Mental Health - Manager's Guide

**Cardiff Council
HR People Services
Employee Relations Team**

**Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg.
This document is available in Welsh**

Oct 2017

Contents

1.0   Introduction

1.1 The Council, through its managers and employees must seek to prevent stress at work and ensure that work place pressure is addressed through a risk assessment process.

1.2 Managers must ensure they promote mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. They must seek to build and maintain a workplace environment and culture that supports mental health and prevent discrimination.

1.3 This guidance is designed to assist line managers in dealing with an employee's disclosure about a mental health concern. Mental health concerns may emerge gradually, suddenly, as a result of a specific event, or may be known to you due to a disclosure at the recruitment stage.

1.4 Ideally, speaking about mental health problems should be an intrinsic part of the culture of your workplace. Remember that the Council has a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, including those with mental health issues. However, it is imperative to know your limitations – line managers are not health professionals, and are not expected to counsel employees or provide medical advice.

1.5 This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Council's Mental Health Policy.

2.0 Identifying early signs of stress or possible mental ill-health

2.1 Identifying signs of stress or mental ill health at an early stage means that managers can encourage an employee to seek help before difficulties escalate into a crisis or sickness absence. Often a key indicator is a change in typical behaviour. Symptoms will vary, and every employee's experience is different, but potential indicators include:

- physical symptoms e.g. fatigue, headaches, indigestion, changes in sleep patterns;

- psychological symptoms e.g. including anxiety, tearfulness, low mood, indecisiveness, loss of humour, illogical thought processes;

- behavioural symptoms e.g. including increased smoking and drinking, withdrawal, irritability, restlessness, uncharacteristic errors, and uncharacteristic problems with colleagues,

- changed attendance patterns (lateness, working long hours, taking leave at short notice).

- Slipping hygiene or poor self care.

- Over commitment or positivity-possible followed by failure to deliver.

2.2 If managers notice some of these signs, or have other reasons to think that an employee is not well, it would be appropriate to talk to the employee privately to explore what is going on. Remember that even if an employee is displaying some of these signs it does not automatically mean that they have a mental health problem. The person may have a different health condition or some other issue.

2.3 An employee who is experiencing early signs of mental ill health may have difficulty in recognising that they have a real health problem and need to seek medical help. You may want to encourage them to access the Employee Assistance Programme, seek a referral to Occupational Health, visit their G.P. or sign post to the support detailed at appendix 1.

2.4 There may be occasions when you suspect from the employee's behaviour that they may have a mental health issue, but they insist that there is no problem. In this situation, you need to establish clear expectations for behaviour and performance. It may take a while before the employee recognises that they are not functioning well. Alternative it may be necessary to seek specific advice from HR particularly if the employee behaviour is causing concern whereby colleagues feel endangered for both the employee's safety and their own.

3.0 An Employee discloses a mental health issue

3.1 An employee disclosing a mental health problem may do this in a planned one to one meeting or may ask to speak with you separately. Remember that you do not need to be an expert to talk about mental health.

3.2 Choose an appropriate place – somewhere private and quiet where the person feels comfortable and equal. Possibly a neutral space outside of the workplace or away from the main office. It would not be appropriate at any point to hold discussions in a place where other employees may overhear conversations.

3.3 It is important that the employee has some control over the space they are disclosing in. Ideally, your workplace will have a quiet room or a space where you will be able to have a private conversation. Identify if it is appropriate to move the conversation somewhere private. Treat this as an informal conversation. Unless it is in the realms of a performance management meeting, this should not be considered a formal discussion.

3.4 If an employee tells you they have a mental health problem aim to hold an open and honest conversation with them. Disclosing a mental health problem may feel a risky step to take, therefore it is important to keeping an open mind and listen to the employee. Avoid making assumptions about a person's symptoms, or how they may affect their ability to do their job. Many people manage their condition and perform their role to a high standard.

3.5 Reassure the employee that you will treat this as confidential information, and you will not pass on private information to their colleagues unless it is agreed what information can be shared. However, it is essential to inform an employee that should they indicate something that means you believe that they or someone else is at risk of harm, when you have a duty of care to speak.

3.6 Encourage the employee to talk – ask simple, open and non-judgmental questions and let them explain in their own words how their mental health problem manifests, the triggers, how it impacts on their work and what support they need.

