



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Positive about Mental Health and Wellbeing

Deimhinneach mu Shlàinte is
Sunnd Inntinn

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Introduction

At the Parliament, our [values](#) underpin the way in which we act and behave.

By applying these values to our work practices, we aim to promote a positive and healthy workplace culture, where open and honest communication is encouraged, and mutual respect is the norm.

This policy complies with meeting the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's (SPCB) Health and Safety legal duties as an employer and has been reviewed against good employment practice guidelines.

Who is this policy for?

It applies to all MSPs, MSPs' staff, SPCB and staff employed by the SPCB.

Why is it important?

Colleagues may experience mental health conditions for various reasons that are connected to circumstances outside of work. Some staff will have a pre-existing or mental health condition when recruited or may develop one caused by factors relating to their personal life.

Colleagues who experience long-term mental health conditions can thrive at work, with the right support and working environment.

We know that getting support at an early stage is important and to achieve this staff will be managed in a way that is not detrimental to their mental health. An adjustments process allows individuals to have the right support in place to manage their condition at work.

There are also work-related reasons which can impact on an individual's mental health and wellbeing, including:

- Excessive work pressures
- Work-life imbalance
- Feeling devalued or undermined by a colleague or manager
- Workload
- Job satisfaction

We work in a highly complex, political and scrutinised environment which can sometimes put pressures on colleagues. Issues like a lack of control and a demanding role can contribute to changes in individual mental health. Colleagues can sometimes be exposed to situations that they find traumatic. This can lead to problems that might last a few weeks, months or ones that need managing over the longer term.

In recent years, we have seen an increased number of people giving evidence to the Parliament on difficult, sensitive issues. It can be based on an individual's lived experience, such as child sex abuse or bullying. Listening to these stories while at work can also take an emotional toll on someone and may lead to a variety of health issues which in turn could result in burnout or a chronic or sudden deterioration in mental health.

What is mental ill-health and how can it be addressed?

Mental health is our state of emotional, psychological and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel and act and how we cope with the pressures of everyday life.

The [Health and Safety Executive](#) defines mental ill-health (stress) as “the adverse reaction people have to excess pressure or other types of demands placed on them”. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be positive if managed correctly and stress which can be detrimental to health.

Anyone can experience a period of mental ill health. Mental health is a complex area and while we can try to define it, the effects of mental ill health are unique to each individual. It can range from common mental health issues such as anxiety and depression to more serious conditions such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. Symptoms can emerge suddenly because of a specific event, or gradually, where they can worsen over time.

Some conditions can be persistent and may move to be classed as a disability, while others can occur less frequently, leading to “good days” and “bad days”. Positive mental health is rarely an absolute state. Factors both in and out of work affect the mental health of colleagues.

What is the aim of the policy?

The aim of the policy is to support a workplace environment that promotes the good mental health and wellbeing of all colleagues.

How will that be achieved?

We will continuously strive to improve the mental health environment and culture of Parliament by identifying, removing or minimising harmful processes, procedures and behaviours that may cause or contribute to psychological harm or illness to colleagues.

We will promote an integrated and whole institutional approach that actively encourages consideration of colleagues’ mental health and wellbeing across all areas of the Parliament. This will include:

- Ensuring our interactions are based on mutual respect and dignity for the different roles we play, commitment to high professional standards, an openness to constructive challenge, in both directions, between MSPs and staff.
- Working to reduce and remove the stigma associated with mental health in the workplace.
- Building and maintaining a workplace environment and culture that supports positive health and wellbeing.
- Placing equal value on both physical and mental health.
- Making mental health and wellbeing everybody’s responsibility.
- Increasing awareness of mental health and wellbeing issues, including mental health training.
- Ensuring that the mental health and wellbeing of colleagues is considered in all relevant policies and decisions.

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- Ensuring all managers and MSPs, as employers, are committed to the mental health and wellbeing of colleagues and act as good role models.
 - Encouraging a supportive workplace culture to facilitate early intervention and prevention.
 - Ensuring colleagues have clearly defined job roles, objectives and responsibilities with realistic timescales included to achieve targeted outputs while also providing them with good management support, appropriate training and adequate resources to do their job.
 - Establishing good two-way communication to ensure colleague involvement, particularly during periods of organisational change.
 - Managing conflict effectively and ensuring the Parliament is free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.
 - Providing support to managers and employing MSPs to support and improve wellbeing within their teams.

By taking a whole Parliament approach to mental health, we will work collectively to promote a culture that is informed, supportive and inclusive. This inclusive approach can be achieved without undermining the employment relationship between Members and their staff.

What are the expected outcomes of this policy?

Colleagues in all types of employment will:

- Have “good work” which contributes positively to their mental health and the overall performance of our Parliament.
- Have the knowledge, tools and confidence to understand and look after their own mental health and the mental health of others.

Managers and MSPs, as employers, will be

- Equipped with the awareness and tools to not only address but prevent mental ill health caused or worsened by work.
- Equipped to support colleagues with mental health conditions to thrive, from recruitment and throughout their employment.
- Aware of how to get access to timely help to reduce sickness absence caused by mental ill health.

What are the roles and responsibilities?

