Wellness Action Plans: a guide for staff

The way employers view workplace wellbeing is changing: the focus is shifting from reactive management of sickness absence to a more proactive approach of prevention through promoting wellbeing and enhancing employee engagement.

We are looking for new ways to address and support staff wellbeing and this has led us to introduce the Wellness Action Plan Tool (WAP).

Based on a framework developed by the mental health charity MIND, the WAP is an optional and confidential tool which can help you manage your mental health and wellbeing at work.

What is a Wellness Action Plan (WAP)? The WAP is inspired by an evidence-based system used worldwide by people to manage their mental health. It is a personal, practical tool that anyone can use, whether you have a mental health problem or not, that helps you identify what keeps you well at work, what causes you to become unwell and how to address a mental health problem at work should you experience one.

The WAP can be completed as a personal document to help you understand more about the way your mental health impacts work, or it can be shared with your manager and/or colleagues to help conversations about how you can be practically supported in the workplace.

Who should complete a WAP? Any member of staff can complete a WAP. You may be:

- Currently experiencing a mental health problem
- Currently well but interested in using a WAP as a proactive tool to map out what might need to be in place for you to be mentally well at work

What should a WAP cover?

- Approaches you can take and behaviours you can adopt to support your mental wellbeing
- Early warning signs of poor mental health that your manager or supervisor can look out for and respond to effectively
- Any workplace triggers for poor mental health or stress
- Support you might need
- Actions or steps you or your manager might be able to take if you are experiencing stress or poor mental health

How can it help me? The WAP can help to open a dialogue with your manager so they can better understand your needs and experiences, potentially leading to better support for you in the workplace. This in turn leads to better productivity, performance and job satisfaction.

When should I complete a WAP? A WAP can be completed at any time – they are not mandatory but an option that is open to you as a way for you to develop a structured way of maintaining your mental health at work. They can be particularly helpful during any period of absence or a phased return-to-work process if you have been off work due to a mental health problem, as they provide a framework for conversations about what might support you and help you to stay well.

If you decide to share your WAP with your manager and/or colleagues (this can also include Occupational Health and Human Resources) it can help with agreeing practical support actions that can be put in place if and when needed.
It is advisable to regularly review your WAP to ensure the information you have shared is up-to-date.

**Is it confidential?** If you share your WAP it should be held confidentially and should not be shared more widely without your consent. It is your document and so you need only provide information that relates to your role and the workplace, and that you are comfortable sharing.