

# Employee Wellbeing Policy

---

Date of adoption: 01.09.2020 Updated 01.02.2022\*  
Date to be reviewed: 01.09.2022

## Introduction

This policy applies to all employees of Spencer Academies Trust and the Trust Central Team. The Trust Scheme of Delegation outlines the delegated responsibility and levels of authority for managing HR matters and for decision making related to this policy.

The Trust recognises its duty of care and responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its employees and understands that wellbeing and performance are linked. The Trust are committed to fostering a culture of co-operation, trust and mutual respect, where all individuals are treated with dignity, and can be successful in their roles.

This Policy sets out the Trust's commitment to employee health, the responsibilities of managers and others for maintaining:

- psychological and physical health;
- healthy promotion initiatives;
- communication and training on health issues;
- a range of support available for the maintenance of mental health;
- a range of employee benefits;
- an organisational commitment to handling individual issues.

The Trust recognise that work-related stress has a negative impact on employees' wellbeing and that it can take many forms and so needs to be carefully analysed and addressed at Trust and school level. The Trust are committed to balancing the needs of employees and the Trust's educational, business and operational needs.

We encourage our academies to follow the Five Ways to Wellbeing:

- **Connect** – with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships;
- **Be active** – find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life;
- **Keep learning** – new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence;
- **Give to others** – even the smallest act can count whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word;
- **Be mindful** – more awareness of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you.

Throughout this policy, 'Principal' refers to the person outlined in the table of delegated authority as set out in the Trust Scheme of Delegation in force at the date of adoption of this policy. This Policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time. Advice can be sought from the HR contact in school or the Trust HR Team as appropriate to the circumstances.

Author: SAT central HR Team \* inclusion of Health Assured

## Responsibilities

The Trust 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. We will ensure that its policies and practices reflect this duty and review the operation of these documents at regular intervals.

In addition to reducing safety risks, we will operate the business in a way that minimises harm to employees' mental health, for example by ensuring that the demands of jobs are reasonable and having policies and procedures in place to support employees experiencing mental ill health at work.

### The Trust will

- take overall responsibility for implementing this Policy;
- adopt the appropriate policies in respect of 'family friendly' employment, including consideration of flexible working arrangements, part-time working, etc. where this can be implemented without detriment to the operational requirements of our academies;
- ensure clear procedures are in place that will minimise levels of stress caused to employees both in their general working environment and when following informal support and formal procedures;
- ensure that employees' roles and responsibilities are clearly defined;
- seek to foster a mentally healthy culture by incorporating these principles into line manager training and running regular initiatives to raise awareness of mental health and other wellbeing issues at work.

The Principal is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the procedure to ensure that it is communicated to employees and that it is applied consistently.

### The Principal will

- create reasonable opportunities for employees to discuss concerns, and enable employees to do so in a supportive environment;
- pay attention to any indication of changes in employee performance or behaviour and promote sympathetic alertness to employees who show signs of being under stress;
- follow agreed procedures when there are concerns or absence due to work-related stress and other mental-health problems;
- ensure that contact is maintained with absent employees as appropriate and that a return-to-work procedure is established that is supportive of employees;
- carry out a timely risk assessment, where necessary, and especially when concerns have been raised;
- carefully plan and agree work-life balance solutions including part time and flexible working practices where possible and appropriate;
- ensure that the right people are recruited to the right jobs and that a good match is obtained between individuals recruited and the job description/person specification;
- make sure jobs are designed fairly and that work is allocated appropriately between teams;
- demonstrate commitment, via systems and protocols for employees maintaining a good work-life balance, and ensure that such practices are communicated to all employees;
- manage pressures, which may affect employees, including the impact of workload pressures, and anticipate likely problems, taking action to reduce the effects of these pressures where possible.

## Line Managers

Line managers will put in place measures to minimise the risks to employee wellbeing. For example, line managers should ensure that employees understand their role within the team and receive the necessary information and support from managers and team members to do their job. Line managers must also familiarise themselves with the Trust's policies on equality and diversity and tackling inappropriate behaviour in order to support employees.

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

- creating reasonable opportunities for employees to discuss concerns;
- paying attention to any indication of changes in employees performance or behaviour and promote sympathetic alertness to employees who show signs of being under stress;
- following agreed procedures when there are concerns or absence due to work related stress and other mental-health problems;
- carrying out a risk assessment, where necessary, and especially when concerns have been raised;
- seeking agreement from the employee for a referral to the Trust Occupational Health Provider, signpost Health Assured counselling and wellbeing support or suggest support through the Access to Work Mental Health Services. If this is required and/or appropriate in the circumstances;
- keeping employees in the team 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;
- ensuring that any necessary work stations assessments are completed as appropriate;
- encouraging employees to discuss wellbeing at their professional performance review or other meetings;
- take action in the interests of all colleagues where performance by an employee may cause stress to others;
- ensure welfare and return to work meetings are held and complete and a Return to Work form, ensure notes of welfare meetings and where required complete an individual Wellness Action Plan (see below).

## Employees

Employees must take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing by adopting good health behaviours (for example in relation to diet, exercise and general health) and informing the Academy 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 line managers or the Occupational Health service is treated in confidence and only shared with the Principal, senior leaders (as appropriate) and HR.

### Employees should:

- seek support or help when they think they are experiencing a problem at the earliest opportunity to ensure effective strategies can be implemented;
- act in a manner that respects the health and safety needs of themselves or others whilst in the workplace;
- ensure awareness of the Trust's policies and procedures relevant to employee wellbeing;
- assist in the development of good practice and ensure that they do not, through their actions or omissions, create unnecessary work for themselves or colleagues;
- treat colleagues and all other persons with consideration, respect and dignity;
- if required, attend appointments with Occupational Health or other medical appointment/examination by a registered medical practitioner nominated by the Academy.

