



**MENTAL HEALTH
& WELLBEING
STRATEGY**

Version control

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Strategic Alignment

Improving the Council's Resource Base – (23) Build a workforce for the future capable of delivering on our priorities and shared ambition

Consultation and Distribution Record

Consultation Process	Strategy developed by joint stakeholders	
Stakeholders	Contacts identified for each service	
	Joint Trade Unions JNC for Teaching Staff Employee Equality Forum	
Distribution		

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introduction

North Lanarkshire Council recognises that mental ill health and stress can be associated with many of the leading causes of disease and disability in our society. Promoting and protecting the mental wellbeing of our workforce is important for individuals' physical health, social wellbeing and productivity. Mental wellbeing in the workplace is relevant to all employees and everyone can contribute to improved mental wellbeing at work.

As an employer, we are taking steps to promote positive mental health and wellbeing.

Addressing workplace mental health and wellbeing can help strengthen the positive, protective factors of employment, reduce 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 support them once they are at work.

Important aspects of our mental health and wellbeing include providing information and raising awareness, promoting preventative and self-management techniques, fostering management skills to deal with issues around mental health and stress effectively, developing a supportive workplace culture, providing stress management and resilience building skills for employees, offering assistance, advice and support to anyone experiencing a mental health problem or returning to work after a period of absence due to mental health problems.

2. Scope:

This strategy applies to all North Lanarkshire Council employees.

3. Direction Statement:

The Council is committed to the protection and promotion of the mental health and wellbeing of all employees.

The Council shall continuously strive, as far as is reasonably practicable, to promote mental health throughout the organisation by establishing and maintaining processes that enhance mental health and wellbeing.

4. The Legal Position

Under the Equality Act (2010) it is illegal to discriminate directly or indirectly against a person who considers themselves to be disabled. You also cannot discriminate against anyone because of an association with a disability, for example, an employee who cares for a disabled relative. A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a long term, adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Under this legislation, employees experiencing ongoing poor mental health may be considered to have a disability. As an employer, we must therefore ensure that any employee who considers themselves to be disabled is treated fairly and, where appropriate, that we make reasonable adjustments to enable them to do their job to the best of their ability.

5. Definitions

“Mental Health influences how we think and feel about ourselves and others and how we interpret events. It affects our capacity to learn, to communicate and to form, sustain and end relationships. It influences our ability to cope with change, transition and life events.”

(Scotland’s Healthy Working Lives Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy & Guidance)

For the purposes of this strategy the following terms will be used:

Mental health – we all have mental health. This is an umbrella term which refers to a range from positive mental health to poor mental health. This can be mild to moderate or more serious, severe and enduring. Your mental health doesn’t stay the same. It can fluctuate as circumstances change and as you move through different stages in your life.

Mental health problem – a term that refers to symptoms that meet the criteria for clinical diagnosis of a defined mental health condition – for example, depression or anxiety. However, a diagnosis isn’t required to have a mental health problem.

We may find these early warning signs of a problem hard to see in ourselves, and it can help to have colleagues who can help us connect this to our mental health.

Wellbeing – a term that includes life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing – for example, having a sense of control, purpose in life, a sense of belonging and positive relationships with others. Being comfortable, happy or healthy.

Resilience – a term that refers to the ability to function well under pressure, adapt to changing demands and recover (quickly) from the impact of difficult situations. Like mental health, resilience can fluctuate over time. It can be strengthened through a set of learnable skills.

6. Key Priorities

(i) To develop a supportive culture and a climate of wellbeing, addressing factors that may negatively affect mental wellbeing

Our commitments are to:

- Reduce discrimination and stigma by increasing awareness and understanding of mental health problems
- Give employees information on and increase their awareness of mental wellbeing
- Include information about the mental health and wellbeing strategy in the staff induction programme.
- Provide training for staff to identify early causes and effectively manage mental health issues.
- Ensure that employees have the tools and resources to carry out their jobs safely and effectively.

