

Mental Health Policy

Purpose and Scope

As a Company we recognise the importance of supporting the health and wellbeing of all our colleagues both mentally and physically and we are committed to implementing a mental health in the workplace programme across the A.F. Blakemore group that engages, enables, and supports all colleagues.

The Company understands the role it has in ensuring that health and safety legislation is adhered to. The Company undertakes to create a safe workplace where risks to mental health and wellbeing are limited as far as possible and mental health discussions are open and encouraged.

Mental health problems and stress can affect anyone at anytime, regardless of their position in the Company. This policy applies equally to all colleagues.

The implementation of this policy will also be supported by other policies e.g., Absence Management Procedure, Dignity at Work Policy and Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

Key Principles

- 1. To tackle workplace practices and behaviours that may negatively impact on mental wellbeing and to develop strategies that support and promote mental wellbeing.**

We aim to create and promote a workplace environment that supports and promotes the mental wellbeing of all colleagues.

We understand that certain working conditions and practices can negatively affect colleagues' mental wellbeing, including aspects of work (processes, workload and tasks), and environmental and social conditions that have the potential for psychological as well as physical harm.

Policy actions:

- Give all colleagues information on and increase their awareness of mental wellbeing.
- Provide opportunities for colleagues to look after their mental wellbeing, for example through physical activities, nutrition, de-stressing activities, and social events.
- Offer colleagues flexible working arrangements that promote/support their mental wellbeing.
- Give all colleagues the opportunity to influence how they do their jobs, scope for varying their working conditions as far as possible, and opportunities to develop and fully utilise their skills.
- Set colleagues realistic targets that do not require them to work unreasonable hours.
- Ensure all colleagues have clearly defined job descriptions, objectives and responsibilities and provide them with good management support, appropriate training, and adequate resources to do their job.
- Encourage inclusivity, managing conflict effectively and ensuring the workplace is respectful, enjoyable, and free from bullying and harassment, discrimination, and racism.
- Establish and maintain good two-way communication to ensure staff engagement and involvement, particularly during periods of organisational change or operating demands.

2. To develop a culture based on trust, support and mutual dignity and respect within the workplace.

We aim to create and promote a culture where colleagues can talk openly about their job and mental health concerns/problems and to report difficulties without fear of discrimination or repercussions.

Policy actions:

- Give non-judgmental and proactive support to individual colleagues who experience mental health concerns/problems.
- Deal sympathetically with colleagues suffering from mental health problems due to circumstances outside the workplace, and who consequently find it difficult to do their jobs effectively.
- Provide information and raising awareness about mental wellbeing.
- Provide opportunities for colleagues to look after their mental wellbeing.
- Promote policies and practices that promote wellbeing.
- Offering assistance, advice and support to colleagues who experience a mental health problem while in employment.
- Support colleagues returning to work after a period of absence due to mental health problems
- Give new colleagues a comprehensive induction programme providing an understanding of the company, its values and culture, the established policies and procedures and the role they are expected to carry out.

3. To provide support and assistance for colleagues experiencing mental health concerns/difficulties

Policy actions:

- Ensure colleagues experiencing mental health problems are treated fairly and consistently and are not made to feel guilty about their problems.
- Encourage colleagues to consult their GP/Mental Health First Aider or other support network.
- Investigate the contribution of working conditions/practices and other organisational factors to mental ill health and remedy this where possible/escalate where necessary.
- In cases of long-term sickness absence, put in place, where possible, a phased/gradual, supported return to work.
- Make every effort to identify suitable alternative employment, in full discussion with the colleague, where a return to the same job is not possible due to identified risks or other factors.
- Treat all matters relating to individual colleagues and their mental health problems in the strictest of confidence.
- Provide training in responsive leadership and management practices, including those related to health and safety and stress management.
- Provide adequate resources to enable / support managers to implement the Company's agreed mental health and wellbeing policy.
- Maintain the investment in and availability of Mental Health First Aiders across the group to ensure we have the appropriate level of support available to colleagues.

Advice for Managers Engaging with Colleagues

If a manager believes, or is informed that, a colleague is suffering from mental ill health, they must be spoken to as soon as possible to discuss what support and adjustments they may need.

