



Wellbeing Policy

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1. Introduction

Colchester Borough Homes has developed an employee wellbeing policy to manage its obligations to maintain the mental health and wellbeing of all staff.

The aim of this policy is to outline Colchester Borough Homes' commitment to the mental health and wellbeing of employees in its broadest, holistic sense, setting out how the organisation fulfils its legal obligations, the responsibilities of different functions and specialists, and the range of services available to help employees maintain health and wellbeing.

The organisation recognises that wellbeing and performance are linked. Improving employees' ability to handle stress levels and to balance work and home life will ultimately lead to improved individual and organisational performance.

Creating an open and welcoming culture where employees are confident to disclose the state of their mental health is essential.

2. Organisational commitment

Colchester Borough Homes has legal obligations under health and safety legislation to manage risks to the health and safety of employees. In addition to reducing safety risks, this means operating the business in a way that minimises harm to employees' mental health, for example by ensuring that the demands of jobs are not unreasonable and having policies and procedures in place to support individuals experiencing mental ill health at work.

Colchester Borough Homes will put in place measures to prevent and manage risks to employee wellbeing, together with appropriate training and individual support. It will also seek to foster a healthy culture by incorporating these principles into line manager training and running regular initiatives to raise awareness of mental health issues at work.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Organisation

Colchester Borough Homes has a legal duty of care to employees to ensure health at work, as set out in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. The organisation will ensure that its policies and practices reflect this duty and review the operation of these documents at regular intervals.

3.2 Line managers

Line managers will put in place measures to minimise the risks to employee wellbeing, particularly from undue pressure at work. Managers must familiarise themselves with the Health and Safety Executive's stress management standards, and use these to mitigate psychological risks in their teams. For example, managers should ensure that employees understand their role within the team and receive the necessary information and support to do their job. Managers must also familiarise themselves with the organisation's policies on diversity and tackling inappropriate behaviour in order to support staff, for example on bullying and harassment issues.

In particular, line managers must ensure that they take steps to reduce the risks to employee health and wellbeing by:

- ensuring that the right people are recruited to the right jobs and that clear job descriptions are in place;
- keeping employees up to date with developments at work and how these might affect their job and workload;
- ensuring that employees know who to approach with problems concerning their role and how to pursue issues with senior management;
- making sure jobs are designed fairly and that work is allocated appropriately between teams; and
- ensuring that work stations are regularly assessed to ensure that they are appropriate and fit for purpose.

3.3 Human Resources

The HR department will develop organisation-wide 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.

3.4 Occupational health

Occupational health professionals will provide a comprehensive service designed to help employees stay in work, or to return to work, after experiencing mental health problems. This will include preparing medical assessments of individuals' fitness for work following referrals from line managers and the HR department, liaising with GPs and working with individuals to help them to retain employment.

Occupational health professionals will play a critical part in developing rehabilitation plans for employees returning to work after absences related to mental ill health, and work with GPs and line managers on designing jobs and

working environments to ensure that rehabilitation is successful. Line managers and employees can contact the organisation's occupational health service on 0844 842 1755.

If employees 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 HR department. The discussion should cover workload and other aspects of job demands.

A referral to the occupational health team will be made if this is considered appropriate after an employee's initial discussion with his/her manager or the HR department. Discussions between employees and the occupational health professionals are confidential, although the occupational health team is likely to provide a report on the employee's fitness to work, and any recommended adaptations to the working environment, to the HR department.

3.5 Employees

Employees must take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing, by adopting good health behaviours (for example in relation to diet, alcohol consumption and smoking) and informing the organisation if they believe work or the work environment poses a risk to their health. Any health-related information disclosed by an employee during discussions with managers, the HR department or the occupational health service is treated in confidence.

4. Staff wellbeing group and health promotion initiatives

A staff wellbeing group has been running since early 2017. The group meet quarterly and have representatives from across most CBH departments. The group work with HR to manage a wellbeing budget which finances several health promotion initiatives over the year.