3.7 Do not make assumptions – do not try to guess what symptoms an employee might have and how these might affect their ability to do their job. Many people are able to manage their mental health problem but may require support measures when experiencing a difficult period.

3.8 Listen to them and respond flexibly – everyone's experience of a mental health problem is different so treat people as individuals and focus on the person, not the problem. Adapt your support to suit the employee and involve them as much as possible in finding solutions to any work related difficulties they are experiencing.

3.9 Remember effective reasonable adjustments are often quite individual but need not be costly or require huge changes. Often it might be offering flexible working hours or moving to a quieter desk.

3.10 Be aware of risks outside the workplace - Be aware of what is happening in people's personal lives as stress outside of work, for example due to illness, bereavement or financial worries might be contributing to them struggling to cope in the workplace.

3.11 Be honest and clear – if there are specific grounds for concern, such as high absence levels or impaired performance, it is important to address these at an early stage.

3.12 Ensure confidentiality – people need to be reassured of confidentiality. It is sensitive information and should be shared with as few people as possible. Discuss with the individual what information they would like shared and with whom. However it is essential to inform the employee that if it is a safeguarding or criminal issue confidentiality cannot be ensured and appropriate steps may need to be taken.

3.13 Safeguarding concerns - If an individual indicates, they cannot keep themselves or others safe or has suicidal thoughts they should be encouraged to seek help immediately. Depending on the circumstances this may involve:

- going to a hospital A&E
- contacting their own GP for an immediate referral
- contacting occupational health
- contacting the Samaritans or other appropriate organisation
- contacting their carer or other relevant individual
- contacting NHS Direct.
- calling 999

The most important thing will be to encourage the employee to seek professional help. The manager should, in turn seek immediate support from their own line manager or HR People Services as to what steps may be appropriate.

3.14 Being at Work - explore how the condition affects the employee, and how you can help them at work. Being at work, rather than taking sickness absence, helps to maintain mental wellbeing. The employee benefits from the regular routine, from being able to perform useful work and from the social contacts. There may be things that a manager can do to help the employee.

3.15 Encourage the employee to seek advice and support – they should speak to their GP about available support from the NHS or if appropriate a referral to Occupational Health should be made. A list of external and internal support is detailed in appendix 1 and information is available on the Council's intranet.

3.16 Reassure them – Employees may not always be ready to talk fully about the problems they are experiencing so it is important you outline what support is available, tell them your door is always open and let them know you will help to ensure they get the support they need.

3.17 Medication – Employees experiencing mental health issue may have been or will be prescribed medication. Unfortunately, certain medications can have negative and debilitating side effects, particularly in the early stages of treatment. These can include:
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Insomnia
- Dizziness
- Drowsiness

4.0 Following Disclosure

4.1 Record the conversation as accurately as you can to make a plan with the employee to carry out the next steps. This will help with your commitment to supporting the employee, provide a copy to the employee involved to ensure they agree that it is accurate.

4.2 The Equality Act (2010) outlines an employer's duty to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities in order to ensure that they have the same access to everything that involves gaining or keeping employment as a non-disabled person. If relevant, seek advice for HR People Service or Occupational Health.

4.3 It may be appropriate to inform someone else of the disclosure. This may be for the safety of the employee, or others, or it may be to ensure continuity of support

during their absence or annual leave. This needs to be discussed with the employee first.

4.4 Commit to regular catch-ups or one to one meetings to continue the conversation and help the employee feel that their mental health problem is being treated in the same way as a physical illness would.

4.5 Seek advice and support yourself. The Employee Assistance Programme can provide tailored advice to support employees.

5.0 Planning Ahead

5.1 Develop an action plan – work with your employee to develop an individual action plan which identifies the signs of their mental health problem, triggers for stress, the possible impact on their work, who to contact in a crisis, and what support they might need. (Appendix 2) The plan should include an agreed time to review the support measures to see if they are working. Where appropriate seek advice from the Occupational Health Service or from HR People Services. It is likely the employee will require a period of time to complete the action plan and an additional meeting or meetings to discuss. It should however, be recognised that some mental health issues are episodic, and nebulous. The unpredictability may therefore make the completion of a plan difficult.

