

Stress, Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

1. Introduction

Ore Valley Housing Association (OVHA) is committed to developing a culture that cares about our employees' health and maintain a working environment that promotes the health, safety and wellbeing of the organisation and its employees.

2. Aims of the Policy

- To take reasonable steps to assess the risks and reduce the likelihood of employees suffering from work-related stress and other adverse mental health conditions.
- Raise awareness of stress and mental health and support staff in building their capacity for coping with pressure and stress
- To develop and promote an open culture of mental health and physical wellbeing awareness, communication and risk management.
- To encourage colleagues to talk openly about how they are feeling and support each other

3. Principles of the Policy

OVHA is committed to promoting and supporting the wellbeing of all of its employees, to create an inclusive culture which focusses on prevention, and where issues are identified, minimised and managed before they have a detrimental impact on employees. Please refer to [the Equality & Diversity Policy](#) for more information.

OVHA recognises that a rounded approach to employee wellbeing can:

- foster a thriving workforce, which can deliver on its objectives
- achieve increased employee engagement, productivity, retention and recruitment
- reduce stigma against wellbeing issues, and overall reduced sickness absence and presenteeism.

All matters relating to an employee's wellbeing will be treated in confidence, except where it may be necessary to break confidentiality to preserve the wellbeing of employees.

OVHA recognises that the diversity of its workforce may give rise to different wellbeing needs.

OVHA is committed to ensuring that employees have access to a variety of support services and will signpost to appropriate professional help.

OVHA recognises that the environmental conditions in which employees work may have an impact on their wellbeing.

4. Definition

- **Health:** "A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or infirmity." (World Health Organisation)
- **Occupational Health:** "...the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations by preventing departures from health, controlling risks and the adaption of work to people and people to their jobs". (International Labour Organisation ILO/WHO 1950)
- **Wellbeing:** "...a state of being with others, where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully to pursue one's goals, and where one enjoys a satisfactory quality of life." (Economic and Social Research

Council)

- **Stress** “In a medical or biological context stress is a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Stresses can be external (from the environment, psychological, or social situations) or internal (illness, or from a medical procedure).” (William C. Shiel, MD)
- The HSE’s formal definition of **work-related stress** is “The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work”.
- Sutherland -v- Hatton (2002) pronounced that the legal test for cases of alleged ill-health caused by occupational stress is “*whether this kind of harm to this particular employee was reasonably foreseeable*”.
- Barber -v- Somerset Council (2004) concluded that an employer was only fulfilling [their] duty of care if [they] “*kept actively and reasonably up to date with developments in Health & Safety and guidance on stress*”.

OVHA will aim to achieve continual improvement in the area of ‘employee wellbeing’ which, in its widest sense, will be considered to include a range of employee health, welfare and wellbeing topics

5. Roles & Responsibilities

OVHA is responsible for ensuring all leaders within the organisation are positive role models, championing and shaping a culture where the importance of wellbeing is recognised and supported.

OVHA will aim to develop a system and culture of supervision, teamwork and staff interaction which aims to support and protect all employees and take a proactive approach to reducing stress and promoting mental health and wellbeing awareness in the workplace.

OVHA will aim to achieve continual improvement in the area of ‘employee wellbeing’ which, in its widest sense, will be considered to include a range of employee health, welfare and wellbeing topics. For further roles and responsibilities please refer to [Wellbeing Roles and Responsibilities Guidance](#)

6. Training

We have two qualified 1st Aid Mental Health members of staff to help support staff who feel their mental health is impacting on their day to day life. This training is refreshed every 3 years. Mental health awareness training will be provided at induction of new staff, with awareness training being provided every 3 years to all staff.

7. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Ore Valley Housing Association is fully committed to equal opportunities and ensuring equality of treatment for all stakeholders, employees, customers and suppliers without discrimination or prejudice based on an individuals protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act as follows :-

- age
- disability
- gender identity¹
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

¹ The inclusion of gender identity as a characteristic goes beyond the confines of the Equalities Act which only recognises gender reassignment as a protected characteristic. This is referred to in our [Equality, Diversity & inclusion Policy](#).

- The Association will always seek to follow best practice in order to ensure that the above group needs are understood, considered and accommodated wherever possible.

8. Review

This Policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier in line with regulatory or legislative guidance/changes or good practice guidelines.

December 2023
Health & Safety Control Manual
Version 3, Revision 8