



MANAGING STRESS AND PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY

V1

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1.0 Policy Statement

Beckfoot Trust has developed a managing stress and promoting positive mental health and wellbeing policy to manage its obligations and demonstrate its commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing of our staff.

This policy outlines our commitment to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff; the responsibilities of managers and others for maintaining psychological health; health promotion initiatives; communicating and training on health issues; the range of support available for the maintenance of mental health and organisational commitment to handling individual issues.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. We may vary any of the provision detailed within this policy without consultation. It has been formally adopted by the Trust Board.

2.0 Scope and Purpose

The aim of this policy is to describe Beckfoot Trust's commitment to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing of staff in its broadest, holistic sense, setting out how our Trust will fulfil our legal obligations, the responsibilities of different functions and specialists and the range of services available to help staff maintain health and wellbeing. We recognise that wellbeing and performance are linked. Improving staff's ability to manage pressure and to balance work and home life and societal challenges will ultimately lead to improved performance.

Beckfoot Trust recognises the importance of identifying and tackling the causes of work-related stress. We also recognise that personal stress, while unrelated to the workplace, can adversely affect the wellbeing of staff at work.

As part of its ongoing commitment to the wellbeing of its staff, Beckfoot Trust has signed up to the Department of Education Staff Wellbeing Charter. The charter is a declaration of support for, and set of commitments to, the wellbeing and mental health of everyone working in education. A copy of the Education Staff Wellbeing Charter can be found at [The Education Staff Wellbeing Charter - November 2021 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/984212/education_staff_wellbeing_charter_november_2021.pdf).

Mental wellbeing is relevant for all staff, which means every member of staff can play a part in improving wellbeing in the workplace. By addressing mental health issues, we can improve the general wellbeing of staff, reduce absenteeism, lower staff turnover and increase productivity.

2.1 Who is covered by the policy?

The procedure applies to all employees regardless of length of service. It also applies to any agency workers, casual staff, self-employed contractors/consultants and volunteers.

2.2 Legal obligations

Beckfoot Trust have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that your health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised.

This policy takes account of our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1998 and Equality Act 2010.

2.3 Data Protection

Any information you provide to us about your health will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. We recognise that such data is sensitive and will handle it in a confidential manner.

2.4 Relationship with other policies, procedures and our Trust's core values

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Flexible Working policy
- Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Attendance Management policy
- Leave of absence policy
- Anti bullying and harassment policy
- Trust's People First Charter.

2.4.1 The wellbeing section of the Trust's People First Charter puts an emphasis on:

- Reviewing any work practices that stand in the way of staff being able to plan and deliver great learning
- Finding ways of reducing unnecessary workload
- Collecting staff voice and responding to it; formally, a minimum of annually and informally, as much as possible
- Making no excuses for staff suffering a loss of dignity
- Promoting wellbeing and a healthy and safe work environment
- Minimising meetings and emails and thinking carefully about the purpose of all communication.

3.0 Overarching Principles

3.1 Understanding stress and mental health

Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or demands placed on them. Sustained over a period of time, stress can lead to mental and/or physical illness.

Mental health is a term used to describe our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing; it affects how we think, feel and act and how we cope with the normal pressures of everyday life. Positive mental health is rarely an absolute state since factors inside and outside work affect mental health, meaning that we move on a spectrum that ranges from being in good to poor mental health.

There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enable individuals to meet their full potential and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure becomes excessive it produces stress and undermines mental health.

Pressures outside the workplace, whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown, financial worries or world events, can result in stress and poor mental health. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.

We recognise that individuals react to similar situations in different ways and that what triggers stress and poor mental health varies from person to person.

3.2 Our approach to mental wellbeing

We will:

- a) Promote a culture of open communication by providing both formal and informal channels through which you can raise concerns;
- b) Take account of stress and mental wellbeing when planning and allocating workloads. We will provide opportunities to discuss these through line management processes;
- c) Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that you are not overworking and monitor holidays to ensure you are using their entitlement appropriately;
- d) Ensure risk assessments include or specifically address work-related stress;
- e) Facilitate requests for flexible working where reasonably practicable in accordance with our Flexible Working Policy;
- f) Consider reasonable adjustments on a temporary or permanent basis, and in conjunction with relevant medical advice, where you have advised us of concerns regarding their mental health;
- g) Ensure that in any workplace reorganisation our change management processes are designed to minimise uncertainty and stress;
- h) Implement policies and procedures to address factors that can cause or worsen stress in particular so that we can provide a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation and address inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action;
- i) Provide training to help you understand and recognise the causes of work-related stress and mental ill health, the impact of stress from factors in everyday life and the steps you can take to protect and enhance your own mental wellbeing and that of your colleagues;
- j) Provide support services such as occupational health and confidential counselling and an employee assistance programme, mental health first aiders if you have been affected by or absent by reason of stress and grief first aiders if you have been affected by bereavement or grief. There are also resources available on the People First Charter SharePoint site.

