

# Guide to creating a mental health/wellbeing policy

**Organisations can vary considerably in how they tackle mental health. Ideally, an approach should be both proactive and strategic, while identifying and managing risks.**

Building an effective organisational framework requires both good leadership and people management, with clear policies to ensure staff receive consistent support. Despite this, only 33% of employers have a written policy or guidance, and less than half of employers have a proactive wellbeing strategy<sup>1</sup>.

This guide is designed to help you create a mental health policy – based on Mental Health at Work's 2019 commitment and Stephenson Farmer's mental health standards from 'Thriving at work' – and suggests six elements to underpin any approach, strategy or policy related to mental health.



The 6 coloured touchpoints below correspond to various sections in the following policy example. Some sections may correspond to more than one touchpoint.

**1**

Produce, implement and communicate a mental health at work plan

**2**

Develop mental health awareness

**3**

Encourage open conversations about mental health and support available

**4**

Provide your employees with good working conditions and healthy work/life balance

**5**

Promote effective people management

**6**

Routinely monitor employee mental health and wellbeing



## BEFORE YOU START...

- Understand current mental health and wellbeing concerns within your business by reviewing available data such as absence trends and employee surveys.
- Look at the Mental Health Standards from the 'Thriving at work' report and determine how you currently compare against these.
- See how Unum can help [here](#)>

## KEY

These are suggestions for inclusion in your mental health/wellbeing policy – separated into:

**E** ESSENTIAL

**O** OPTIONAL

# Mental health policy



## INTRODUCTION

Promoting and protecting the mental wellbeing of our staff is important. Mental wellbeing in the workplace is relevant to all staff and everyone can contribute to improved mental wellbeing at work. This policy is created to support a fair and inclusive workplace which promotes positive wellbeing attitudes and a proactive approach.

## Purpose and objective

We aim to create a workplace environment that promotes the mental health and wellbeing of all employees.

Other potential policies to take into account (depending on the person's circumstances)

Sickness absence

Compassionate leave

Reasonable adjustments

## INITIATIVES

**Mental health first aiders:** [Mental Health First Aid annual training](#) for champions.

**Training/workshops:** [Unum Line Manager and Staff Training](#) programme communicated through 'x' platform.

**E-learning:** [Unum online wellbeing modules](#) available through the intranet.

**Wellbeing support:** [Unum Wellbeing Calendar](#) – sign up to the newsletter to receive regular updates.

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**Make your commitment – let your staff know why you're doing this**

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## Think about:

- What are you trying to achieve?
  - Set measurable goals and objectives
  - Detail actions of how you will achieve them
- Create a tagline that you can communicate to all staff that summarises your aims.
- Consider other related policies – eg. sickness absence process, compassionate leave, special leave.
- [ACAS Supporting Mental Health in the Workplace >](#)

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**List any initiatives you may have within the business.**



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## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL RESOURCES

Provider	Resources	Available to	Details
<b>Unum</b>	Group Income Protection Line manager training Absence management support Resilience training Wellbeing calendar	Line manager, HR, Staff	
<b>LifeWorks by Morneau Sheppel (via Unum)<sup>2</sup></b>	EAP	All staff	See below
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24/7 helpline: Immediate and confidential access to qualified counsellors and experts, supporting your people on a broad range of topics whenever they need it</li> <li>• Financial assessments: Enabling people to feel in control of their finances with tailored recommendations to improve an individual's overall financial wellbeing</li> <li>• Mental wellbeing support: Providing access to online modules, guidance and localised support to help employees receive professional care specific to their needs</li> <li>• Health and fitness plans: Custom workout plans and nutritional advice to help employees reach their health and fitness goals</li> <li>• Life event resources: Guidance on key life events such as moving home, becoming a parent, elder care or starting a new job</li> <li>• Legal assistance: Comprehensive advice for businesses from law experts, taking the strain away from potentially complex legal issues</li> <li>• Line manager support: Helping managers on all aspects of their management role, including a referral service and access to advice from professional consultants</li> </ul>		
<b>OH</b>	Fitness for work Health screening	Line manager and HR	
<b>Help@Hand (from Unum)<sup>2</sup></b>	Provides employees with support for their health and wellbeing	All staff	See below

Help@hand is a digital health and wellbeing service from Unum – completely confidential and will provide employees and their family\* access to five health and wellbeing services via one easy-to-use app including:

- Remote GP: Unlimited video consultations with a UK-based GP, 24/7
- Physiotherapy: personalised treatment plans and up to 8 consultations including an initial assessment
- Mental health support: an assigned therapist throughout and up to 8 consultations including an initial assessment
- Medical second opinions: Access to UK-based private consultants – following a final diagnosis. 2 consultations per year
- Life, money & wellbeing support (integrated Employee Assistance Programme)

\* Employees and their partner (if applicable) will be able to access all Help@hand services. Children are eligible to access the remote GP and medical second opinion services up until their 18th birthday or 24th if in full-time education. Children over 18 will be able to access the Life, money and wellbeing confidential helpline and other online resources.