The plan may contain:

- Details of possible reasonable adjustments to help the employee stay healthy in the workplace.
- A list of factors that can contribute to the employee becoming unwell, and how the employee will manage them if they cannot be avoided.
- Early warning signs of an employee's deteriorating mental health, and how they would like their manager (or were appropriate colleagues) to respond.
- Definite signs that the employee is unwell and how they would like their manager to respond.
- Contact numbers for the manager to call if they are concerned about the employee's health.
- Agreement as to who may see the information.
- Signatures from manager and employee that the information expresses their agreement.
- Review date to be agreed mutually.
- Things that the employee undertakes to do outside work to support themselves in returning to good health e.g. balanced diet, adequate sleep etc.

6.0 While an employee is off sick:

6.1 Actions to be considered:

- Keep in regular contact with the employee, in line with the Attendance and Wellbeing Policy.

- Arrange how work will be handled during the employee's absence. It should not just pile up until the person's return. This is especially important if the original difficulties were related to the stress of managing the workload. The Stress Management Policy (1.CM.118) can provide further guidance.

- Consider whether any reasonable adjustments are needed in the workplace.

- Discuss a phased return to work.

- Manage the absence in line with the Attendance and Wellbeing Policy.

7.0 When an employee returns from sickness absence:

- Hold a return-to-work interview to discuss any support needs and agree regular reviews. Discuss an early warning system for any future difficulties.

- If workplace stress contributed to the employee's ill health, agree a plan for how to prevent a recurrence of their illness. This may involve assistance with prioritising, reallocation of some work, further training or revision of work processes.

- Consider a gradual resumption of tasks. It may be better for the employee to start with a limited number of tasks.

- If agreed brief other team members about the employee's wishes, so that they can be supportive but not intrusive. Respect the employee's wishes on privacy. In general a simple enquiry about an employee's wellbeing can be supportive and may help prevent any feelings of isolation.

- Update the employee about any workplace developments in their absence.

- Remember that even though the employee is back at work, they may still be living with mental ill health. Being at work may be part of their recovery process.

- Monitor performance and give the employee honest feedback.

- All of the above should be carried out in line with any guidance/reports from Occupational Health.

8.0 Performance concerns

8.1 If there are concerns about poor performance, the manager should explore whether there is a health or disability issue, or where it is known a mental health issue,

before implementing any formal performance management steps. Asking simple questions about how an employee is, and whether anything is affecting their performance can give them an opportunity to disclose a disability, mental health issue or something else going on in their lives. It may also be useful to ask about relations with colleagues.

8.2 Managers should not force employee to disclose a mental health issue, or suggest they are ill, but can explore this in a way that is not intrusive or judgemental. One way is to start from your own observations e.g. "I've noticed that you've been having a lot of headaches recently. How are you feeling?"

8.3 If the manager is aware of a mental health issue, they should explore possible reasonable adjustments for mental ill health and performance should be monitored (Reasonable Adjustments Guidance - 5.C.275). In the small number of cases where an employee with severe mental health issues is unable to perform their role despite adjustments, advice should be sought from HR People Services.

8.4 Evidence of performance, including attendance records, should be collected, and should form the basis for an honest discussion between manager and employee. This makes it more difficult for the employee to deny the existence of any difficulties.

8.5 It may be helpful for a second person to sit in as an observer on all one-to-one meetings or the employee may wish to be accompanied by their Trade Union representative. A person with complex mental health issues may have difficulty in making a realistic assessment of a situation.

8.6 Managers should refer to the Capability Policy before commencing any process regarding performance and a referral to Occupational Health should be considered.

9.0 Tips for talking about mental health concerns

9.1 Where

- In private, preserving confidentiality for the employee. Avoid glass-walled offices.
  - In a venue where the employee feels equal e.g. seated at same level.
  - An employee who is on sickness absence may find it easier to meet away from the office on neutral ground.
  - Avoid interruptions by phone or other people. Make sure people cannot walk in on you.
  - A place were any conversations cannot be overheard

9.2 How

- Speak calmly.

- Listen carefully.
- Set clear parameters for confidentiality: "I'm not going to share this information with anyone unless I believe that you or someone else is at risk of harm, when I have a duty of care to speak."
- Encourage the employee to talk.
- Be prepared for some silences – it may be difficult for an employee to talk.
- Avoid being too prescriptive with advice or recommendations. The employee must agree to any actions proposed.
- Try to use open questions such as:
  - "You seem a bit down/angry/under pressure, how are you feeling?"
  - "Would you like to talk about it?"
  - "How can I help of support you?"
  - "Have you spoken to your GP or anyone else?"
- Try to keep your own emotions out of the situation. An approach of curiosity, and wanting to learn, may work best. The employee may already be having difficulty in managing their powerful feelings. Sometimes you may be able to help them recognise how they are feeling, and add a broader view, "I hear that you are annoyed with yourself for making that error, but you recognised it immediately and took appropriate action."
- Focus on solutions not problems.