## Support mechanisms

### Training and communication

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. This will be particularly important prior to, and during, periods of organisational change.

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 Trust-wide methods. The Trust will ensure that structures exist to give employees regular feedback on their performance, and for them to raise concerns.

The Trust will consider special communication media during periods of organisational change.

### Occupational Health support

Line managers can seek advice from the HR contact in school with regard to a referral to the Occupational Health service for advice on managing issues regarding work-related stress and wellbeing. The Occupational Health provider delivers a comprehensive service designed to help employees stay in work, or to return to work, after experiencing mental health problems. This includes preparing medical assessments of individuals' fitness for work following referrals from line managers and HR, liaising with GPs and working with individuals to help them to retain employment.

Occupational Health professionals can aid 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.

A referral to Occupational Health will be made if this is considered appropriate after an employee's initial discussion with their line manager. It may be instigated promptly where work place stress is a fact or where there are concerns regarding mental health. Discussions between employees and the Occupational Health professionals are confidential, although the Occupational Health team will provide a report on the employee's fitness to work, and any recommended adaptations to the working environment, to the Academy.

Counselling is provided through Health Assured in the first instance where this has been exhausted and it is deemed appropriate further counselling can be provided through the Trust's Occupational Health Provider. Both provide a confidential, independent services using professionally qualified counsellors.

### Health Assured

SAT has partnered with Health Assured to provide a confidential employee assistance programme (EAP) designed to help deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting an employee's home life or work life, health and general wellbeing. The service provides a complete support network that offers expert advice and compassionate guidance 24/7, covering a wide range of issues.

Health Assured offers cover for employees and their immediate family members, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year:

- Life support: including structured telephone counselling or face-to-face counselling sessions (employees only).
- Legal information.
- Bereavement support.

Author: SAT central HR Team      \* inclusion of Health Assured

- Medical information.
- CBT online.

In addition to the counselling support and advice, they also offer a virtual library of wellbeing information. To find out more information on what services Health Assured can provide, please visit [www.healthassuredeap.com](http://www.healthassuredeap.com) or contact 0800 028 0871.

Health e-Hub Mobile App offers access to holistic health and wellbeing support at the tap of a finger anywhere and anytime.

### Access to Work Mental Health Services

Support can be provided from the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service. This is a free confidential service provided by the Department for Work and Pensions for employees with depression, anxiety, stress or other mental health issues affecting their work. Confidential helpline 0300 456 8114. [www.remploy.co.uk/mentalhealth](http://www.remploy.co.uk/mentalhealth)

### Mediation

A mediation service could also be supportive in order to assist employees to return to normal working relationships. This could be accessed via the Trust HR Team, Counselling Service or other agency, e.g. ACAS. Where this service is appropriate it will be discussed with the employees affected by the situation. Please seek advice from the Trust HR Team.

### Other measures

SAT has developed a number of employee support guides including:

- Managing Stress
- Menopause
- Domestic abuse

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

- procedures for reporting and handling inappropriate behaviour;
- leave of absence arrangements;
- opportunities for requesting flexible working;
- support for workers with disabilities;
- the Trust grievance and whistleblowing policies;
- the EAP programme;
- a stress management risk assessment.
- Access to work Scheme - <https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

### Spencer Academies Trust - Wellness Action Plan

A Wellness Action Plan (WAP) reminds us what we need to do to stay well at work and details what lines managers can follow to better support employees. It also helps employees to develop an awareness of their working style, stress triggers and responses, and enables them to communicate these to their manager.

In cases where someone has had to take time off as a result of a mental health problem, a WAP can be used as part of the return-to-work process to set out what steps they and their manager plan to take to support recovery.

The information in the WAP form will be held confidentially and regularly reviewed by the member of staff and their manager together. The member of staff only needs to provide information that they are comfortable sharing

Author: SAT central HR Team \* inclusion of Health Assured

and that relate to their role. This form is not mandatory but it will help employees and managers to agree, together, how to practically support the member of staff in their role and address any health needs.

It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that the data gathered in this form will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone without the permission of the employee.

1. What helps you stay mentally healthy at work? (For example: taking an adequate lunch break away from your desk, getting some exercise before or after work or in your lunch break, light and space in the office, opportunities to get to know colleagues).
2. What can your line manager do to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work? (For example: regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments).
3. Are there any situations at work that can trigger poor mental health for you? (For example: conflict at work, organisational change, tight deadlines, something not going to plan).
4. How experiencing poor mental health might affects your work? (For example: you may find it difficult to make decisions, struggle to prioritise work tasks, have difficulty with concentration, drowsiness, confusion or headaches).
5. Are there any early warning signs that we might notice when you are starting to experience poor mental health? (For example: changes in normal working patterns, withdrawing from colleagues).
6. What support could be put in place to minimise triggers or help you to manage the impact? (For example: extra catch-up time with your manager, guidance on prioritising workload, flexible working patterns, consider reasonable adjustments).
7. Are there elements of your individual working style or temperament that it is worth your line manager being aware of? (For example: a preference for more face-to-face or more email contact, a need for quiet reflection time prior to meetings or creative tasks, negotiation on deadlines before they are set, having access to a mentor for questions, clear deadlines if you have a tendency towards perfectionism or overworking a task, tendency to have particularly high or low energy in the morning or in the afternoon).
8. If we notice early warning signs that you are feeling mentally unwell, what should we do? (For example: talk to me discreetly about it, contact someone that I have asked to be contacted).
9. What steps can you take if you start to feel mentally unwell at work? Is there anything we need to do to facilitate them? (For example: you might like to take a break from your desk and go for a short walk, or ask your line manager for support)
10. Who would you like us to contact if we have concerns about your wellbeing?
11. Is there anything else that you would like to share?