

Guidance – How to complete a Wellness Action Plan (WAP)

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Version control

This document is subject to regular review due to legislative and policy changes. The latest versions of all our publications can be found on our website. Before contacting us about the content of this document, we recommend that you refer to the most recent version on the website and any relevant guidance.

| Version | Date approved | Approved by | Notes / changes |
|---------|---------------|-------------|-----------------|
| v1.0 | 12/11/2021 | AM/LH | New guide |

Guidance – How to complete a Wellness Action Plan (WAP)

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Denbighshire County Council is committed to supporting employee wellbeing and in order to support employees in maintaining their own health and wellbeing, we have devised this plan, which is based on the resources put together by the mental health charity Mind.

It is focused on encouraging employees to explore for themselves steps they can take to improve and maintain their mental health.

The focus is shifting from reactive management of sickness absence to a more proactive approach of prevention through promoting wellbeing and improving employee engagement.

Managers should encourage the employee to speak openly about their mental health and to look at ways in which support can be given.

It may be necessary to complete the Stress Risk Assessment, to identify particular areas of concern and to devise an action plan to which may help both parties understand the stressors and put actions in place to try and alleviate these.

More information and support for both physical and mental wellbeing can be found on the dedicated mental health and wellbeing pages. <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/jobs-and-employees/my-employment/mental-health-wellbeing/mental-health-and-wellbeing.aspx>

There are two types of Wellness Action Plan's, one for general issues and a more specific template where the employee is a remote worker and is finding this a challenge. Please use the most appropriate template.

What is a Wellness Action Plan and how can it help?

It can also be helpful if an employee is feeling particularly stressed or anxious, or is struggling to manage an underlying physical health problem. Identifying ways that the employee can help themselves along with any support the manager can provide, will help the employee to manage their condition, without the need for a prolonged sickness absence and reduced ability to engage in family and social life.

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A wellness action plan may be particularly helpful during the return to work process, if an employee has suffered a prolonged absence due to either physical or mental ill health, as it can help to provide a structure for conversations around how they can be supported and what reasonable adjustments may be useful to discuss with their manager.

A wellness action plan can help employees to develop approaches to support their mental wellbeing, leading to a reduced likelihood of problems such as work-related stress.

What Should a Health & Wellbeing Plan Cover?

- The approaches that can be taken and behaviours that can be adopted to support physical and mental health
- Diet and lifestyle changes which may be of benefit
- Early warning signs that health may be declining
- Any workplace triggers for poor mental health or stress
- Potential impact of physical and/or mental health condition on work performance and what help and support may be needed with this
- What support is required from the line manager
- Actions and positive steps that can be taken by employee and the manager if an employee is struggling with either a physical or mental health condition
- Awareness of support mechanisms which are available in the workplace – i.e. employee assistance programme, mental health first aiders and physiotherapy.
- Agree review timeframes together with any support mechanisms which have been put in place to ensure they are working.
- Any external support required – advice from Occupational Health for example.

The wellness action plan is intended as an agreement between employee and manager in order to promote wellbeing and/or address any existing health needs, including any reasonable adjustments that can be discussed.

The wellness action plan should be written and owned by the employee, expressing their own personal choices, reflecting their voice, their personal experience and their needs.

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By regularly reviewing the agreed, practical steps in the wellness action plan, managers can support their team member to adapt it to reflect their experiences or new approaches they find helpful. By allowing the employee to take ownership of the process and of the plan itself, will be empowering and for them to feel more in control.

The manager's role is to discuss the plan with the employee and provide support, including guidance on what is possible for any reasonable adjustments. It should be a collaborative process, but led by the employee.

How managers can support staff wellbeing

How people are treated and managed on a day-to-day basis is central to their mental wellbeing and to how motivated and engaged they feel, so it is important for managers to reflect on their managerial style and tailor it to suit the needs of each team member and task.

Your role and behaviour as a manager is key to the mental wellbeing of your team members. Being open to receiving feedback on your management and communication style and being aware of how you come across to others is a crucial part of being an effective manager, and creating healthy and productive teams.

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| Before the conversation takes place | Employees should plan some time on their own to complete the plan Choose an appropriate place. It should be in private and usually be one-to-one Keep the meeting as informal and relaxed as possible |
| At the start of the conversation | Ask how they are doing, explain what a Wellness Action Plan is and whether they have completed it Explain that this plan is their document Remember to ask simple, open and non-judgmental questions. |
| During the conversation | Listen carefully and don't make assumptions Reassure them that you are there to try to help and being proactive is the best approach |

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| | <p>Ask open questions, for example what do they feel like when they are feeling well at work, what helps them maintain their mental wellbeing or what coping strategies do they have and what has worked in the past</p> |
| <p>At the end of the conversation</p> | <p>Check if they think anything else should be included or discussed</p> <p>Set a timescale when you will review this plan with them to see how things are going and how they are feeling</p> |
| <p>After the conversation</p> | <p>Weave wellbeing into catch-up discussions, ensuring that you regularly ask how they are and how well they feel their work is going. This can be done by using the one to one template document under the section ‘How are you’</p> <p>Develop an atmosphere of trust by regularly asking for feedback about the support provided</p> <p>Proactively support staff to monitor their workload and encourage healthy working hours and a positive work/life balance</p> <p>Provide your team with meaningful work and opportunities for personal development and growth</p> <p>Make sure that deadlines are reasonable, that work is clearly defined and well matched to each employee’s abilities and that people understand their role in the bigger picture</p> |