10.0 What next?

10.1 It is important that several things emerge from any discussion:

- The employee should feel reassured that they have been listened to.
- The manager and employee agree a plan of action and support, detailing the steps that will be taken to help the employee recover.
- Agree whether further support will be sought e.g. from Occupational Health Service.
- A time and place are agreed for a meeting to review whether any support agreed is working, and whether the employee is benefitting.

11.0 Colleagues having concerns about fellow employees

An employee with a mental health issue will sometimes come to the notice of a fellow employee/s. It is in the employee's interests to be offered support as soon as possible, as it improves the chances of a successful outcome. It is imperative that managers create an environment where colleagues feel confident to be open and supportive in these circumstances. Although it may be difficult, employees are encouraged to raise the issue with their line manager.

12.0 Related Documents

Mental Health Policy
Attendance and Wellbeing Policy 1.CM.049
Flexible Working Policy 1.CM.088
Reasonable Adjustments Guidance 5.C.275
Redeployment Policy 1.CM.207
Stress Management Policy 1.CM.118
Stress Risk Assessment Code of Guidance 1.CM.113
Carers Policy 1.CM.188
Management of Alcohol, Drugs and Substance Misuse 1.CM.134

Appendix 1 Support Contact Details

Cardiff Academy
Offers a range of classroom based and e-learning. Topics include Stress Awareness and Control Programme, Stress Control 1 to 1 sessions, Mental Health in the

Workplace, Handling Difficult Conversations, Equality and Diversity. Telephone 029 2034 6050 (Ext. 46050)
Email: CardiffAcademy@Cardiff.gov.uk

Employee Counselling Service
The Employee Counselling Service (ECS) offers free and confidential counselling to anyone who is employed by the Cardiff Council.
Telephone 029 2078 8301
http://cmsweb/cardiff/content.asp?id=11153&d1=0

Employee Assistance Programme – Carefirst
This free phone telephone service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. All calls are answered directly by a team of qualified and experienced counsellors. Professional information and advice services are also provided by a separate team of information specialists plus there is access to a web based information service.
Telephone 0800 174319
http://cmsweb/cardiff/content.asp?id=40976

NHS Choices
The NHS website has a wide range of advice and practical tools for raising awareness of mental health issues, self-management of symptoms and sources of further specialist help.
www.nhs.uk/livewell/mentalhealth

NHS Direct Wales

Health advice 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
Telephone 0845 4647
www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Centre for Mental Health
The Centre for Mental Health works to improve the quality of life for people with mental health problems by influencing policy and practice in mental health and related services. It focuses on criminal justice and employment.
Tel: 020 7827 8300
www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk

Samaritans
Provides confidential, non-judgmental emotional support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those that could lead to suicide. You can phone, email, write a letter or in most cases talk to someone face to face.
Telephone: 08457 90 90 90 (24 hours a day)
Email jo@samaritans.org
www.samaritans.org

Mental Health Foundation
A UK charity for everyone's mental health, which has prevention at the heart of what they do. It aims to find and address sources of mental health problems. They offer information, guidance and publications on a range of issues associated with mental health. Their website also includes podcasts and videos.

www.mental health.org.uk

CALL (Community Advice and Listening Line)

Offers emotional support and information/literature on Mental Health and related matters to the people of Wales. Anyone concerned about their own mental health or that of a relative or friend can access the service. C.A.L.L. Helpline offers a confidential listening and support service

Telephone 0800 132 737
www.callhelpline.org.uk

Saneline
Saneline is a national mental health helpline providing information and support to people with mental health problems and those who support them. If you're a carer needing support you can contact all of the above as well as Carers Direct and the Princess Royal Trust for Carers, both of whom are able to provide support and advice on any issues affecting you
Telephone 0845 767 8000 (6pm-11pm)
www.sane.org.uk

Rethink Mental Illness Advice Line

Rethink is the largest national voluntary sector provider of mental health services with 340 services and more than 130 support groups. It helps over 48,000 people every year through its services, support groups and by providing information on mental health problems.

