Isle of Wight Council

WORKPLACE WELLBEING POLICY

January 2011

1   Document Information

Title:	**Workplace Wellbeing Policy**
Status:	**Approved**
Current Version:	**1**
Author:	Tony Wright, Lead officer Health, Safety and Welfare Rosie Barnard, Lead Officer Diversity and Wellbeing Human Resources, Resources Directorate ✆ Anthony.wright@iow.gov.uk rosie.barnard@iow.gov.uk ☎ (01983) 821000 ext 5450 ext 3091
Sponsor:	Claire Shand, Head of Human Resources Human Resources, Resources Directorate ✆ Claire.shand@iow.gov.uk ☎ (01983) 821000 ex 3120
Consultation:	Completed with Trade Unions in conjunction with Attendance Management Policy
Approved by:	Employment Committee
Approval Date:	17 January 20011
Review Frequency:	Two Years
Next Review:	November 2013

Version History		
Version	**Date**	**Description**
0.1	June 2010	1st draft
0.2	September 2010	2nd draft
0.3	October 2010	3rd draft
0.4	January 2011	4th draft

2   Contents

3   Introduction

This policy aims to support the Council's overarching strategic corporate plan for a healthy and supportive Island and one of the key strategic priorities to modernise the Council, as well as a keystone of the people management, people resourcing and attendance management strategies.

Core to the success of these priorities and strategies is a significant programme of transformation and a smaller Council meeting the needs of the Island in an efficient and cost effective manner.

The council is committed to providing a working environment and management practices that promote good health and wellbeing of all its employees thus reducing the occurrence of absence and related costs

4   Wellbeing Strategy

4.1   The Council's 'duty of care' towards employees, and legislation along with case law, require us to manage and safeguard the physical and psychological wellbeing of our employees.

4.2   To help services meet these targets, Human Resources has developed:

- the **attendance management policy and procedure** which provides a framework with clear milestones enabling managers to effectively manage attendance;

- the **health & safety policy** which provides a framework for, and measurement of, safe places of work; and

- the **workplace wellbeing policy** which focuses on the Council's obligations to managing stress and mental ill health.

It is vital that managers are fully aware of these policies and their role in managing healthy workplaces.

4.3   Managers within the council need to have a clear understanding of the causes of absence in order to formulate strategies that address non-attendance (sickness absence). The main causes of absence can be viewed as four distinct areas:

Causes of Absence:

Health and lifestyle factors	Workplace factors
Genuine illness/poor health Smoking Excessive use of alcohol Lack of exercise Body weight	Working patterns Health and safety concerns Travel times Excessive hours Safe place of work
Attitudinal and stress factors	**Domestic and relationship factors**
Job satisfaction Career satisfaction Intention to leave Organisational commitment Stress Absence 'culture'	Number of children under 16 Lack of flexible working arrangements Caring responsibilities Financial worries

4.4   Clear and consistently applied procedures play an important part in managing attendance. However, these mechanisms do not necessarily address some of the underlying causes of

sickness absence. It is in some of these areas where prevention may be more effective than cure.

4.5   Specific areas for preventative action by managers should include:

- health promotion
- recruitment and screening procedures
- flexible working arrangements
- improving the physical working environment
- job design
- managing career expectations through the personal development review process.
- building trust and loyalty
- monitoring of working hours
- prevention of accidents and occupational ill health
- consultation with staff on work-related issues that may affect their health

Advice and guidance in all these areas is available through existing policies or from HR in conjunction with the Occupational Health Service.

4.6   The council has arrangements in place for staff to access a confidential counselling service. Any member of staff who may be experiencing problems at work or at home may make use of this service.

5   The need for a workplace wellbeing policy

Promoting and protecting the wellbeing of the workforce is important to the Council with regard to an individual's physical health, social wellbeing and productivity. Many factors in the workplace influence the well being of individual employees, departments/directorates or the council as a whole. Understanding and addressing the factors which affect people's wellbeing at work have a wide range of benefits, both for the individual and the Council.

We will continue to drive through performance improvement and efficiency, getting the very best from our people, retaining and attracting the best people and who are skilled and well motivated.