Like any health condition, mental ill health can be a sensitive and personal issue. Some colleagues may feel able to talk about their mental health issues but often colleagues might not feel confident talking about it, so a manager starting a conversation may help.

If the colleague has regular one-to-ones this may be a good time to start a conversation about any concerns. If the colleague does not have regular one-to-ones, the manager should approach the colleague for a wellbeing conversation to gain an understanding of how they are feeling. It should always be in a private and confidential setting where the colleague feels at ease. Questions should be simple, open and non-judgmental to give the colleague opportunity to explain how they feel in their own words. A good starting point for a manager is the following guide:

- Avoid interruptions – switch off phones, ensure colleagues can't walk in and interrupt
- Ask simple, open, non-judgmental questions
- Avoid judgmental or patronising responses, thinking about tone of voice
- Speak calmly
- Maintain good eye contact
- Listen actively and carefully
- Encourage the colleague to talk
- Show empathy and understanding
- Be prepared for some silences and be patient
- Focus on the person, not the condition
- Avoid trying to guess what symptoms someone might have and how these might affect their ability to do their job.
- Ensure the colleague is signposted to where they can get the right help and support.
- Remember, mental health conditions can sometimes last a lifetime for some colleagues, and they must manage their own conditions, whilst the manager explores ways to support them at work.

Company has a responsibility to:

- To promote conversations about mental health and wellbeing within the business whilst removing any stigmas.
- To support and invest in Mental Health First Aiders
- Train and develop managers in becoming more aware and competent in supporting colleagues who are experiencing problems with their mental health.

Managers have a responsibility to:

- Monitor the workplace, identify hazards and risks, and take steps to eliminate or reduce these as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Ensure good communication between management and colleagues.
- Assist and support colleagues who are known to have mental health problems or are experiencing stress outside of work – for example due to bereavement or separation.
- Ensure colleagues are provided with the resources and training required to carry out their job.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that colleagues are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that colleagues are not overworking, and monitor holidays to ensure colleagues are rested and are taking their full entitlement.
- Ensure colleagues are provided with meaningful development opportunities.

Colleagues have a responsibility to:

- Raise issues of concern and seek help from their line manager or a Mental Health First Aider or use the GroceryAid, Colleague Assistance Programme.
- Consider opportunities for counselling if recommended.

Help and Support Available:

Support Service	Contact Information	Further Information
Employee Assistance Programme GroceryAid	Call: 08088 021 122 www.groceryaid.org.uk	24/7 confidential helpline Services include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial help, including benefits and debt advice • Emotional support and advice • Health and wellbeing support • Relationship support • Work and career advice • Legal advice • Carers and disability support
Occupational Health	Mobile: 07825 901201 Telephone: 0121 568 2937 RBangerh@afblakemore.co.uk	Raj K Bangerh AF Blakemore - Occupational Health Advisor
Mental Health First Aiders	Telephone: 0121 568 2905 https://www.afblakemore.com/docs/content-new/AFB_Mental_Health_First_Aiders.pdf	Mental Health First Aiders across the business
HR Team	Telephone: 0121 568 2905 sharedservices@afblakemore.co.uk	HR Shared Services Team
Crisis Team	<u>Midlands</u> https://www.blackcountryhealthcare.nhs.uk/contact-us/help-crisis <u>Wales</u> https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/AdultsandOlderPeople/MentalHealth/AdultMentalHealthSupport.aspx	NHS localised support services for mental health. You will need to google the Crisis Team located in your the specific area of the country where the colleague works. Examples of Crisis Team contacts for the Midlands and Wales have been provided.
Mind	Telephone: 0300 123 3393 Text: 86463 www.mind.org.uk	Local call rates (9.00am – 6.00pm, Mon – Fri) Information on types of mental health issues and where to get help, medication, and alternative treatments. Wide range of services related to mental health. Also acts as an umbrella organisation to many independent local Mind organisations providing different services throughout the country e.g., therapy services, self-help groups and alternative therapies.
Rethink	Telephone: 0300 5000 927	Local call rates (9.30am – 4.00pm) Practical help and information on issues such as the Mental Health Act, community care, benefits, debt, criminal justice and carer's rights.
Samaritans	Telephone: 116 123 Email: jo@samaritans.org www.samaritans.org	Freephone 24/7 Provide emotional support for people 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They allow people to talk about feelings of distress and despair and are confidential and offer non-judgemental support.
Saneline	Telephone: 0300 304 7000 www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/helpline	Provide out of hours mental health and emotional support and information to anyone affected by mental ill health including family, friends, and carers.
Anxiety UK	www.anxietyuk.org.uk	Aims to support everyone affected by anxiety. Offers talking therapies and self-help groups.