4.0 Responsibilities and Arrangements

4.1 Responsibilities

4.1.1 Headteachers

Headteachers are accountable for establishing, maintaining and promoting a culture of wellbeing in line with Beckfoot Trust's People First Charter and section 3.2 of this policy. In addition, they are responsible for ensuring that arrangements for risk assessments are suitable and are communicated effectively, including a preventative school risk assessment for work-related stress. This should be reviewed on an annual basis. This risk assessment should use the Health and Safety Executive's management standard as a framework.

4.1.2 Employees

All staff should ensure that they are familiar with this policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. Staff should plan and organise their work to meet personal and organisational objectives and co-operate with support, advice and guidance that may be offered by line managers or the HR Department. Anyone who experiences or is aware of a situation that may result in work-related stress or undermine mental wellbeing at work should speak to a manager.

4.1.3 Line managers

All line managers have a responsibility to recognise potential issues of work-related stress or mental ill health in the staff they manage. They will be given training to support them in this and should seek advice from the HR Department in the event that they have concerns. All managers should provide support to staff by working with the HR Department. In particular, they need to:

- Promote the wellbeing of our staff and support our Trust's approach as outlined in section 3.2
- Promote a culture of open communication
- Effectively plan and provide feedback on performance
- Ensure that staff receive necessary training and support
- Monitor workloads and reallocate work where necessary.

Ensure that staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and others, and act on behaviour that falls below those standards.

4.1.4 Human resources support

We will develop policies and procedures, to protect the wellbeing of employees, assist line managers in supporting individuals, and liaise as appropriate with occupational health and other medical professionals, with the objective of helping employees to maintain good psychological health.

Beckfoot Trust operates practices and policies that ensure staff are able to achieve a satisfactory balance between their work and other commitments and adhere to the working limits set out in the Working Time Regulations 1998.

4.1.5 Employee assistance programme provider

The provider of external employee assistance services, Health Assured, provides anonymised data provided by calls to its helpline. The data will alert the Head of HR to clusters or "hotspots" of psychological risk in the organisation.

Health Assured can provide confidential support, including counselling and financial and health wellbeing. Health Assured can be contacted on 0800 0280199 or via their downloaded Wisdom app.

4.1.6 Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA)

We have trained a number of mental health first aiders across our Trust who can be contacted by any member of staff experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. Mental health first-aiders can discuss your concerns and provide details of available support. Details of mental health first aiders are available on the People First Charter SharePoint site or from the HR department. MHFAs wear a green lanyard and have a mental health first aid logo on their email footer.

4.1.7 Grief First Aiders (GFA)

We have trained a number of grief first aiders across our Trust who can be contacted by any member of staff experiencing grief or bereavement. Grief first-aiders can listen and provide details of available support. Details of grief first aiders are available on the People First Charter SharePoint site or from

HR department. GFAs wear a badge with the grief first aid logo on it and the logo on their email footer.

4.2 Training and communications

- 4.2.1 Line managers and staff should regularly discuss individual training needs to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to adapt to ever-changing job demands. An examination of training needs will be particularly important prior to, and during, periods of organisational change.
- 4.2.2 Line Managers will receive training so they are able to recognise the symptoms and causes of mental ill health.
- 4.2.3 Staff will receive training in mental health awareness so they are able to recognise the symptoms of mental ill health in themselves and others in addition to recognising causes.
- 4.2.4 Managers and staff are encouraged to participate in communication/feedback exercises, including stress audits and staff surveys. All staff are expected to be aware of the importance of effective communication and to use the media most appropriate to the message, for example team meetings, one-to-one meetings and electronic communications. The school/central function will ensure that structures exist to give staff regular feedback on their performance, and for them to raise concerns.
- 4.2.5 Managers and staff are encouraged to utilise Wellbeing Action Plans where appropriate. A Wellbeing Action Plan is an informal plan that can be considered for staff who are already experiencing poor mental health but they are also useful for staff who are currently well, but want to take a more pro-active approach to staying mentally fit at work. A plan can be tailored to the individual's needs and seeks to identify any possible triggers to stress, how the individual wishes to be communicated with and steps/actions that can be taken to assist when they are not coping.

4.3 Occupational health support

- 4.3.1 Staff can speak to their line managers if they would like to be considered for support from occupational health. A comprehensive occupational health service is available, from individual health screening to the design of return-to-work plans for those rehabilitating after a period of long-term sickness absence.
- 4.3.2 Workplace wellbeing services provided by the occupational health team include:
 - Pre-employment screening;
 - Fitness-for-work assessments.
- 4.3.3 If staff believe that their work, or some aspect of it, is putting their wellbeing at risk they should, in the first instance, speak to their line manager or the Senior HR Officer. The discussion should cover workload and other aspects of job demands and raise issues such as identified training needs.
- 4.3.4 A referral to the occupational health team will be made if this is considered appropriate after an individual's initial discussion with their manager or the HR department. Discussions between staff and the occupational health professionals are confidential, although the occupational health team will provide a report on the individual's fitness to work, and any recommended adaptations to the working environment, to us.

