

HUMAN RESOURCES



Health, Work and Wellbeing

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South Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue
WORKING FOR A SAFER
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Health, Work and Wellbeing

INTRODUCTION

1. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of all employees. Work can have a positive impact on our health and wellbeing. Healthy and well-motivated employees can have an equally positive impact on the productivity and effectiveness of SYFR.
2. This Policy helps employees to understand the interaction between health and wellbeing and work by focusing on:
 - the relationships between line managers and employees
 - the importance of getting employees involved
 - the use of occupational health.
3. As a member of the Dignity at Work Partnership¹, SYFR is committed to promoting a positive working environment where the dignity and respect, to which all employees are entitled, is not undermined. No employee should be treated less favourably on the grounds of race, gender or gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or spiritual belief, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin, marital/parental status, family ties, trade union or political belief, hours worked, or any other reason, either directly or indirectly.
4. This policy applies to all employees of SYFR and should be read and used in conjunction with the associated documents listed below:
 - Confidentiality Policy
 - Counselling Procedure
 - Post Incident Support Procedure
 - Counselling Information Sheet
 - Dignity at Work Policy
 - Health and Safety Stress Reduction Guidance
 - Work/Life Balance Policies
 - Stress Policy
 - Absence Management Policy

¹ The Dignity at Work Partnership is a partnership between the Government, Unite (the UK's largest union) and major public and private organisations. For further information on the Partnership, see www.dignityatwork.org

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HEALTH AND WORK

5. The connection between health and work is largely restricted to concerns with physical hazards. SYFR protects their staff by looking after their health and safety. Traditional health issues such as noise, dust and chemical hazards are vitally important. However, the growing awareness of work-life balance has also made us aware of the relationship between our mental and physical wellbeing and the job we do.

IS WORK GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH?

6. Studies show that work is generally good for your health. As well as a financial reward it gives many of us self-esteem, companionship and status. Research has shown that this 'feel good' factor is strongly influenced by the amount of control we have over our working lives. Having an element of control over the way we do our jobs makes us feel more committed to an organisation.
7. While the benefits of work greatly outweigh any disadvantages, work can also be a contributory factor for your health to decline. This can take the form of stress, anxiety, musculoskeletal disorders, depression and increased risk of coronary heart disease.
8. An unhealthy workplace is usually quite easy to recognise. It often has:
 - poor management
 - a bullying culture
 - poor service and productivity
 - high levels of absence
 - unreasonably high work demands

WHAT MAKES A HEALTHY WORKPLACE?

9. Good relationships have the potential to make workplaces healthy and productive. But, promoting a healthy and productive workplace is not just about being nice to each other. Good employment relations are built upon:
 - effective policies for managing people issues such as communication, absence, grievance and occupational health
 - high levels of trust between employees and managers. Trust is often nurtured by involving employees in decision-making and developing an open style of communication.
10. Healthy and motivated people will:
 - go that extra mile
 - give good customer service

Health, Work and Wellbeing

- take fewer sickness absence days
 - provide commitment and creativity
11. Acas believes that there are six indicators of a healthy workplace:
- line managers are confident and trained in people skills
 - employees feel valued and involved in the organisation
 - managers use appropriate health services e.g. Occupational Health, to tackle absence and help people to get back to work
 - managers promote an attendance culture by conducting return to work discussions as per the Absence Management Policy
 - jobs where applicable are flexible and well-designed
 - managers know how to manage common health problems such as mental health and musculoskeletal disorders.
12. The Acas Model Workplace describes building blocks that every organisation needs to make them effective. These include:
- the attitudes and values that can help healthy relationships to flourish
 - the techniques that can help build trust between management and employees
 - the policies and procedures needed to reward fairly, work safely, communicate, and manage discipline and grievance issues.
- These building blocks focus on getting the best out of the employees of SYFR.
13. Promoting health and wellbeing will include:
- helping line managers play a crucial role in setting the tone for the way people interact with each other
 - involving employees in decisions you make about their jobs and how things are done in the workplace
 - managing organisational change effectively in order to minimise the potentially negative impact on employees' health
 - redesigning working practices and jobs to enable workers to have greater control in the way they do their day to day work.

MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITIES

Health, Work and Wellbeing

14. The Line Manager is responsible for dealing with problems that directly affect an employee's health and wellbeing, such as disciplinary and absence problems with the assistance from Human Resources and Occupational Health.
15. Line Managers are encouraged to develop healthy relationships that involve ongoing:
 - dialogue
 - support
 - respect for diversity
 - personal development and mentoring
 - conflict management
 - team building
16. Early intervention can help SYFR to solve or manage problems and maintain attendance and levels of motivation. Employees who are absent are also more likely to return to work quickly if they feel there is a supportive and understanding environment to come back to.
17. The way we manage is particularly important at times of organisational change. The Health and Safety executive (HSE) has identified change as one of the six main causes of stress at work. To help reduce stress managers should inform and consult employees on changes that are likely to affect them. Where appropriate allow employees to ask questions before, during and after their jobs or prospects change.
18. To help reduce stress managers should read and inform employees of the organisations Stress Policy.

GETTING EMPLOYEES INVOLVED

19. Research suggests that health, wellbeing and productivity are strongly linked to a range of factors including:
 - the degree of control employees have over the way they carry out their jobs, and
 - the amount of support employees receive from managers.
20. Employees feel happier if they know what is going on and why. They feel happier still if they have a say in the decisions that are made or at least have the chance to express their opinions. Employee 'control' doesn't have to mean employees having total autonomy over when and how they do their work; it might just be allowing the employee some flexibility in what order they complete a range of tasks.
21. It is not purely a manager's responsibility to promote health and wellbeing. Individual employees also have a responsibility to talk to managers, OHU, HR etc and raise any

Health, Work and Wellbeing

concerns they might have.

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF WORK

22. The way that work is managed influences how it affects our health and wellbeing. Acas' experience is that work is likely to have a positive impact on employee wellbeing if it focuses on the need to develop high levels of trust between managers and employees.
23. There is a clear connection between ill health and inactivity; therefore, it is generally better to be in work than out of work. Recent research commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions found that work:
 - is therapeutic
 - helps people recover more quickly
 - minimises the harmful physical, mental and social effects of long term sickness absence.
24. However, it is acknowledged by SYFR that employees who suffer from illness or who have a disability may need the support of the Occupational Health Unit, physiotherapists, consultants etc to help them stay at work or return to work in some capacity i.e. modified duties, phased return.
25. Since it is better for your health and wellbeing to be in work employees are encouraged to engage in exercise and seek advice through Occupational Health for information and advice on diet, smoking, and other lifestyle factors, taking advantage of any health screening programmes provided.

**If you require any further guidance on this document please contact
Human Resources or the Occupational Health Unit**