Wellbeing in the workplace is relevant to all employees and everyone can contribute to improved wellbeing at work. Addressing workplace wellbeing can help strengthen the positive, protective factors of employment, reduce the risk factors for mental ill health and improve general health. It can also help promote the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems, and assist them in remaining at work.

To fulfil this commitment we will:

- seek to identify potential circumstances that may affect the wellbeing of staff and conduct risk assessments
- increase awareness and understanding of how to promote wellbeing at work and the avoidance of absence
- provide advice and guidance to managers in dealing with wellbeing concerns of staff

In turn, staff will be encouraged to take a responsible approach to health and wellbeing issues, including assisting those conducting risk assessments of stress in the workplace

6   Definitions

One of the main concerns in promoting the wellbeing of staff is to encourage positive mental health. In doing so, it is recognised that positive action must be taken to reduce the occurrence of workplace stress. The Health and Safety Executive define stress as being "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them".   However it is important that the difference between "pressure" and "stress" be acknowledged: pressure does not necessarily give rise to stress and pressure can sometimes motivate. While acknowledging that pressure and stress may also be caused by a range of issues external to the workplace, the council's prime responsibility is to address work related stress.

7   Policy objectives

The policy aims are to:

- provide advice and information about minimising risks to health
- outline specific responsibilities
- educate staff about the causes, effects and management of stress

To achieve these objectives managers will:

- carry out risk assessments to identify health and wellbeing issues related to work
- implement appropriate control measures to minimise risks to health and wellbeing
- monitor and audit arrangements in an effort to improve the quality of the working environment
- raise awareness of the causes, signs and symptoms of stress and stress-related illness, and of the ways in which the Council supports individuals
- ensure they are equipped to respond to staff wellbeing concerns
- educate employees in techniques for recognising and coping with potentially stressful situations
- provide information about appropriate welfare services to all employees, including the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

The following have been identified as appropriate measures of employee performance and wellbeing for the purposes of managing health and wellbeing

- absences will be recorded and monitored for data analysis
- exit questionnaires will be used and followed up with appropriate exit interviews when staff leave council employment
- use of the Council's occupational Health and counselling services will be monitored without breaching confidentiality

8   Wellbeing responsibilities

Senior Managers are responsible for ensuring:
- the engagement of management at all levels in the importance of managing staff wellbeing
- allocation of appropriate resources to enable managers to deliver the agreed strategy proactively, use of the counselling service (EAP) and health referrals for expert opinion

Heads of Service in addition to the general duties of all managers detailed below have specific responsibilities for:
- active implementation of the principles and behaviours contributing to positive staff wellbeing
- alertness to employees' personal circumstances and offering additional support where appropriate to members of staff experiencing risks to their wellbeing derived from outside work, e.g. bereavement or separation
- ensuring effective communications between management and staff
- in particular, ensuring effective communicating where there are organisational and /or procedural changes which give rise to increased levels of stress in the workplace
- ensuring that bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated (NB please refer to Dignity at Work Policy)

Line Managers will:
- request HR to provide advice and guidance with stress risk assessments when it is identified that an employee is suffering from stress or where there is a perceived risk of stress and ensure that any reasonable measures identified are implemented
- ensure that employees are consulted at all times over all aspects of their employment that may cause stress or impact on their health and wellbeing when changes affecting them are planned
- ensure that employees receive appropriate training and resources to carry out their duties
- ensure that staff are provided with appropriate development opportunities manage absence in accordance with the Absence Management Strategy
- consider workloads to ensure jobs are realistic and manageable
- monitor working hours, overtime and holidays to encourage individuals to take breaks as required by legislation
- familiarise themselves with the Dignity at Work Policy concerning bullying and harassment and ensure that employees are aware that this is not tolerated in the workplace
- recognise that employees may have experiences in their personal lives that may make them vulnerable to pressures at work and which may have a temporary influence on their work performance e.g. health issues or personal circumstances
- treat all discussions with employees around personal issues as confidential unless it is necessary to involve others to deal with the issue and the employee gives written agreement for disclosure
- where appropriate discuss issues around stress with the 'local; health and safety liaison officer, Human Resources (HR) Advisor, or Trade Union representative