4.4 Other services

4.4.1 Other measures available to support staff in maintaining health and wellbeing include:

- An employee assistance programme. Details on how to access the EAP can be found on our People First Charter SharePoint [here](#)
- Procedures for reporting and handling inappropriate behaviour (for example bullying and harassment or discrimination);
- Special leave arrangements;
- Opportunities for flexible working;
- Our grievance policy;
- Wellbeing boards;
- Trained workplace mediators across our Trust;
- Programme of intentional listening;
- Information can also be obtained from our People First Charter SharePoint site [here](#)

4.4.2 If any member of staff is considered by their line manager or colleagues to be at serious risk of self-harm, or of harming others, action must be taken straight away. The matter should be referred to the Headteacher/Deputy CEO who will seek medical advice from the Occupational Health Department if that is reasonably practicable. Every effort will be made to contact any person nominated by the member of staff as an emergency contact. Where necessary the emergency services will be called. The wellbeing of the member of staff and those around them will always be our first concern.

4.5 Addressing work-related stress

4.5.1 If you believe you are experiencing work-related stress you should discuss this with your line manager in the first instance. If you feel unable to do so you should contact a mental health first aider or your Senior HR Officer.

4.5.2 Once an issue affecting your health comes to the attention of your line manager, Headteacher or the HR Department, we will discuss with you what steps can be taken to address that issue. Those steps may include any of the following:

- A review of your current job role, responsibilities, workload and working hours. Adjustments may be agreed to these, on a temporary basis and subject to further review, where appropriate;
- Where it appears that stress has been caused by bullying or harassment, investigation under our Disciplinary and/or Grievance Procedures;
- Referral for medical advice, treatment and/or a medical report to be provided by the Occupational Health provider, our medical advisers or any specialist or GP who has been treating you;
- Creation of a bespoke stress action plan with you;
- If you are on sickness absence, discussion of an appropriate return to work programme. Our Attendance Management Policy may be applied.

4.6 Absence due to stress or mental ill health

4.6.1 If you are absent due to work-related stress or challenges with mental ill health, you should follow your school's/central team sickness absence reporting procedure.

4.6.2 In cases of prolonged or repeated absence it may be necessary to apply the procedure set out in our Attendance Management Policy.

4.7 Reasonable adjustments

4.7.1 There may be reasonable adjustments that can be made to your role if you are experiencing poor mental health or in order to proactively support before this occurs. These adjustments could be on a temporary basis or they could be permanent changes. Examples of the types of adjustments that can be considered are as follows:

- Changes to your physical working environment;
- Changes to your working pattern;
- Adapting the way our policies are applied;
- Reviewing tasks or deadlines to help someone have a reasonable workload while managing their mental health;
- Providing rest areas away from the main staff room to allow an employee to rest away from social demands;
- Modifying supervision to provide regular check ins, prioritising work and creating structure in the working day;
- Providing training or coaching to build confidence in skills relevant to the job;
- Agreeing a preferred communication method to help reduce anxiety.

4.8 Confidentiality

4.8.1 Information about stress, mental health and mental wellbeing is highly sensitive. Every member of staff is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality that is required when dealing with information about stress or mental health whether they are supporting a colleague or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a workplace policy or procedure.

4.8.2 A breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action.

4.8.3 However, there are occasions when information about stress or mental wellbeing needs to be shared with third parties. For example:

- Where steps need to be taken to address work-related stress such as reallocating work within a team;
- Where medical advice is required on how to support a member of staff, address issues raised by work-related stress or address issues raised by mental ill health;
- Where allegations of harassment, bullying or other misconduct require a disciplinary investigation or proceedings to take place;
- Where a member of staff presents an immediate danger to themselves or others.

In these circumstances, wherever possible, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.

4.9 Protection for those reporting stress or assisting with an investigation

- 4.9.1 Staff who report that they are experiencing work-related stress or challenges with mental ill health, who support a colleague in making such a report or who participate in any investigation connected with this policy in good faith will be protected from any form of intimidation or victimisation.
- 4.9.2 If you feel you have been subjected to any such intimidation or victimisation, you should seek support from your line manager/Headteacher/Deputy CEO. You may also raise a complaint in accordance with our Grievance Procedure.
- 4.9.3 If, after investigation, you are found to have provided false information in bad faith, you will be subject to action under our Disciplinary Procedure

5.0 Review of Policy

This policy is reviewed annually by the Executive. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.