

WINDLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Mental Health Policy

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1 Introduction

Windlesham Parish Council recognises the importance of promoting and protecting the mental health and wellbeing of its workforce and elected members. Supporting mental wellbeing not only enhances individual health and resilience but also contributes to the overall success of the Council.

The Council acknowledges that mental ill health and stress are significant issues in modern society and is committed to creating a positive, inclusive, and supportive working environment. This policy outlines our approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing and aims to foster a culture that prioritises the mental health of all employees and elected members.

2 Policy Statement

Windlesham Parish Council is committed to:

- Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing among all employees and elected members.
- Reducing stigma and raising awareness about mental health issues.
- Providing support and assistance to employees experiencing mental health challenges or returning to work after related absences.
- Creating a workplace environment that supports mental wellbeing and minimises work-related stressors.

The Council will strive to continuously enhance the mental health culture of the Council and comply with all relevant Health and Safety legislation and best practice guidelines.

3 Policy Objectives

1. Develop a supportive and inclusive organisational culture.
2. Identify and address workplace factors that may negatively impact mental health.
3. Provide education, training, and resources to promote mental wellbeing.

4 Scope

This policy applies to all employees and Councillors of Windlesham Parish Council. It aligns with existing Council policies and procedures and will be reviewed regularly to ensure effectiveness and relevance.

5 Policy Actions

5.1 Promoting Mental Wellbeing

- Increase awareness and understanding of mental health to reduce stigma and discrimination.
- Provide employees with information about mental wellbeing and include this as part of the induction process.
- Encourage staff to engage in activities that support mental health, such as physical exercise, mindfulness, and social connection.
- Promote the “Five Ways to Wellbeing”: Connect, Be Active, Keep Learning, Give, and Take Notice.
- Ensure predictable working hours, manageable workloads, and flexible working practices where appropriate.

- Offer appropriate training, clear job descriptions, and defined objectives to enhance job satisfaction and reduce work-related stress.
- Provide a safe, ergonomically designed working environment.

5.2 Supporting Employees with Mental Health Difficulties

- Treat all employees experiencing mental health challenges fairly, respectfully, and consistently.
- Facilitate phased returns to work following mental health-related absences.
- Offer proactive support, such as counselling or referrals to external resources, including GPs or therapists.
- Maintain confidentiality in all matters related to employee mental health, sharing information only with consent and on a need-to-know basis.
- Explore alternative roles or adjustments where an employee is unable to return to their previous role due to mental health challenges.

5.3 Addressing Workplace Stress

- Recognise workplace stress as a health and safety concern and adopt the principles of the HSE Stress Management Standards.
- Consult with employees on actions to prevent workplace stress and ensure their involvement in organisational changes.
- Encourage access to confidential counselling services.

5.4 Supporting Councillors

Windlesham Parish Council recognises that Councillors may also experience challenges to their mental health due to the unique responsibilities and pressures associated with public office. To support councillors, the Council commits to:

- Providing access to resources and information on maintaining mental wellbeing.
- Encouraging Councillors to engage in self-care activities, including physical exercise and mindfulness.
- Ensuring a culture of respect, inclusivity, and support among councillors to prevent bullying, harassment, or discrimination.

- Promoting a healthy work-life balance by recognising the demands on councillors' time and offering flexibility where possible.
- Creating opportunities for open dialogue and peer support among Councillors.

6 Communication and Engagement

- This policy will be communicated to all employees and Councillors and included in staff induction materials.
- Employees participating in wellbeing initiatives will be regularly consulted for feedback to ensure continuous improvement.

7 Review and Monitoring

- The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed regularly. Feedback from staff and observations of workplace culture will inform adjustments and improvements.

By implementing this policy, Windlesham Parish Council aims to create a supportive and thriving workplace environment where mental health is prioritised, and all employees can reach their full potential.