



Mental Health & Wellbeing at Work Policy

Scope of Policy

Priory Medical Group understands the importance to protect all of its staff's mental health and wellbeing whilst at work and wants to provide a safe space where support and understanding in such matters is an integral part of its culture.

Therefore, the aim of this policy is to

- Raise awareness of mental health and its potential effects at work and in particular assist managers in supporting staff who are experiencing issues with their mental health and wellbeing and enable staff to access the support they need.
- Help foster an environment in which staff can openly and comfortably initiate conversations or engage in discussions about mental health and wellness.
- Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of mental health and how they can better support staff.
- Ensure that staff experiencing mental health challenges feel confident to discuss it — if they wish to — and ask for support so they can continue to be successful in their roles.
- Enable staff to attend work and contribute their best whilst experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues.

Why is staff wellbeing so important?

It's so important to make sure we are supporting the mental health of our workforce. It brings so many benefits – not just to our staff, but to PMG too. When asked about workplace stress, Mind's research found:

More than one in five workers said they had called in sick to avoid work.

14% of employees said they had resigned because of workplace stress.

30% of staff said they wouldn't feel able to talk openly with their line manager if feeling stressed.

56% of employers said they'd like to do more to improve staff wellbeing but don't feel they have the right guidance.

Spotting possible signs of a mental health problem

Not everyone will show obvious signs of poor mental health and it's important not to make assumptions. But some possible signs at work include:

- appearing tired, anxious, or withdrawn
- increase in sickness absence or being late to work
- changes in the standard of their work or focus on tasks
- being less interested in tasks they previously enjoyed
- changes in usual behaviour, mood or how the person behaves with the people they work with
- It can be harder to spot these signs if employees are working from home. It's important for Line Managers to regularly ask their team how they're doing. They should help them to be open and honest about how they're feeling.

The sooner we become aware of a mental health problem, the sooner we can provide help and support. Therefore, here at PMG, we have introduced Wellness Action Plans to help Line Manager to recognise possible signs of a mental health problem and take any relevant action to support the employee.

What is a Wellness Action Plan?

Wellness Action Plans are a personalised, practical tool we can all use— whether we have a mental health problem or not. The option to complete a Wellness Action Plan is completely voluntary. The purpose of the plan is to:

- to help us identify what keeps us well at work, what causes us to become unwell, and how to address a mental health problem at work should you be experiencing one.
- As a manager, encouraging your team members to draw up a Wellness Action Plan gives them ownership of the practical steps needed to help them stay well at work or manage a mental health problem.
- By giving your team an opportunity to draw up a Wellness Action Plan, they will be able to plan in advance and gain an awareness of what works and what doesn't work for them. A Wellness Action Plan can help your people to develop approaches to support their mental wellbeing.
- It also opens up a dialogue between you and your team member, to help you better understand their needs and experiences and therefore better support their wellbeing. This in turn can lead to greater productivity, better performance, and increased job satisfaction.
- By regularly reviewing the agreed, practical steps in the Wellness Action Plan, you can support your team member to adapt it to reflect their experiences or new approaches they find helpful.
- By allowing the individual to take ownership of the process and of the Wellness Action Plan itself, you will be empowering them to feel more in control.

Wellness Action Plans are also particularly helpful during the return-to-work process, as they provide a structure for conversations around what support will help your team member and what workplace adjustments might be useful to discuss and consider.

Line Managers

Discussing and Conducting a Wellness Action Plan

While the Wellness Action Plan itself will provide a structure to your discussion with your team member,

- **Choose an appropriate place when discussing mental health and wellbeing,**
- **It's important to make people feel comfortable so that they feel able to have an open and honest conversation.**
- **If holding your discussion in the workplace, find a private and quiet space.**
- **If your team member is working remotely, be sure to provide appropriate notice of the meeting so they can find an appropriate space to have the discussion.**
- **A person working from home may not feel comfortable having a conversation about mental health if sharing a working space with a partner or other members of their household.**
- **It can be difficult for people to share information relating to their mental health. The Wellness Action Plan template will hopefully have provided your team member time and structure to order their thoughts and articulate their feelings in a way they're comfortable.**
- **Provide your team member the space to talk through their Wellness Action Plan in their own words in their own time.**
- **Listen and be respectful.**
- **Support your team member to explore the support they need.**
- **Don't make assumptions about what may or may not be of support to your team member and try not to influence them by offering your own suggestions unless it is sought.**
- **A Wellness Action Plan is most effective when a regular follow up with your team member to discuss and assess what is working and what isn't is part of the process.**

Confidentiality and the Wellness Action Plan

The **Wellness Action Plan** should be confidential and only HR, Line Manager and the employee will be aware of its contents and it should only be read or shared with the employee's permission.

In order to fulfil our duty of care to keep our staff members safe at work, we will be obliged to break confidentiality if the employee is experiencing a crisis. If you become aware that someone is at serious risk of harm, whether this is the employee or someone else, you should call the emergency services.

When beginning a discussion about a Wellness Action Plan, it is best to ensure they understand the circumstances under which you might be required to share information they disclose.

The Law on Mental Health

As employers, PMG has a 'duty of care'. This means we must do all we reasonably can to support our employees' health, safety, and wellbeing. This includes:

- making sure the working environment is safe
- protecting staff from discrimination
- carrying out risk assessments

We treat mental and physical health as equally important as each other.

Discriminating against someone with a disability

By law (Equality Act 2010) someone with poor mental health can be considered to be disabled if:

- it has a 'substantial adverse effect' on their life – for example, they regularly cannot focus on a task, or it takes them longer to complete tasks
- it lasts, or is expected to last, at least 12 months
- it affects their ability to do their normal day-to-day activities – for example, interacting with people, following instructions, or keeping setting working times
- Poor mental health can be considered a disability even if they do not have symptoms all the time.

If an employee is disabled, PMG:

- must not discriminate against them because of their disability
- must make reasonable adjustments

It's a good idea to work with our employees to make the right adjustments for them, even if the issue is not a disability. Often, simple changes to the person's working arrangements or responsibilities could be enough. For example:

- allowing them more rest breaks
- working with them each day to help prioritise their workload.

Available NHS Support

Staff Support Network Counselling Service – Tel 01904 725092

- You can be referred by HR or self-refer yourself to Occupational Health counselling.
- <https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/financial-support/>
- <https://www.england.nhs.uk/supporting-our-nhs-people/support-now/>
- <https://checkwellbeing.leadershipacademy.nhs.uk/>
- NHS Staff Support Network – York – 01904 725092

Other Support

Mind - www.mind.org.uk

Samaritans – 116 123

Latest Review Date:	April 2025
Reviewed & updated by:	Joanne Fox HR Manager
Next Review:	April 2026