It expert advice and information to people with mental health problems and those who care for them, as well as giving help to health professionals, employers and staff.
Telephone 0845 456 0455 (10am-1pm Monday to Friday)
Email info@rethink.org
www.rethink.org
Helpline: 0300 5000 927
www.rethink.org

Mind Infoline

Mind is the leading mental health charity in England and Wales. It campaigns to create a better life for everyone with experience of mental distress. Mind provides confidential mental health information services. With support and understanding, Mind enables people to make informed choices. The Infoline gives information on types of mental distress, where to get help, drug treatments, alternative therapies and advocacy. Mind also has a network of nearly 200 local Mind associations providing local services.

Telephone: 0300 123 3393 (9am-5pm Monday to Friday)
Email info@mind.org.uk
www.mind.org.uk

Education Support Partnership

Advice, support and Counselling available to teachers and other employees in Education services. Operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
Telephone: 08000562561
www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk

TUC
Advice on mental health first aid.
Website www.tuc.org.uk

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
WWW.MOODJUICE.CO.UK
WWW.MOODGYM.CO.UK.

Dewis Wales
Information and advice about individual well-being or how you can help someone else.

Sources of advice and information for managers:

Employee Assistance Programme Manager Support Line

NHS Health for Work Adviceline
Tel: 0800 077 8844
http://www.nhshealthatwork.co.uk/

The Mind Infoline
Lines are open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays).
Tel: 0300 123 3393 info@mind.org.uk. Text: 86463

Mindful Employer - www.mindfulemployer.net
Developed, led and supported by employers, the MINDFUL EMPLOYER® initiative is aimed at increasing awareness of mental health at work and providing support for businesses in recruiting and retaining employees.

Centre for Mental Health - http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/
The Centre for Mental Health aims to help to create a society in which people with mental health problems enjoy equal chances in life to those without.

Health and Safety Executive – http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/

Mental Health First Aid Guidance for Line Managers-
http://mhfaengland.org/files/5613/9101/5215/MHFA_Line_Managers_Resource.pdf

Time to Change Wales - Time to Change Wales is the first national campaign to end the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems.
http://www.timetochangewales.org.uk/en/

Mental Health Manager's Guide

Bereavement
Cruse Bereavement Care helpline for bereaved people and those caring for bereaved people
Tel: 0844 477 9400
Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk
Crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Teachers
Teacher Support Network is an independent charity that provides practical and emotional support to trainee, serving and retired teachers and their families.

24/7 Support Line; 08000 562 561(UK) 08000 855 088 (Wales)
Email:support@teachersupport.info   www.teachersupport.info

Debt
Stepchange Debt Charity provides help for anyone in debt or concerned they may fall into debt
Freephone 0800 138 111(includes all mobiles) www.stepchange.org
Email www. Stepchnage.org/contactus/sendusanemail.aspx

Gambling
Gamcare offers confidential counselling, advice and information for anyone affected by a gambling dependency.

Tel:0808 802 0133 www.gamcare.org.uk

Appendix 2
EMPLOYEE WELLNESS ACTION PLAN
The information in this form will be held confidentially and should be regularly reviewed by the employee and line manager. Whilst the employee only needs to provide information that they are comfortable sharing and that relates to their role and