**E** **Detail your providers and what support they provide:**  
 Provider  
 What do they provide?  
 Who can access?  
 More detail – eg. how to access, links to intranet, referral details, example of when this might be appropriate



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**What support is available to support employees to stay at work or reasonable adjustments to be implemented, and who provides it?**

See [Unum absence management support](#) >

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

#### Manager

Managers have a duty of care to their staff and must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of their team members.

#### HR

Fostering employee wellbeing is good for people and the organisation. Promoting wellbeing can help prevent stress and create positive working environments

### CULTURE AND WORKLOAD

#### HSE stress assessment

Workplace stress can be one of the major causes of both short-term and long-term sickness absence. Employers have a legal duty to protect employees from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it.

#### Reasonable adjustments

Employees with a mental health condition may be disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010, and will be protected from discrimination during employment. Unum can help suggest reasonable adjustments for employees with disabilities. Please note what is 'reasonable' depends on the circumstances, the nature of the disability and the resources of the team/division.

#### Early intervention

Early intervention can help stop a short-term issue from becoming a longer-term problem.

Unum can support and guide Income Protection customers if a wellbeing check has identified an employee who is still at work, but struggling to cope - or from day one of absence.

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**This can be as high level or as granular as needed.**

Detail the responsibilities that each stakeholder has - eg, manager, HR, employees, health and safety, wellbeing manager.

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**HSE stress assessment**

If you have fewer than five employees you don't have to write anything down. But if you have five or more employees, the risk assessment must be written down by law.

See [HSE's stress risk assessment](#) >

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Consider support for those in different situations and what alternative support they may need – eg. caring responsibilities, bereavement, ill family member, work-related stress. See [ACAS – absence from work >](#)

### Wellness Action Plan

Use the wellness action plan to help managers and staff communicate effectively and work together if an employee has a condition with recurring symptoms.

### Other causes of absence

If an employee's health and wellbeing is impacted by other factors, such as caring responsibilities, financial worries or work-related stress, source extra support from external expertise or if appropriate, on the company intranet.

### SELF HARM AND SUICIDE

If an employee is at work and discloses suicidal intentions, and is deemed an immediate risk, do not leave them on their own, continue to talk to them, make them feel comfortable in a safe private space, call 999 or take them A&E.

Out of hours: Check for emergency contact or ask employee for contact details. You can also contact the Samaritans on their behalf.

Use phrases like: "Given what you have told me I have concerns about your safety and its important that I get you immediate help – your safety is the most important thing right now"

[Samaritans - emergency support >](#)

[BITC - In Crisis >](#)

If someone is talking about suicide with no immediate intent/if there is not an immediate threat to safety: Signpost the employee to their GP, NHS Support (Community mental health nurse, treating practitioner). Continued communication is important – arrange regular follow-ups with the employee and discuss reasonable adjustments if required.

Line manager support can include, debrief with HR, peer-to-peer support, Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

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This tool can help you to work out ways to promote your staff's health at work.

See [Unum's wellness action plan >](#)

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While suicide can be something many don't want to acknowledge, some people may experience these symptoms as part of their mental ill-health.

Although an optional part of the policy, it is something that you should consider.

The [wellness action plan](#) may be a useful tool here, as you will already have relevant next of kin contact details.

Consider how best to raise the issues – whether the individual is at work or calling in from home, and whether the concerns are raised out of hours.

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Make sure you include useful contacts for further questions or help at the end of your policy

### REVIEW AND MONITORING

This policy should be reviewed annually. As part of the mental health plan, monitor usage rates of the EAP (or other appropriate support), attendance and feedback of training sessions, sickness absence data and employee engagement surveys. Inform employees where the mental health plan and results from the above monitoring can be found, such as the company intranet, or an email bulletin.

#### Any questions?

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#### How and when will you monitor the policy success?

Objective indicators: absence data, staff survey, utilisation rates.

How would you share the review and outcomes with your staff?

[Unum Mental Health Review >](#)

[Thriving at Work Stevenson Farmer Review >](#)

[How to implement the thriving at work standards >](#)

We hope you have found this guide useful. If you have any further questions, please contact [pathway@unum.co.uk](mailto:pathway@unum.co.uk)

Please note all the information in the above example guide are suggestions only. Unum cannot be held responsible for the content of third-party websites or for any of the outcomes for any processes we recommend.

1. CIPD health and wellbeing report 2020 2. This is a non-contractual benefit which can be withdrawn or changed by Unum at any time. The service does not form part of any Unum insurance policy and there is no additional cost or increase in premium as a result of Unum making this benefit available.

Remote GP, mental health support, physiotherapy and medical second opinion services are provided through Square Health Ltd. Registered in England and Wales Number 07054181. Crown House, William Street, Windsor SL4 1AT

Employee Assistance Programme is provided by LifeWorks. Lifeworks by Morneau Shepell is a trading name of Work Angel Technology Limited.

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