Human Resources will:
- provide advice and guidance to staff on the Workplace Wellbeing Policy
- provide guidance to line-mangers on the implementation of the policy to include the appropriate management of individual cases
- through the Health, Safety and Welfare Team advise, guide and support departments in carrying out stress risk assessments where required

- through the Heath, Safety and Welfare Team provide support to employees experiencing stress and advise them and their line-manager of the support available
- raise awareness amongst all staff of the importance of work/life balance

Employees will:
- take reasonable care of their own health and safety and co-operate with management in any measures taken to reduce stress
- be committed to avoiding causing health and wellbeing problems for other employees, including acting in accordance with the principles of the Dignity at Work Policy
- be proactive in identifying occasions when they may be suffering from health and wellbeing problems, either work-related, or due to external factors, and alert their line manager to these where appropriate

Trade Unions will:
- work with the Council to raise awareness and promote the importance of health and wellbeing in the workplace
- where aware of concerns, identify these to HR and work with the Council to resolve the issues

9   Related documents

- Sustainable Community Strategy - *Eco-Island*   www.eco-island.org.uk
- Corporate Plan   www.iwight.com/Council/documents
- Flexible Working Policy
- Personal Development Review
- Dignity at Work Policy
- People Strategy
- People Resourcing Strategy
- Attendance Management Policy and Procedure

10   Appendix A – Glossary of terms

• **EAP**	Employee Assistance Programme
• **HSE**	Health and Safety Executive
• **HR**	Human Resources

11   Appendix B – Flowchart for managers

Manager is informed by employee that they may be suffering from stress.

↓

Meet with employee to identify possible causes of stress, e.g. volume of work, particular aspect of job, unrealistic deadlines, domestic problems, etc.

↓

Discuss, agree and implement changes that can be made to remove/reduce stress, e.g. reducing work demands, prioritising tasks, extension of deadlines, training/coaching to improve confidence and where appropriate help with domestic problems.

Manager recognises signs of stress in employee e.g. irritability, reduced performance, difficulty in concentrating, headaches etc.

↓

Approach employee sensitively at appropriate time, e.g. during 1:2:1 and discuss symptoms. If manager has concerns that are not acknowledged by employee they should contact HR for advice.

Employee off sick a number of occasions with illness which could be attributable to stress, e.g. persistent headaches, backache, raised blood pressure, exhaustion, etc.

↓

Sensitively maintain regular contact with employee whilst on sick leave. Ensure management of attendance procedures are followed.

↓

Discuss planned/controlled return to work and/or agree with employee how changes can be made to reduce stress e.g. phased return, review of work volumes, prioritising tasks, review deadlines, training/coaching to increase expertise/confidence.

Document the outcome of meetings and any agreed control measures with monitoring dates. Monitor employee and review working practices regularly.

↓

If, after the agreed final review period the employee continues to be affected by work related stress managers should consider the following options:
- Extension of review period
- Referral to Occupational Health
- Potential for redeployment or re-training

12 Appendix C – Flowchart for employees

```
┌─────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Employee feels unable│              │  Inform line manager│
│ to approach line     │              │                     │
│ manager.             │              │                     │
└──────────┬──────────┘              └──────────┬──────────┘
           │                                     │
    ┌──────┴──────┐                              ▼
    ▼             ▼                   ┌─────────────────────┐
┌─────────┐ ┌──────────────┐          │ Referral to         │
│Contact  │ │Contact trade │          │ counselling (EAP)   │
│HR       │ │union rep.    │          │ and Occ Health      │
└────┬────┘ └──────┬───────┘          └──────────┬──────────┘
     └──────┬──────┘                             │
            ▼                                     ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐          ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Referral to counselling │          │ Manager to look at  │
│ service if appropriate  │          │ reasonable support. │
│ (EAP)                   │          │                     │
└────────────┬────────────┘          │ (EAP)               │
             ▼                        └─────────────────────┘
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Issue may be raised with│
│ line manager on behalf  │
│ of employee.            │
└─────────────────────────┘
```