

# Human Resources

## MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

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South Yorkshire  
Fire & Rescue  
WORKING FOR A SAFER  
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

# MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

## INTRODUCTION

1. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) are committed to ensuring the health safety and wellbeing of all employees and recognises that mental health is as important as physical health.
2. SYFR Rescue is committed to supporting all employees, including those with mental health conditions as far as it reasonably can.
3. As a member of the Dignity at Work Partnership<sup>1</sup>, 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 these documents:
  - Confidentiality Policy
  - Counselling Procedure
  - Counselling Information
  - Post Incident Support Policy
  - Bullying and Harassment Policy
  - Work/Life Balance and Family Policies
  - Health and Safety Executive Guidance
  - Disability Discrimination Act 1995
  - Absence Management Policy
  - Dignity at Work Policy

## SCOPE OF POLICY

5. SYFR recognises and accepts that mental health is an important issue and is committed to promoting the mental health of all employees.

<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.dignityatwork.org)

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6. Mental health problems can affect people at any time of life and in different ways. They can include anxiety, depression, stress, bi-polar disease, self-harm and dementia. This policy aims to clarify support the organisation provides to both current and potential employees.
7. SYFR will seek to provide a healthy work environment where all employees are supported to develop and utilise their skills and abilities to their full potential.

### THE LEGAL ASPECTS

8. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), it is unlawful for an employer to treat a disabled employee, or potential employee, less favourably than others by:
  - Discriminating against a disabled person in employment by failing to provide any reasonable adjustments for the disabled employee or potential employee who may be at a serious disadvantage in relation to others
9. Changes to the DDA introduced in 2005 mean that mental illness no longer has to be a clinically well-recognised condition in order to be covered by the Act. Applicants will only have to prove that the condition has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
10. Long-term means that the disability has continued or is expected to continue for at least twelve months.
11. Recurring or episodic conditions are covered if the substantial effect is likely to recur after the initial episode.
12. For employees with shorter term mental health problems or ones not covered by the DDA, SYFR would endeavour to support those individuals in line with current policies.

### RECRUITMENT

13. Due to fear of discrimination potential employees may choose not to disclose a mental health problem, including dyslexia, in their application or at the interview stage.
14. It is important that at the recruitment stage SYFR makes it known that it is willing to make reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants and this policy includes individuals with mental health problems.
15. Individuals with mental health problems may not have attended an interview for some time; therefore, consideration should be given to:
  - Permitting the applicant to be accompanied
  - Allowing additional time to undertake any test of ability
  - Appreciation of perceived 'deficiencies' due to their mental health problem, such as gaps in their employment history

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- Providing the appropriate environment to try and ensure that the applicant is able to fully demonstrate their ability to do the job applied for.

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16. SYFR will acknowledge all types of mental illness and in line with current policies individuals will be referred or can self refer to the Occupational Health Unit for advice and support.
17. As with physical disability, there will be occasions when specialist advice will be required to assist individuals with mental health problems. Occupational Health will be responsible for confidential liaison with any external practitioners involved in the care of the individual.
18. Confidential counseling will be provided, including where appropriate, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). If necessary, referral to external sources will be made.
19. The aim of the support is to enable the employee to function as well as they can within their role, reasonable adjustments will be advised as appropriate.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

20. Managers;
  - Will follow current policies when dealing with recruitment staff absence or problems highlighted to them
  - Will adopt an open environment that allows staff to discuss issues of concern with them
  - Will refer to or seek advice from appropriate other sections e.g. Human Resources or Occupational Health
  - Will ensure advice given is adhered to and discuss any problems that may arise
  - Treat all medical information in confidence.
21. Occupational Health Unit;
  - Respond as appropriate to all referrals from Managers, HR, Individuals
  - Provide advice and support to those making a referral
  - Provide confidential counselling through the in house counselling service and where appropriate refer onto specialist agencies
  - Monitor the progress of any individual referred.
22. Human Resources;

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- Give assistance to managers on policies
- Assist in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to assist issues
- Provide ongoing support to all individuals and managers within the changing workplace
- Encourage referral to Occupational Health Advisors/Counsellors

### 23. Employees;

- Monitor own situation, and address where appropriate with GP and/or other health care practitioners
- Raise issues as appropriate with Line Manager, HR or Occupational Health
- Accept opportunities designed to assist in their own personal circumstance

### 24. Trade Union Representatives;

- Support individuals as requested by the individual

**If you require any further guidance on this document, please contact  
Transactional HR / Occupational Health**