Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

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Contents

1.   Why mental health and wellbeing is important

At **One Multi Academies Trust** we believe that the good mental health and wellbeing of our staff is vital to organisational success and sustainability. We also know that in order for our staff to support the ongoing mental health of our children, it is essential that we support our workforce in the same way.

A healthy, happy workforce means we can:
- reduce sickness absence and staff turnover;
- enhance our reputation as an employer who cares;
- improve staff morale and performance;
- better support our children to learn and succeed.

As a Trust we are committed to the following principles:
- Promoting wellbeing for all staff;
- Tackling the causes of work-related mental health problems;
- Supporting staff who are experiencing mental health problems.

2.   Definition of mental health and wellbeing

We use the World Health Organisation's definition of mental health and wellbeing: "a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community".

Mental health and wellbeing is not just the absence of mental health problems. We want our staff to:
- Enjoy working in a safe, open and supportive workplace environment and culture that supports mental health, overall wellbeing and prevents discrimination;
- Be aware of mental health and wellbeing issues and behaviours;
- Help us reduce the stigma around depression and anxiety in the workplace;
- Feel supported during times of personal or work stress;
- Maintain a healthy work life balance;
  Have opportunities to engage in initiatives that support mental health and wellbeing;

Feel confident and empowered to talk about their problems to colleagues and or managers as appropriate;

- Have positive and healthy relationships at work.

3   Ethos and values

As a Sikh faith based Trust we encourage all staff to avail themselves of resources available in each of our Academies to participate in prayer throughout the day. That staff have the opportunity for meditation and spiritual worship in our gurdwaras and access to spiritual leaders. For those staff of other faiths can also have the opportunity to use designated rooms for prayer and meditation. All of these resources are available to support the well-being of valued staff.

The values of the Trust as we know are Knowledge of Divine, Humility, All is One, Love for All, Self-Respect and Attached to One. It is these values that help us value our staff and their well-being.

4.   Roles and Responsibilities

Supporting activities that enable good mental health and wellbeing in the workplace is the responsibility of all employees.

The Trust will look to all line managers within the Trust to manage staff in a manner which is not detrimental to mental health and which, at its best, can positively promote mental health and wellbeing.

All staff should strive to achieve a healthy work life balance by regularly taking uninterrupted lunch breaks, refraining from sending work-related emails out of hours, taking annual leave and resting after busy periods, with very senior staff leading by example. Weekend and evening emails should be kept to a minimum and only sent where it is absolutely necessary for the smooth running of the Academies or where there is an urgent reason for doing so.

All employees have a responsibility to promote a positive working environment that aims to help them and their colleagues to feel included, supported and empowered to talk about mental health openly and without judgement.

Employees are also responsible for accessing support when they need it and raising any concerns with their line manager.

There are specially trained members of staff across the Trust who are designated Mental

Health First Aiders (MHFAs). The role of the MHFAs is to:

- Approach, assess and assist members of staff in crisis or in need of support
- Listen and communicate non-judgmentally
  Give support and information
- Encourage appropriate professional help
- Encourage other support

5.   Engaging with staff to identify ways in which the Trust and its Academies can better support mental health and wellbeing both generically within the workplace and more targeted support for individuals.

To date, we have engaged with staff via the annual staff survey and from this we are developing a greater insight into the needs and requirements of our workforce which has fed into the development of this policy. We are working to develop a culture of openness whereby the whole of the staff team feel empowered to talk about mental health and put forward ideas as to how the Trust can support this even further.

We intend to continue our efforts to engage with the whole staff team and with individuals on a one on one basis in the ways outlined above and via the routine channels of communications that already exist in our Academies (team meetings, 1:1 meetings, Senior Leadership Meetings, performance management meetings, wellbeing groups and drop in sessions etc). The feedback from our staff will always drive the Trust's actions and efforts to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

6.   Raising awareness of mental health and positive wellbeing strategies
In many workplaces mental health is the elephant in the room. Too often, employees are scared to talk to their manager and problems can spiral. The Trust aims to raise awareness of mental health by embedding mental health into

induction procedures and training and celebrating key dates in the mental health calendar.

Each Academy within the Trust has Mental Health First Aiders whose role is to promote healthy minds by:

> Leading and working with other staff to coordinate whole Academy activities to promote positive mental health and wellbeing;

- Providing advice, support and signposting to staff;
- Organising training and updates.

7.   Positive working relationships and social connections.

As a Trust we will take positive action to make the workplace a mutually supportive environment where good work relationships thrive.

We will:
- promote a culture of teamwork, collaboration and information-sharing;
- promote positive behaviours to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
- ensure robust policies on bullying and harassment are in place and well publicised;
- encourage exercise and regular social events to boost staff health, team work and mental wellbeing;
- offer mentoring and coaching sessions with buddy systems for new starters to help them gain confidence and develop new skills;
- celebrate the successes of teams and individuals in a variety of ways;
- encourage cross MAT networking both socially and professionally through the organisation of out of hours social events.

8.   Providing the right level of support to staff when it is needed
We recognise that many behaviours and emotional problems can be supported within the Trust or with advice from external professionals. Some staff will need more intensive support at times, and there are a range of mental health professionals and

organisations that are available to staff within our Trust alongside our Mental Health First Aiders.

Sources of other relevant support include:
- Our own Senior Leadership Teams;
- Our Mental Health First Aiders;
- Occupational Health;
- Bespoke counselling service;
- NHS Mental Health Services;
- MIND;
- Samaritans;
- Other online / telephone helplines and charities.

