Health and well-being

Introduction

Organisations have a direct interest in creating an environment that helps people make healthy choices, as a healthier more engaged workforce makes good business sense. A motivated and healthy workforce is more likely to perform well and everyone can benefit through improved morale, reduced absenteeism and increased retention and productivity.

Wellbeing is defined as “creating an environment to promote a state of contentment which allows an employee to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation”.

Wellbeing is more than an avoidance of becoming physically sick as it represents physical, mental and social health. Well employees are physically and mentally able to contribute in the workplace and likely to be more engaged at work.

Key Principles and Objectives

The organisation and staff share the responsibility for well-being; Managers in the organisation can create and support an environment where staff can be healthier through providing information and access to schemes to improve well-being; however, well-being is ultimately each individual’s responsibility requiring both education and self-awareness.

Your role

The manager should view his/her role as an enabler in promoting health improvement and healthy lifestyles for all staff. Managers should support staff in improving their own health by promoting a culture of health improvement which motivates and inspires staff to become healthier. The definition of health encompasses both the physical and psychological health of staff and managers should aim to adopt a preventative approach to illness. Health and well-being can be grouped under five domains and the manager has a role to play in each of these areas:

Values

To further improve staff wellbeing it is essential that the organisation has ethical standards, values diversity and can meet commitments in relation to staff expectations. The manager needs to ensure that he/she leads by example and that an effective governance structure is in place.

Personal development

In considering staff wellbeing the manager needs to consider areas such as autonomy, career development, lifelong learning and creativity and ensure that these are reflected in appropriate policies. The manager also needs to ensure that these policies are active and are implemented in his/her workplace.

Emotional

The manager has a duty to ensure that the workplace culture fosters a positive working environment and is focused on creating a workplace culture in which everyone feels included, valued and respected. Creating a climate of mutual respect and dignity will foster improved working relationships and contribute to productivity and business performance.

Work/Organisation

This includes change management, work demands, and job security. Managers should ensure that staff are engaged in discussions about how their work is organised as this could have a significant impact on their well-being. It is important that staff have meaningful and challenging work and have an opportunity to apply their skills and knowledge in effective working relationships with colleagues and managers in a safe and healthy environment.

Physical

The manager needs to consider a number of aspects of staff well-being in this area including physical health, mental health, the working environment, physical safety and the provision of healthy and safe accommodation. (See also chapter on “A safe working environment”)

Key processes

The section outlines various actions under each of the five domains which promote health and well-being in the organisation
Values

- Lead by example
- Ensure the organisation has an effective corporate governance structure in place and that all appropriate policies are effectively communicated to all staff
- Ensure that the organisation adheres to the Diversity and Equality Policy and that this is effectively communicated to staff
- Hold regular Diversity related Training and Awareness Sessions
- Adopt a Partnership approach to fostering employee commitment and negotiating change.

Personal development

- Adopt a consultative approach to decision making
- Ensure effective functioning of performance management system as a tool for both performance management and staff development
- Provide a mentor for newly appointed employees
- Provide access to career breaks for developmental purposes
- Investigate suitable coaching training for staff
- Provide access to appropriate learning and development interventions

Emotional

- Ensure that the organisation’s Dignity in the Workplace Charter is adhered to
- Ensure the organisation’s Positive Working Environment Policy is adhered to and training in this area is provided for all staff
- Provide time for team sessions for all teams every six months
- Promote the Employee Assistance Service to staff.

Work/organisation

- Utilise technology to the highest levels to minimise the amount of mundane work for staff
- Promote a culture of staff consultation and involvement
- Provide adequate training for all staff appropriate to their role in the organisation
- Conduct risk assessments as part of Health and Safety Policy development
- Ensure compliance with the Working Time Act and ensure a “long hours” culture does not develop in the organisation
- Encourage staff to avail of a range of work-life balance initiatives, including: flexi-time, work-sharing, shorter working year scheme (See chapter on Managing work conditions and Life Balance)
- Provide training in stress management, time management and other similar areas to support staff in managing their work.

Physical

- Encourage physical activity by displaying appropriate signage setting out walking routes etc
- Provide health checks as appropriate
- Adhere to a Healthy Working Environment Policy
- Arrange for ergonomic checks of each staff member’s work station
- Provide personal safety awareness sessions
- Promote the organisation’s Absenteeism Policy and ensure staff are aware of both their rights and obligations in relation to this
- Encourage staff to contact the Employee Assistance Officer where appropriate and provide contact details to staff
- Ensure that an up-to-date Health and Safety Statement is in place at all times and staff are aware of their responsibilities in this regard
- Provide safe equipment and ensure that safe working practices are in place
- Provide regular Health and Safety Awareness Sessions and relevant training for all individuals with specific health and safety related responsibilities (including fire and road safety)
- Implement the organisation’s Emergency Egress Plan to ensure the safe egress of people with disabilities
- Provide regular First Aid training and Refresher training for interested staff
- Promote recycling and energy saving in the organization