Bereavement Advice Centre	www.bereavementadvice.org	Supports and advises people after a death in England and Wales. Their website and helpline provide help with the wide range of practical issues that need to be managed after bereavement as well as signposting to other support.
Citizens Advice Bureau	Telephone: 03444 111 444 www.citizensadvice.org.uk	National Phone Service Free, independent information and advice for people on money, legal, consumer, housing, and other problems. Website is searchable for local bureaus and has a dedicated web chat service.
My Black Dog	www.myblack.co.uk	As a unique mental health charity, My Black Dog was founded on the motto "talk to someone who gets it". Our goal is to put people in touch with others who have lived experiences of struggling with mental health because those people understand what you are going through.
Yu Life	Download the app on your phone www.yulife.link/afblakemore and enter your employee number to register	The YuLife wellbeing app rewards you for healthy activities such as walking and meditating.

Mental Health First Aider Q&As

1. How do I request to speak to a Mental Health First Aider?

There are a few ways you can reach out to a Mental Health First Aider:

- First aider list: Contact a Mental Health First Aider directly. Access the list [here](#)
- Call HR Shared Services on 0121-568-2905 and they will ensure a Mental Health First Aider calls you.

2. I don't have a diagnosed mental health condition; can I still speak to a Mental Health First Aider?

- Yes, the aim of Mental Health First Aid is to recognise signs and symptoms of poor mental health before it becomes a diagnosable condition. No matter how minor you think the issue may be, Mental Health First Aiders are trained to listen and provide support in a non-judgmental way.

3. I feel like if I speak to a Mental Health First Aider they will think I'm being silly and say my problem is not that big. Is this true?

- No, this is not true. Mental Health First Aiders are trained to be non-judgmental. Mental ill-health, including stress affects us all differently and Mental Health First Aiders are aware of this. No problem would be regarded as silly or minor – what you feel is real to you and Mental Health First Aiders will recognise that. It should be remembered that everyone has mental health which can vary throughout their life.

4. Will my conversation with a Mental Health First Aider be recorded or shared?

- Conversations you have with a Mental Health First Aider are strictly confidential, unless there is a risk of harm to you or other individuals in which case immediate support may be required. A Mental Health First Aider will submit a form each time they use their skills and this may contain brief details of the conversation such as topics of concern (e.g. work related stress, relationships), however no personal details are recorded (e.g. names, age, specific details). The importance of confidentiality is stressed in the training that Mental Health First Aiders receive.

5. Where will I meet the Mental Health First Aider?

- This is at yours and the designated Mental Health First Aiders discretion. You may not find it comfortable to meet in an office or working environment. You may want to talk on the phone or via TEAMS/Zoom or you may want to suggest meeting in a common space.

6. What can I do if I do not get on with the Mental Health First Aider I speak to?

- If you did not connect with the Mental Health First Aider or feel like you got on with them, it is recommended that you try to speak with a different Mental Health First Aider. Mental Health First Aiders are aware that this situation may arise and will understand.

7. What if I don't feel comfortable approaching a Mental Health First Aider

- You could speak in confidence to Grocery Aid who employ professional counsellors, Occupational Health or if you feel comfortable to do so, your line manager.
- Contact details for the above are highlighted in the Help and Support available.

8. What if I need Mental Health First Aid assistance out of normal office hours?
 - You can access several support services on offer, listed within this policy (pages 4-5).
9. Can I speak to someone about some questions I have regarding this policy?
 - Yes, call HR Shared Services on 0121-568-2905 or email Sharedservices@afblakemore.co.uk