Line Managers will routinely take stock of individuals' wellbeing and mental health to help assess the impact of current approaches and plan further improvements to enhance morale. This will take place in 1:1 meetings, performance management meetings and supervision meetings.

Regular 1:1 meetings are encouraged across the Trust as they have significant benefits for employers and employees. They give managers opportunities to speak regularly with staff about how they're doing both at work and at home, and explore with them what might be impacting on their mental wellbeing. Whilst 1:1s are not always possible due to teaching schedules and working times, clear and regular lines of communication are essential, especially for those working in isolation, for example regular telephone catch ups

9.   Recruitment

Supporting mental health starts with getting the right person for the job. If there's a mismatch between a new recruit and our workplace, or their skills and abilities the Trust's vision, it can lead to intense stress. As a Trust we will always be realistic about the role in interviews, and be careful to select people on their skills and competencies, or realistic potential.

We will make it clear in adverts and interviews that the Trust values staff mental health, as this sends a signal that disclosure will not lead to discrimination. The following statement in future will be used routinely in our recruitment:

'As an employer we are committed to promoting and protecting the physical and mental health of all our staff.'

We will state clearly that reasonable adjustments are available – for the interview and the job itself – so applicants understand why disclosure might be beneficial.

Someone applying for a job may be worried about sharing information about their mental health. They might be anxious their mental health problems will lead to them being rejected, or that the interviewer will view them in a negative light. Therefore, it is important that as a Trust, we provide a fair and unbiased recruitment process. We will ensure people can disclose confidentially and that any information about health or disability is kept separate from the application form, so the recruitment panel does not see it.

Since the Equality Act 2010 came into force, it is unlawful for employers to ask questions about health before making a job offer, including about mental health.

However, there are ways to support people to disclose their mental health problems lawfully. This helps ensure they have equal access to job opportunities and are offered the support they need without discrimination.

Recruitment decisions should always be based on whether candidates have the necessary qualifications and competence for the job, without making assumptions about health or disability. If there are concerns about whether health or disability will affect their ability to do the job, recruitment managers should assess these with the legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

10. Induction

Delivering an effective induction programme is essential. Starting a new role can feel unsettling, and if employees aren't given the right expectations and guidance, it can destroy their confidence and trigger existing or generate new mental health problems. At this stage, we will make sure we provide information about what support is available for staff to look after their mental health and wellbeing.

11. Responding to disclosure

If a mental health disclosure is made by a member of staff, it is imperative that line managers have an early conversation about the person's needs. Managers should find a safe, quiet place to talk to the individual about their needs so that the right level of support can be arranged, including necessary adjustments.

This is where good people management skills, plus basic empathy and common sense, are essential. Managers need to ensure they are seen as approachable and listen when staff ask for help. They should also be mindful of whether people would feel safe sharing their problem at work. Trained Mental Health First Aiders may be called upon if necessary to provide specific support.

12. Supporting an employee when they are unwell and off sick

Sometimes an employee may be so unwell they need time off work to recover. How well this is managed is key in shaping how well and how quickly people are able to return to work and get back to feeling healthy and able to work again.

13. Supporting people to return to work

Effective return-to-work interviews can ensure mental health problems are identified at an early stage before they get worse. However, to be effective, managers must understand how to use them to build trust and engagement. Before the interview, managers must always tell people what they can expect in advance and make it clear that the return to work interview is a supportive way to help them make a successful and lasting return to the workplace and address any on-going health needs.

14. Workplace adjustments

Workplace adjustments for mental health are often quite small, simple, practical and cost effective changes. They could include anything from offering rooms for quiet work, to starting a buddy system. Often the change isn't physical, but about attitude, expectation or communication.

Employers have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments one they are aware that something about work is causing a problem for someone with a disability.

15. Building people's mental health literacy so they can support each other

Building mental health literacy means boosting employees' knowledge and skills so they better manage their own mental health and improve their ability to support that of others. Ensuring staff and managers have a good understanding of mental health, and the factors that affect workplace wellbeing, is essential for building a healthy, happy and productive workforce.

As a Trust we will do this by:
- Embedding mental health in our induction and training and ensuring our staff are given information on how best to manage mental health and what support is available;
- Raising the profile of mental health by opening talking about positive mental health in team meetings, PDMs and whole Trust days;
- Making the most of internal communications and raising awareness through share factsheets, tips for managers, useful web links and FAQs etc;
- Offering training to line managers where appropriate to ensure they are fully supported in their role.

16. Policy Review Statement:

This policy will be reviewed to ensure it remains up-to-date, relevant, and aligned with the Trust's strategic objectives, regulatory requirements, and best practices. The review process will be conducted as follows:

- **Policy Owner Review**
  The Policy Owner will conduct an initial review to assess any necessary updates or amendments.

- **Executive Team Policy Committee**
  The revised policy will be presented to the Executive Team Policy Committee for further evaluation and recommendations.

- **Trust Board Approval**
  Following review and necessary revisions, the policy will be submitted for formal approval by the Trust Board in accordance with the scheduled review cycle.

For details on the specific review schedule, please refer to the review table on the front page.

Appendix A: Five Stages to Mental Wellbeing (based on NHS)

5 steps to mental wellbeing

Evidence suggests there are 5 steps we can all take to improve our mental wellbeing. If you give them a try, you may feel happier, more positive and able to get the most from life.

Connect – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and
neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships.

Be active – you don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of
football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.

Keep learning – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and
a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play
a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike?

Give to others – even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank
you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community
centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.

Be mindful – be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts
and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness
"mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you
approach challenges.