

Keeping employees healthy:

Employee wellness guide and plan

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Introduction

We are moving away from reactive management of absences to a more proactive approach to prevention

We will accomplish this by promoting employee wellbeing and increasing employee engagement.

Through **Employee Wellness Plans (EWPs)**, employers are looking for ways to address employee wellbeing. This is a tool which helps all employees of **Healthwatch Barnsley** manage their mental health and wellbeing at work. This document serves as a guide for employers on how to effectively manage staff mental health. It outlines a comprehensive approach that includes promoting employee wellbeing, addressing the root causes of work related mental health issues, and providing support for staff who are experiencing mental health challenges.



Who will this guide help?

This guide is intended for individuals in employment or voluntary roles who wish to learn more about using **Employee Wellness Plans (EWPs)** to support and promote their mental health and well-being at work. You may be:

- Experiencing a mental health issue and want to see how a EWP can help
- Doing well and want to use the EWP to proactively ensure mental wellness at work



Helpful definition

Mental health

Everyone has mental health, just like physical health. Emotions can vary from positive wellbeing to difficult feelings or serious issues.

Mental wellbeing

Mental well-being is the ability to handle daily stressors, work effectively, engage positively with others, and realise our full potential.

Poor mental health

Poor mental health is a state of low wellbeing that hinders one's ability to realize potential, manage daily pressures, work productively, and contribute to the community.

Mental health problems

We all face challenges with our mental health at times. When these difficulties persist and affect our ability to enjoy life, it indicates a mental health problem. You might receive a specific diagnosis or feel a general decline in your wellbeing.

Common mental health problems

Mental health issues like depression, anxiety, phobias, and OCD affect one in four people each year. Symptoms can range from mild to severe.





Less common mental health problems

Less common conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder can greatly affect lives, making treatment harder to find and increasing stigma due to lower understanding. Nevertheless, many people manage these diagnoses effectively and lead fulfilling lives.

Work related stress

Work related stress is the negative reaction individuals have to excessive pressure at work. It can lead to illness and is linked to high absenteeism, staff turnover, and increased errors.

Although stress is not a medical diagnosis, prolonged severe stress may result in conditions like depression or anxiety.

Why is an Employee Wellness Plan needed?

With rising stress and mental health issues in the workplace, there is a growing need for proactive approaches to mental health management. The **Employee Wellness Plan** draws inspiration from Mary Ellen Copeland's Wellness Recovery Action Plan® (WRAP®), an evidence-based system used worldwide to support mental health.

Employee Wellness Plans are personalised tools that everyone can use to identify what helps us stay well at work, what can cause mental health issues, and how to address them if they occur.

This fosters a conversation with your manager, helping them understand your needs and experiences. Improved support for your mental health can lead to greater productivity, performance, and job satisfaction.

We all have mental health, just like physical health. This **Employee Wellness Plan** supports everyone in managing their mental well-being.

If you work remotely, an **Employee Wellness Plan** can help you identify how your manager can support you and address potential barriers.

Employee Wellbeing Plans are useful for returning to work after a mental health absence, as they provide a clear framework for discussing needed support and potential adjustments with your manager.



What should Employee Wellness Plans cover?

- Early warning signs of declining mental health for managers to observe.
- The potential effects of poor mental health on your performance, if any.
- Any triggers in the workplace that may lead to poor mental health or increased stress.
- Approaches you can take and behaviours to support your mental wellbeing.
- Identify the support you require from your line manager.
- Actions and positive steps you and your manager can take if you are experiencing poor mental health or stress
- Consider any extra resources or support that you think might significantly enhance your mental health journey.
- An agreed time to review the **Employee Wellness Plan** and any support measures that have been implemented.

The **Employee Wellness Plan** is a non-binding agreement with your manager designed to support your well-being and address any mental health needs, including potential adjustments you may wish to discuss..

Starting the Employee Wellness Plan

1. Put some time aside to complete your **Employee Wellness Plan**
2. Arrange a private meeting with your manager to discuss
3. Think about the key points that would help your manager before the meeting.

Completing an **Employee Wellness Plan** helps you manage your wellbeing by identifying effective strategies, determining necessary support from your manager, and developing health promoting habits.

If you face a mental health issue, you'll know what support you need. This encourages open communication with your manager, leading to practical steps for regular monitoring and review.

Regularly reviewing your **Employee Wellness Plan**, helps you adjust it based on your experiences and new strategies you find useful. Taking ownership of the process can enhance your sense of control over your wellbeing.

The **Employee Wellness Plan** should be created by you, reflecting your personal choices and needs. Your manager will support and guide you on reasonable adjustments, but you will take the lead in the process.

Reasonable adjustments and the Equality Act 2010

After completing your Employee Wellness Plan, consider discussing any needed adjustments with your manager.

A reasonable adjustment is a change made by an employer that helps an employee fulfil their duties equally with others.

Under the Equality Act 2010, employers must make reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities. They are also encouraged to support staff experiencing mental health challenges, even if those challenges are not classified as disabilities.

Reasonable adjustments for individuals with mental health issues vary based on their symptoms and should be personalised to meet their needs. These adjustments also depend on the organisation's available resources, so it's crucial for your manager to understand what can be offered and what is deemed 'reasonable' in these discussions.