The SPCB as the employer has overall responsibility and must protect the health, safety and welfare at work of all their staff. Everyone who works for the SPCB is expected to actively support mental health and wellbeing, whether their own or that of others.

This means:

We are all responsible for:

- Understanding what mental health and wellbeing is, what are the causes of mental ill health, and how it can be prevented.
- Being aware of the policies and support in place to promote good mental wellbeing.
- Taking reasonable care of own mental health and wellbeing.
- Being supportive of other colleagues experiencing mental ill health.
- Informing our manager or employing MSP if we feel we are placed at risk, or under pressure at work that could potentially impact on our mental health.
- Attending and undertaking relevant training

Those in leadership roles and employing MSPs are responsible for:

- Promoting this policy and for ensuring its effective implementation.
- Leading by example, demonstrating a commitment to wellbeing and managing the pressures at work.
- Providing the necessary resources to support colleague wellbeing and mental health.
- Proactively challenging behaviour and actions that may adversely affect colleague health and wellbeing.
- Ensuring the [Health and Safety Executive's management standards](#) are applied to work design within groups/ teams.
- Reviewing data routinely to measure mental health and wellbeing.

Those in manager roles and employing MSPs are responsible for:

- Engaging and communicating with colleagues about mental health and raising awareness.
- Role-modelling by taking reasonable care of their own mental health and wellbeing.
- Encouraging colleagues to contribute to developing new ways of working to improve mental health and wellbeing.
- Designing jobs and monitoring the impact of work pressures on colleagues to promote and improve their health and wellbeing.
- Monitoring working hours/flexi balances to ensure colleagues are not overworking.

- Monitoring holidays to ensure colleagues are taking the full entitlement.
- Supporting colleagues who are experiencing mental ill health.
- Ensuring all colleagues have an up to date wellbeing plan.
- Applying the Health and Safety Executive management standards to job design within their team
- Understanding their role in minimising mental ill health and work-related stress that can be caused or exacerbated by work.

People and Culture office is responsible for:

- Producing, implementing and communicating a mental health at work plan.
- Engaging and communicating with colleagues and managers about the policy and raising awareness.
- Reviewing the wellbeing of colleagues through collecting, analysing and reporting relevant data.
- Providing support and policy advice to managers and colleagues, including the health processes.
- Reviewing and measuring the effectiveness of this policy.
- Identifying additional policies and initiatives that promote health and wellbeing, including training and awareness raising sessions.
- Managing the occupational health/EAP contracts and programmes.

Occupational health/EAP is responsible for:

- Providing a confidential service where colleagues experiencing mental health difficulties can seek advice and support.
- Liaising with managers and employing MSPs, with the colleague's consent, where work-related factors might be a contributory factor in causing an individual's mental health problems.
- Liaising, with the colleague's consent, with the GP of anyone absent through mental health problems about fitness to remain at or return to work.
- Liaising with colleague's representative or representative body to assure colleagues that their best interests are being considered
- Advising managers and the People and Culture office about arrangements for and timing of return to work following a period of absence due to mental health problems, including a suitable return to work programme and workplace adjustments.
- Providing support and guidance on health and wellbeing issues.
- Advising on possible solutions and suitable additional services.



Health & Safety Adviser is responsible for:

- Overseeing the Parliament's risk assessment procedures and providing guidance and support to managers and colleagues in implementing appropriate control measures.
- Advising managers on how to carry out risk assessments in the workplace
- Advising on changes in legislation and current best practice guidance relating to mental health and stress in the workplace.
- Liaising with the People and Culture office where potentially negative mental health and wellbeing has been identified.
- Promoting a positive health and safety culture and signposting colleagues to where these assessments, procedures and control measures can be accessed.
- Monitoring health and safety performance indicators.

Trade Union Partners support their members by:

- Encouraging them to seek help and support where appropriate.
- Directing them to the Parliament's Employee Assistance Programme/counselling where appropriate.
- Helping them to understand the policy and where to seek help, if necessary.
- Offering to represent them in all stages of the implementation of this policy.

Mental Health First Aiders support colleagues by:

- Signposting on where to access all appropriate professional support services, including the Parliament's Employee Assistance Programme/counselling service and self-help strategies.
- Maintaining their skills through participation in group clinical support sessions.
- Taking a break or stepping down from the role when necessary to support their own wellbeing.
- Maintaining the confidentiality of colleagues who approach them for advice.

The Mental Health Network also support colleagues by:

- Raising awareness about mental health and wellbeing issues.
- Encouraging openness with a view to breaking down barriers of stigma and promoting greater understanding.
- Providing practical information and tips on maintaining good mental health and wellbeing.
- Signposting to useful resources, including to this Policy, to help people find further information and support.



Other sources of useful support

Our [mental health and wellbeing intranet pages](#) provide more detail about the available resources:

- Positive about Mental Health and Wellbeing Guidance
- Mental health training opportunities
- Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme
- Individual wellbeing plans
- Mental health risk assessments
- Stress risk assessments
- Mental health first aiders
- Staff-led Mental health network
- Corporate calendar of events to promote wellbeing
- Staff survey results

This policy is effective from December 2021.

Positive about Mental Health and Wellbeing

For further information contact:

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