmes in a sensitive and appropriate manner.
- Ensure compliance with Equal Opportunities Policy in order to tackle workplace bullying and harassment.
- Potential applicants will not be discriminated against on the grounds of past or present mental health conditions.

Employee

This policy applies to all staff. Staff must:

- Be aware of the policy.
- Respect and value colleagues.
- Treat any disclosure of a colleague's mental health status confidentially.
- Be aware of the nature of mental well-being and the effect on behaviour and performance.

COUNSELLING

Professional Counselling services are available for staff, free of charge, who are suffering from work or personal related issues which affect their mental well-being and ability to focus on day to day duties. Access to this service is via the Executive Officer or alternatively, contact Wilma Ross, SIC Welfare Officer on Tel 01595 744580.

Counselling will take place within a private setting, between staff member and Counsellor. The Counsellor will be confidential, non judgemental and non discriminatory. Counselling is a way of enabling choice or change or of reducing confusion. Counselling does not involve giving advice or directing a client to take a particular course of action.

ACCESSING SUPPORT

VAS is committed to maintaining and supporting employees' mental health and well-being. Any employee suffering mental ill health or stress due to work or personal related issues can be assured of a sympathetic and sensitive response. Informing your employer is the first step to accessing support. The Executive Officer can be contacted on 743901.

RETURN TO WORK FOLLOWING ABSENCE

Staff can be assured of a sympathetic response. The Executive Officer will remain in touch with the employee periodically during the time of absence in line with Absence Management Policy. Prior to return to work an appointment may be made with an Occupational Health service to ensure fitness to return and whether a phased introduction should be required. Following this a face to face interview will take place to agree arrangements. During the time of the phased introduction, regular support and supervision will be put in place to ensure the employee's health and wellbeing is protected.

This policy has been developed in consultation with VAS staff.

¹The Mental Health Foundation. Mental Health in the Workplace – Tackling the Effects of Stress.

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/?EntryId=38718&char=M>

²Taken from Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (c. 50)

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1995/Ukpga_19950050_en_1.htm