

Code of Conduct for Psychological Health and Wellbeing

Derek Mowbray©

Purpose of a Code

A Code has the purpose of being the central guide and reference for users in day to day decision making. The Code is meant to reflect the organisation's purpose, mission, values and principles, and linking these to the standards of professional conduct. The conduct of individuals, therefore, should clearly reflect what the organisation 'stands for' and how the organisation wishes to see itself projected to the outside world.

The Code is an open and public disclosure of how the organisation operates. A Code can fulfil other functions. It can become a tool that encourages discussion around ethical dilemmas, prejudices and gray areas that can arise during everyday working; it can provide the opportunity to create a positive public identity for the organisation that can raise levels of public confidence and trust.

Code of Conduct for Psychological Health and Wellbeing

The need for a Code relating to psychological health and wellbeing arises from the widespread anxiety that issues of psychological distress are not being taken with the degree of seriousness the condition deserves. Psychological distress costs business and services £bn's per annum in lost concentration, under-performance,

errors and accidents, diverted management resources, sickness, absence and staff turnover. Psychological distress contributes to about 50% of the causes of sickness and absence from work.

Code of Conduct for the Promotion of Psychological Health and Wellbeing

Employers that promote psychological health and wellbeing need to consider a) the culture of the organisation and b) the behaviour of leaders and managers in the organisation.

Leaders and managers behave according to the context in which they manage. Therefore, the culture of the organisation is the context in which managers behave. The culture is built on a combination of organisational purpose, structure and 'rules' as follows:

Clarity of purpose

- The ability to make clear and unambiguous the purpose of the organisation in ways that are simply expressed, and in ways that employees and the public can understand and relate to.

The structures

- The ability to structure organisations in ways that enable employees to be engaged in decisions about themselves and their work.

The 'rules'

- The ability to recruit managers based on the convergence of clear and unambiguous expectations of the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the job and those of the applicant, together with the personal characteristics set out in this Code.
- The ability to ensure that training and development (the acquisition of skills, knowledge and experience) meets the needs of the organisation and those of the trainee; that training is based on sound learning experiences, and that the training is applied in practice.
- The ability to provide employees with challenges in their work.
- The ability to create and maintain teams of people who are sufficiently trusting of each other that they can critique each other's work without fear of humiliation or retribution, and in the knowledge that lessons can be learnt and applied.
- The ability to communicate – the process of interpreting messages, conveying them intelligibly, seeking responses, and reacting positively to the responses.
- The ability to engage employees and clients in the processes and critical decisions that affect them.
- The ability to performance appraise employees regularly and routinely as part of the bloodstream of management, together with the ability to provide appropriate supporting resources to raise performance where needed.
- The ability to nurture employees by providing opportunities to gain wider skills, knowledge and

experience, and the ability to use these in practice in career development.

- The ability to safeguard the opportunity to complete tasks, projects and assignments undertaken by employees.
- The ability to encourage employees in their work, and to encourage limited risks in their contribution to the work of the organisation.
- The ability to respond positively to employee domestic crisis.
- The ability to create and maintain openness (transparency) in the management of the organisation.

Employers who promote psychological health and wellbeing will ensure that their leaders and managers behave towards their staff in ways that promote engagement, commitment and trust, as the principal defence against the risks of psychological distress. The following are the behaviours that most influence the creation of engagement.

The behaviours

Behaviours applied in the interaction between leaders and others. These behaviours are to be found in the adaptive leadership style.

The behaviours below are those to be expected in routine interactions:

Attentiveness

The ability to demonstrate genuine attentiveness to the contents of an interaction by demonstrating listening, responsiveness and reaction.

Politeness

The ability to be polite in any interaction

Courtesy

The ability to place the other person (people) at the forefront of an interaction

Personal communication

The ability to communicate personally wherever possible; understanding the limitations of electronic communication.

Body language

The ability to use body movements and expressions to show attentiveness.

Addressing needs

The ability to respond positively to individual needs, even in circumstances when the needs cannot be met, given all the circumstances.

Empathetic

The ability to demonstrate an understanding of the other person's issues, ideas, thoughts and experiences

Intellectual flexibility

The ability to think on ones feet and respond with credible choices, alternatives and ideas

Emotional intelligence

The ability to be self aware, self regulate, motivate, show empathy and be socially adept

Negotiation

The ability to negotiate a successful outcome in an interaction.

Sharing

The ability to share with others one's own thoughts and ideas

Reliability

The ability to do what one says

Honesty

The ability to be open in an interaction

Clarity

The ability to be clearly understood in an interaction

Fairness

The ability to be fair to anyone in an interaction, taking account of all the circumstances, and to explain clearly the position that is taken and the reasons

Humility

The ability to acknowledge mistakes, misunderstandings, errors and faults, and to apologise where necessary.

Conflict resolution

The ability to confront a conflict at the time of conflict and to try and resolve any dispute at the time of the dispute.

Encourage contribution

The ability to motivate and encourage others to make a contribution in interactions.

Code of Conduct for the management of psychological distress at work

All managers and employees need to be aware of and understand the following:

- What is stress?
- The difference between stress and pressure
- The principal determinants of stress at work
- Recognising the signs and symptoms of stress at work
- The reasons for taking stress seriously
- The legal position
- The insurance position
- The haemorrhaging of money
- The misery for individuals
- The impact of stress on employers
- The impact of stress on employees
- The 'iceberg effect'.
- Stress risk management and policy development
- Strategy for managing stress at work

- Policy on the promotion of psychological health and wellbeing
- Assessment of risk of stress at work
- HSE Management Standards
- Taking action
- Monitoring risks
- Managing individuals
- Support services
- Supporting staff at work
- Helping people back to work
- Helping those with long term illness
- Building and sustaining psychological health and wellbeing at work
- Building a culture of psychological health and wellbeing
- Sustaining a culture of psychological health and wellbeing
- Coping with stress at work

Employers should have in place the policies and procedures covering the following topics:

- Career development
- Change at work
- Commitment and trust at work
- Conflict, bullying and harassment at work
- Dignity at work
- Diversity and equality at work
- Employee engagement
- Growth and expansion at work
- Manager-employee relationships
- Management encouragement
- Management performance
- Mergers
- Organisational design
- Organisational citizenship
- Recruitment
- Redundancy
- Staff turnover
- Staff retention
- Team working
- Training and development
- The psychological contract
- Work life balance

Employers should ensure that the following staff assessments are carried out each year:

Audit

- Stress risks assessment
- Staff wellbeing survey

Employers should ensure that the following support services for all staff are in place and easily accessible:

Support

- Occupational health service
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Executives Support Programme
- Absence management system
- Occupational Safety service
- Health and Safety service
- Counselling
- Organisation Health Psychology service
- Investigation and conflict resolution service
- Mediation service
- Legal service

Code of Conduct for ‘return to work’ employees and managers

Employers should ensure the following policies are in place for those returning to work:

Policies

- Policies for gradual and effective return to work
- Absence management policies
- Policy in relation to job shadowing, voluntary work and career development for those on long term sick leave.
- Policy on individual support and supervision for those returning to work
- Policy on legal advice and support

Employers should ensure that the following support services are available and easily accessible to all staff returning to work:

Services

- Occupational Health service
- Personal support from line manager
- Absence Management system
- Capacity to assess ability to return to work
- Job risk assessment service
- Career counselling and training
- Training and development services
- Medical services support
- Counselling
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Executives Support Programme
- Legal services

April 2009.

Contact:

T: 0845 8331597

E: info@orghealth.co.uk

W: www.orghealth.co.uk