For more information have a look at the government's [Reasonable adjustments for disabled workers guidance](#), Rethink Mental Illness's '[What's reasonable at work?](#)' guide and the [Acas website](#), where you can find details of their equality and diversity advisory service.





Reasonable adjustments for you

Support from your manager

- Providing written instructions for individuals whose anxiety impacts their memory, along with offering support for workload management and assistance in prioritising tasks.
- Discussing the type of work you can manage during a phased return to work
- Increasing the frequency of catch-up meetings or 1 to 1's

Changes to the physical environment

- Arranging for employees who struggle with distractions in an open-plan office by relocating their workstations to quieter areas, away from busy zones and doors.
- Create a quiet area designated for breaks, away from the main workspace and allow areas for personal space

Flexibility with working patterns

- Flexible working hours can help those who struggle with crowded trains to avoid rush hour by starting and finishing early.
- Allowing someone adjusting medication to take a day off for side effects like drowsiness.
- Allowing a person to adjust their hours to attend weekly therapy sessions
- Allowing someone to take a break from the office when they feel particularly anxious
- Allowing part-time work or job-sharing arrangements for those unable to work full-time
- Allowing someone to schedule their annual leave for regular breaks throughout the year
- Allowing someone who finds large meetings very difficult to have at least 15 minutes between them.
- A gradual return to work following periods of illness related absence
- Remote work, reduced hours, or eased responsibilities can help avoid sick leave during condition fluctuations.

Other types of support

- Arranging mediation if there are difficulties between colleagues
- Assign a 'buddy' or 'mentor' outside management to help the new employee settle in.

Tips for wellbeing at work

Even small changes can enhance your work life or prevent stress.

You can act independently in some situations, but you'll need to discuss certain matters with colleagues or managers.

- Build strong relationships with colleagues to form a supportive network.
- Discuss your feelings of upset with someone you trust, whether it's at work or outside of it.
- Your needs are important. Talk to someone if you need help!
- Say no if you can't take on extra work
- Be realistic about the pressures you feel
- If everything starts to feel overwhelming, take a deep breath. Try and get away from your desk or situation for a few minutes
- Write a list of what needs to be done; it can help you to focus on what's important to you.
- Taking some fresh air and gentle exercise stimulates your health
- Regular working patterns, breaks and holidays will help you to not burn out.
- Try to plan and organise your day so that you don't work overtime or take home with you. This may be ok occasionally, but it should never overtake your life.
- Take advantage of any opportunities to have input on matters that affect you.
- Relaxation techniques can help

For further guidance on how to promote your wellbeing and proactively support your mental health at work, have a look at the New Economic Foundation's [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#)

Employee Wellness Plan Template

An Employee Wellness Plan reminds us what we need to do to stay well at work and details what our line managers can do to better support us.

Additionally, it helps us become more conscious of our working style, stressors, and reactions, which we can then share with our manager.

The information in this form will be held confidentially and regularly reviewed by you and your manager together. You only need to provide information that you are comfortable sharing and that is relevant to your role and workplace. This form is not a legal document, but it can help you and your manager agree on how to practically support you in your role and address any health concerns.

It is the employer's responsibility to ensure that the data gathered in this form is kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone without the permission of the member of staff. In some cases, it may be necessary to break confidentiality.

1. What supports your mental wellbeing at work?

Examples include having a sufficient lunch break away from your desk, exercising before or after work or during your lunch break, having enough light and space in the office, and having opportunities to socialise with coworkers.

2. What proactive steps can your manager take to help you maintain your mental wellbeing at work?

Regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible work schedules, and an explanation of broader organisational developments are a few examples.

3. Are there any circumstances at work that make you feel less anxious?

For instance, disagreements at work, organisational changes, looming deadlines, or unforeseen circumstances

4. What potential effects might having poor mental health have on your job?

For instance, you might have trouble deciding what to do first, setting priorities for your work, focusing, feeling sleepy, confused, or experiencing headaches.

5. Do you have any early indicators that we could look for when you begin to have mental health issues?

For instance, altering regular work schedules or avoiding coworkers

6. What kind of assistance could be provided to lessen triggers or assist you in handling the effects?

For example extra catch-up time with your manager, guidance on prioritising workload, flexible working patterns, consider reasonable adjustments

7. Does your manager need to know certain aspects of your unique working style or temperament?

For instance, a need for quiet time for introspection before meetings, a desire for more in-person interactions, or explicit deadlines if you tend to overwork a task.

8. What should we do if we observe early indicators that you are not feeling well?

For instance, have a private conversation about it or get in touch with someone you've asked to be contacted.

9. If you begin to feel unwell at work, what actions can you take? Do we have to do anything to make it easier for them?

For instance, you may want to ask your line manager for assistance or take a quick walk as a break from your desk.

10. Is there anything else that you want to tell us about?

Employee signature	
Date	
Line manager signature	Date
Date to be reviewed	



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**Committed
to quality**

At Healthwatch Barnsley, we aim to provide the best service we can to our community and to make the greatest difference we can to local people.

To help us be the best we can be, every three years we undertake a comprehensive assessment of our work using a tool called the Quality Framework.

This helps us to understand what we are doing well and where we might need to improve.