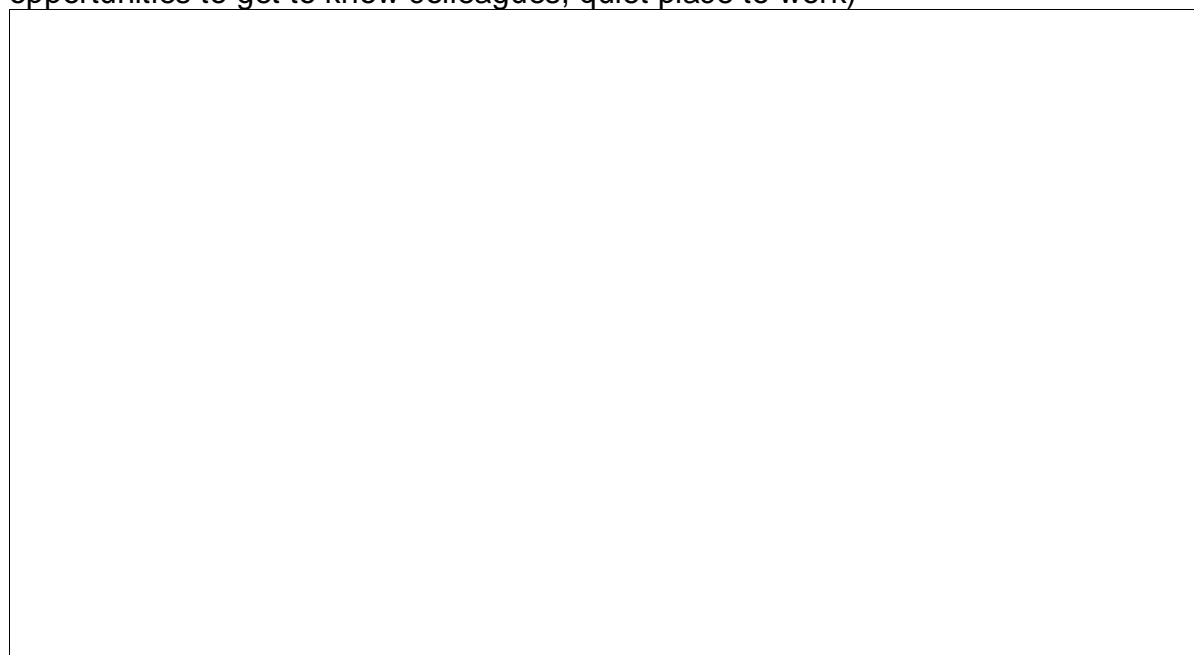Cardiff Council – Mental Health Manager's Guide
15

workplace, the aim is to provide support and therefore the sharing of information will aid this. It can help the employee and manager to agree, together, how to practically support you the employee in your role and address any health needs. It is the responsibility of the manager to ensure that data gathered in this form will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone without the permission of the employee, the exception to this is safeguarding or criminal issues were confidentiality cannot be ensured.

However, it should be recognised that some mental health issues are irregular and ill defined. The unpredictability may therefore make the completion of a plan difficult.

The employee may wish to complete the action plan themselves and then arrange a meeting to discuss. Remember it is important to choose an appropriate place – somewhere private and quiet where the person feels comfortable and equal.

1. What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?
(For example taking an adequate lunch break away from your desk, getting some exercise before or after work or in your lunchbreak, light and space in the office, opportunities to get to know colleagues, quiet place to work)

2. What can your manager do to proactively support you to stay mentally healthy at work? (For example regular feedback and catch-ups, flexible working patterns, explaining wider organisational developments minimising impact of unsuitable environment (heat, light, noise, etc), home working)

3. Are there any situations at work that can trigger poor mental health
for you? (For example conflict at work, organisational change, tight deadlines,
something not going to plan)

4. How might experiencing poor mental health impact on your work?
(For example you may find it difficult to make decisions, struggle to prioritise work
tasks, difficulty with concentration, drowsiness, confusion, headaches, tiredness)
What does good mental health at work look like for you?

5. Are there any early warning signs that we might notice when you are starting to experience poor mental health? (For example changes in normal working patterns, withdrawing from colleagues tiredness, changes in expressing self, changes in clothing/hygiene)

6. What support could be put in place to minimise triggers or to support you to manage symptoms? (For example: extra catch-up time with line manager, environmental factors)

7. Are there elements of your individual working style or temperament that it is worth your manager being aware of?

(For example a preference for more face to face or more email contact, a need for quiet reflection time prior to meetings or creative tasks, negotiation on deadlines before they are set, having access to a mentor for questions you might not want to bother your manager about, having a written plan of work in place which can be reviewed and amended regularly, clear deadlines if you have a tendency to over-work a task, tendency to have particularly high or low energy in the morning or in the afternoon)

8. If we notice early warning signs that you are experiencing poor
mental health – what should we do?
(For example talk to you discreetly about it, contact someone that you have asked to
be contacted)

9. What steps can you take if you start to experience poor mental health at work? Is
there anything we need to do to facilitate them?
(For example you might like to take a break from your desk and go for a short walk,
or ask your line manager for support)

10. Is there anything else that you would like to share?

11. Agreed actions(if appropriate)

12. What (if any) information may be shared with colleagues?

Employee signature_____

Date_____

Line manager signature_____

Date_____

Date to be reviewed_____