



Mental Health Policy

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| Reviewed | |
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| Reviewed by | Policy & Resources 22 nd October 2025 |

Mental Health Policy

INTRODUCTION

Newton Abbot Town Council (NATC) understands the positive impact that healthy and engaged employees make to the success of the Council and that mental health will play a significant role in an employee's state of mind.

NATC appreciates that individuals can experience periods of poor mental health in the same way as with physical health. The Council commits to providing support for employees going through negative mental health.

For the purposes of this policy, the term negative mental health includes mental health conditions that have been diagnosed by a medical professional as well as signs of stress and anxiety.

LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

NATC understands that, as a Council, it must comply with health and safety legislation. We undertake to create a safe workplace in which we will actively take measures to limit risks to mental health and wellbeing.

We also acknowledge our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in respect of making reasonable adjustments for employees suffering from a disability.

1) Manager Responsibilities

Where necessary, managers will invite the employee to regular private meetings and ask them to talk openly about their mental health. The manager will not make presumptions about how the mental health is impacting on the employee personally and professionally. Initial action will include checking how the employee is getting on at work, in the same manner as if the employee was suffering from a known physical health problem. In a more general sense, managers will strive to create an environment in which employees feel capable of approaching their manager to discuss their mental health.

2) Employee Responsibilities

Any support required by the employee is likely to be known by the employee themselves. The Council actively encourages employees to be open and honest about their mental health and to inform their manager of any issues at an early opportunity to allow these to be addressed.

There is also an expectation on all employees to conduct themselves in a helpful and open-minded manner towards colleagues who have mental health problems. Behaviour which is deemed by the Council as being harassing or bullying in nature which is either a contributory factor to an employee's poor mental health, or is in reaction to the employee's current situation, is unacceptable and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

WELLBEING PLAN

1) Employee action plan

If a manager identifies a mental health issue, they will work alongside the employee to create a personal action plan that provides for proactive management of their mental health. This will support ongoing open communication between the manager and the employee and will result in mutually agreed steps being set in place that can be monitored on an ongoing basis.

The manager will ask the employee to draft the plan to ensure it meets their requirements, with medical support as necessary, and then it will be set in place with their manager. Any information in the plan, and the plan itself, will be kept confidential and reviewed on an ongoing basis by both the employee and their manager.

2) Workplace adjustments

We will endeavour to consider all reasonable workplace adjustments for any employee who is experiencing a mental health problem to ensure their situation does not create a barrier to actively contributing to the workplace. Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

Managers will consider a range of reasonable adjustments (for example flexible hours, phased return, workload reprioritisation, quiet spaces, meeting breaks). Adjustments will be confirmed in writing, trialled for 6–12 weeks, and formally reviewed.

2) Occupational health referral

With the employee's consent, a referral will be made to an external occupational health expert who will undertake an assessment on the employee's current condition in order to ascertain how we may provide appropriate support to the employee.

3) Managing absence and return to work

Where the employee is absent by reason of their mental health concerns, their manager will communicate with the employee at regular intervals during their absence as agreed with the employee. The Leave 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 meeting will take place and any return to work plan agreed between the manager and the employee to ensure necessary steps can be taken to support the employee to remain in work.

4) Working Minds approach

The council will follow HSE's Working Minds steps and use the Talking Toolkit to support regular, preventative conversations.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Information concerning an employee's mental health is defined as special category data. This information will be processed in line with current data protection legislation and only disclosed to others where necessary. You may read more about the data the Council holds on you, why it is held and the lawful basis that applies in the GDPR Policy.

TRAINING

In order to be able to provide valuable support to an employee experiencing poor mental health, managers and other relevant members of staff will attend training in how to support positive mental health and how to deal with poor mental health in employees.

All managers will complete annual training, including how to identify early signs, conduct stress risk assessments, agree adjustments, and manage difficult conversations. NATC will use HSE's free online module and evaluate training impact.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

If you have any worries or concerns about any aspect of your situation, employees have access to a confidential 24-hour telephone counselling service on 0800 047 4097 provided through BrightHR.

Crisis pathway: If there is an immediate risk to an individual's safety, managers will follow the crisis pathway: contact emergency services where appropriate, inform the Town Clerk and signpost to the EAP/GP/111. Notes will be factual, minimal, and confidential.

Stress Risk Assessment Template

| HSE Standard | Typical Hazards / Issues Identified | Who may be affected | Existing controls / support in place | Further actions required (with target date & responsible person) | Status |
|--|--|---------------------|---|---|--------|
| Demands – workload, work patterns, environment | e.g. high volume of urgent emails / public contact stressors | All staff | Appraisal process Open door access to line manager support Peer support | Review staffing levels and implement rota changes by Town Clerk and Line Manager. | |
| Control – influence over how work is done | Limited autonomy in task prioritisation | All staff | Shared work plans | Introduce planning sessions | |
| Support – information, training, encouragement | Lack of awareness of Employee Assistance Programme or Wellbeing Plan | All staff | EAP contact details Manager briefings | Circulate EAP number and mental-health training dates | |
| Relationships – conflict, bullying, isolation | Tense communications in public-facing team | All staff | Dignity at Work Policy and EAP. | Mediation session with line manager | |
| Role – clarity about duties and expectations | Overlap between admin and events duties | All staff | Job descriptions | Appraisal process and job description reviews | |
| Change – organisational or procedural change | New IT system creating uncertainty Change in leadership | All staff | Briefing emails / training | | |

Summary of Findings: _____

Overall Risk Level: Low Medium High **Next Review Date:** _____

Manager Conversation Checklist – mental Health/stress discussion (Template)

To help guide respectful, consistent conversations and record agreed actions.

1. Prepare

- Choose a quiet private space; allow enough time.
- Review absence/performance notes factually (no assumptions).

2. Open the discussion

- How have you been feeling recently at work?
- Are there any particular pressures affecting you just now?
- Listen actively; allow pauses; avoid judgment.

3. Explore work factors (HSE areas)

- **Demands:** Is workload manageable? Any peaks causing stress?
- **Control:** Do you have enough say over how you work?
- **Support:** Are you getting the help you need from your line manager or others?
- **Relationships:** Any issues with colleagues or communication?
- **Role:** Is your role clear? Any confusion about priorities?
- **Change:** Have recent changes been handled well for you?

4. Identify early warning signs (agreed by employee)

- e.g. withdrawal, fatigue, reduced concentration, irritability.

5. Agree support / adjustments

- Flexible hours or breaks, phased return, buddy support, EAP referral, temporary task changes.
- Record actions, responsible person, and review date.

6. Plan follow-up

- Schedule check-in (date & time).
- Confirm confidentiality and storage of notes per GDPR Policy.

7. If urgent risk arises

- Call 999 if imminent risk. Advise the Town Clerk.
- Provide EAP (0800 047 4097) and GP/111 signposting.

Signatures:

Manager _____

Date _____

Employee _____

Date _____