(ii) To support employees to minimise the risk of mental ill health by providing access to quality information, signposting and supports around stress, resilience and mindset.

Our commitments are to:

- Provide opportunities for employees to look after their mental wellbeing, for example through physical activity, stress reducing activities and social events (social prescription, self-care, self-management).
- Provide systems that encourage predictable working hours, reasonable workloads and flexible working practices where appropriate.
- Establish good two-way communication to ensure staff involvement, particularly during periods of organisational change.
- Promote and support opportunities to enhance professional development, identified through Performance Review & Development (PRD).

(iii) To provide practical support for employees experiencing mental health difficulties.

Our commitments are to:

- Ensure individuals suffering from mental health problems are treated fairly and consistently.
- Manage return to work for those who have experienced mental health problems and in cases of long-term sickness absence, put in place phased return in accordance with the Supporting Attendance Policy.
- Ensure employees are aware of the wellbeing support that can be accessed such as occupational health, Employee Counselling, physio, mindfulness sessions or alternatively their own GP, or a counsellor.
- Treat all matters relating to individual employees and their mental health problems in the strictest confidence and share on a 'need to know' basis only with consent from the individual concerned.
- Measure the effectiveness of all activities to ensure our offer is in line with needs and emerging plans

(iv) To encourage the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems.

Our commitments are to:

- Show a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues. This includes having positive statements in recruitment literature.
- Ensure that all staff involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health issues and are trained in appropriate interview skills.
- Ensure all line managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace.

(v) To train & support our managers in proactive approaches to reduce instances of workplace stress, recognising that managers have a duty to work with employees to address causes of stress before it has a prolonged, adverse effect on the employees' health.

Our commitments are to:

- Adopt the principles of the HSE Stress Management Standards for employees.
- Consult with trade union safety representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- Provide training in good management practices and provide practical tools for managers to use proactively to carry out team health checks.
- Provide confidential counselling and adequate resources.
- Ensure that we take steps to ensure employees are working safely through and beyond COVID using risk assessment processes.

7. Responsibilities

The Council

- Promote and support positive mental health and wellbeing for all employees.
- Ensure that managers have the necessary training and guidance to appropriately respond to employees presenting with poor mental health and/or confidential disclosures of a mental health diagnosis.
- Build a culture that tackles mental health stigma, discrimination and harassment.
- Develop a culture that breaks the silence around mental health.
- Provide access to a range of appropriate support mechanisms.

Managers

- Lead by example, promoting positive working practices.
- Undertake appropriate, relevant training to ensure a good understanding of mental health issues and appropriate management practices.
- Be understanding, sensitive and available to employees who wish to discuss or disclose information about their mental health.
- Understand the early signs of poor mental health. Where there are concerns, discuss with the employee quickly and sensitively to enable the offer of proactive support to be accessed at an early stage.
- Empower employees by making them aware of the supports available, including training and development opportunities.
- Encourage a culture that prevents stigma, discrimination or harassment around the subject of mental health and to employees who may be struggling with poor mental health.
- Provide a safe work environment where employees can discuss mental health, individually or in teams.
- Support employees before, during and after returning to work following a period of absence due to poor mental health.

Employees

- Be aware of their own mental health and wellbeing, and how to stay healthy.
- Recognise the importance of mental health and wellbeing and its impact on resilience.
- Support a culture where mental wellbeing is valued and promoted and where mental health stigma, discrimination or harassment linked to mental health is not tolerated.
- Support their colleagues when they want to discuss their own mental health concerns.
- If concerned about their mental health, speak to their line manager, People & Organisational Development, trade union or employee forum representative.

8. Communication

All employees will be made aware of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the support available.

Regular updates will be provided to all employees.

9. Review and monitoring

The strategy will be reviewed annually, and progress against the action plan will be monitored on an ongoing basis.



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