Initiatives may include;

- Mental Health activity promotions such as Meditation sessions, Mindfulness, Stress Management awareness, Mental Health First aid training, Book Club etc,
- Physical activity promotion such as Yoga, Running club, Reflexology, Tai Chi etc,
- Lifestyle behaviours, with voluntary health screening (for example in Five Ways to Wellbeing session, cholesterol and blood pressure checks, smoking, alcohol and drugs),
- Training of Wellbeing Champions,

Employees will also be encouraged to establish their own clubs and groups designed to foster wellbeing, for example the running club and lunchtime walking club.

Other measures available to support employees in maintaining health and wellbeing include

- subsidised gym/sports facilities at Leisure World;
- special leave arrangements;
- opportunities for flexible working;
- support for workers with disabilities;
- the organisation's grievance policy.

4.1 Mindful Employer

In January 2016, Colchester Borough Homes signed up to the Mindful Employer Scheme. By becoming a Mindful Employer, we are committed to providing support and information to our employees with mental health issues. Part of this commitment involves educating staff members and raising awareness of mental health issues. By busting the myths around the subject, we hope to reduce the stigma that sometimes surrounds mental health. Colchester Borough Homes is required to evidence progress against these commitments annually.

5. Stress management

Stress places immense demands on employees' physical and mental health and well-being, impacting their behaviour, performance and relationships with colleagues. It's a major cause of long-term absence from work and knowing how to manage the many different signs of stress is key.

The Health and Safety Executive's definition of stress is "The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". Understanding the difference between pressure and stress is essential to enable employees and managers to determine the severity of particular hazards, situations or events, to decide if a person or team is under more pressure than usual.

Stress in itself is not an illness, but prolonged exposure to excessive pressures can lead to psychological conditions such as anxiety or depression. Employees are encouraged not to hesitate in seeking support at any time if they are experiencing stress, or feel they are at risk of stress. Employees should approach their line manager for support in the first instance, but can approach Human Resources if they feel they cannot approach their manager.

To assist with managing work related stress, the HSE have developed the Stress Management Standards. This approach requires managers, employees and their representatives to work together to improve certain areas of work, described in the Standards, which have a positive effect on employee wellbeing.

These standards are based on research into those aspects of management of work directly linked to mental ill-health, including factors concerned with the design, organisation and management of work, and advice on the six main areas identified as having potential to contribute to workplace stress.

These are:

- Demands – are employees able to cope with the demands of the job?
- Control – do employees have some say in the way they do their job?
- Support – do employees have adequate information and support?
- Relationships – are employees subject to unacceptable behaviours e.g. bullying?
- Role – do employees understand their role and responsibilities?
- Change – are employees kept informed during period of organisational change?

Managers are expected to be consistent in their approach to supporting employees. In order to do so, a Stress Risk Assessment has been developed to allow employees to provide details of stressors against the Stress Management Standards. Once the Stress Risk Assessment has been completed, managers should develop an action plan from the results and refer employees to relevant support services where necessary.

Both the Stress Risk Assessment and the action plan template can be accessed via Assure.

6. Training and communications

Line managers and employees will regularly discuss individual training needs to ensure that employees 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.

An E-Learning Stress Management module and other resources are available to all staff through MyLearning.

Managers and employees are encouraged to participate in communication/feedback exercises, including stress audits and staff surveys. All employees 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, electronic communications and organisation-wide methods. Colchester Borough Homes will ensure that

structures exist to give employees regular feedback on their performance, and for them to raise concerns.

7. Confidentiality

Line managers, human resources and occupational health must ensure that personal data, including information about individuals' health, is handled in accordance with the GDPR, Data Protection Act 2018 and the Data Protection Policies of CBH.

8. Related documents

- Short term and frequent sickness absence Policy
- Long term absence policy.

Document control sheet

Title	CBH Wellbeing policy - November 2018					
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1	New	November 2018	New policy