



## Mental Health Policy

**Policy Number:**

065-2021

**Academic Year:**

2023/2024 Onwards

**Target Audience:**

All Staff

**Summary of Contents**

To outline the Colleges commitment to providing a healthy, safe, and supportive working environment that promotes positive mental health of all its employees.

**Enquiries**

Any enquiries about the contents of this document should be addressed to:

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**Review Information:**

First Created: December 2020

Last Reviewed: June 2023

Next Review: June 2025

**Approval By:**

*Approval is for new Policies and substantive changes to existing policies during a review*

CMT: June 2023

Governing Body: 2 October 2023

**Related Documents:**

Sick Absence Policy

Stress Policy

**Superseded Documents (if applicable):**

N/A

**Date of Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations Screening (Section 75):**

January 2021

**Date of Last Accessibility Screening:**

August 2023



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## 1.0 Change History

Changes to this SOP are documented in Appendix 1 of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document, [you can click here to view the change history](#).

## 2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The College is committed to providing a healthy, safe, and supportive working environment that promotes positive mental health of all its employees. Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being and affects how individuals think, feel and act.
- 2.2 The College recognises that individuals may experience different levels of mental ill-health and that it may develop at any stage.
- 2.3 The College is committed to raising awareness of mental health matters and has signed up and committed to the Mental Health Charter, which is jointly produced by the Equality Commission, Action Mental Health, Disability Action, Mindwise, Mental Health Foundation and Niamh. The Charter provides a framework for working towards mentally healthy workplaces.
- 2.4 The College has put in place measures to help and support employees with mental health and provides training and techniques to encourage employees to look after their own mental health and build resilience.
- 2.5 The College is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations in accordance with Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in its policies and practices.
- 2.6 The College will provide this policy in alternative formats on request where reasonably practicable, e.g., Braille, Large Print, Computer Disk, Audio Formats, etc, and/or alternative language.

## 3.0 Aim of the Policy

- 3.1 The aim of this policy is to promote the mental wellbeing of all staff and ensure they are treated fairly and equally by:
  - providing information, support services and raising awareness about mental wellbeing;
  - providing opportunities for employees to look after their mental wellbeing and encourage employees to look after their own mental health and build resilience;
  - providing training to Managers to ensure they are equipped to support employees: and
  - promoting policies and practices that promote wellbeing.

## 4.0 Definition

- 4.1 Mental illness is a medically diagnosed condition, which can range from the severe end of the spectrum to the mild.

4.2 Mental health difficulties can affect people at any stage in their lives and may include:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Phobias
- Eating Disorders
- Schizophrenia
- Psychosis
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Personality Disorders
- Bipolar Disorder

4.3 Mental well-being issues can affect everyone at any time.

## **5.0 Objectives of the Policy**

5.1 The College will:

- provide information for employees to increase their awareness of mental wellbeing;
- provide opportunities for employees to look after their mental wellbeing, through physical activity, activities and social events;
- help develop skills among staff to reduce stress, increase resilience and improve coping skills;
- endeavour to identify and address any aspects of the working environment that may adversely affect mental wellbeing;
- encourage self-awareness for staff to recognise problems at an early stage;
- ensure adequate systems of support are in place;
- offer employees the opportunity to access flexible working/work life balance;
- through an ongoing programme of training and awareness training, reduce the stigma associated with mental health;
- provide prevention training for line managers to support staff and advise how to manage their own mental health through self care;
- provide support for staff to assist with recognising the early signs and symptoms for early intervention with students and how to manage their own mental health through self care;
- manage conflict quickly and encourage a workplace free from bullying and harassment, racism or discrimination;
- show a positive attitude to job applicants with mental health issues, including having positive statement in recruitment literature;
- ensure that all staff involved in the recruitment process are aware of mental health issues and the Disability Discrimination Act;

- endeavour to ensure there are sufficient trained mental health first aiders available on campuses;
- ensure that this policy is linked to other College policies, e.g. Sickness Absence, Stress Management and Dignity at Work Policies;
- Utilise Mental Health Action Plans for those who may have suffered from mental health and for new starts as part of their health declaration process to show commitment to mental health; and
- work with other relevant agencies to rehabilitate staff who had, or have, mental illness.

## 6.0 Roles

- 6.1 CMT and Human Resources will be responsible for the implementation of the policy.
- 6.2 The Internal Equality Working Group will contribute to the implementation of the policy.
- 6.3 Steps will be taken to raise awareness of mental health and stress issues by the Human Resources Team who will continue to monitor stress among the workforce in the College

## 7.0 Assistance and Support

- 7.1 Sources of assistance and support will be identified to assist staff when dealing with mental health issues.
- 7.2 Staff can access support directly from their Head of Department/Head of Unit or Human Resources.
- 7.3 Access to trained Mental Health First Aiders <https://serc2.sharepoint.com/sites/o-my/SitePages/HM.aspx>.
- 7.4 Inspire provides an independent confidential counselling service with access to qualified counsellors on the Inspire helpline by contacting 0800 800 0002 and are available 24 hours per day, 365 days a year.
- 7.5 Inspire Wellbeing Hub is available for all staff and provides instant access to a range of information, guidance, screening, and intervention/ self referral tools, specifically to help care for individual wellbeing needs. The Inspire Support hub can be accessed: <https://www.inspiresupporthub.org/login> (user name SERCSTAFF)
- 7.6 Pastoral Care visits to provide support and assistance and can be arranged by Human Resources.
- 7.7 Access to the Mind Yourself Wellbeing App, in the Healthy Mind Section for information and wellbeing directory of support services <https://serc2.sharepoint.com/sites/o-my/SitePages/HM.aspx>
- 7.8 Dignity at Work Advisors to assist staff with concerns in relation to bullying and harassment which may be affecting their mental health.
- 7.9 Human Resources can access further support from sources such as Occupational Health or External Agencies. All matters relating to the mental health of staff will be treated with the strictest confidence. Information will only be shared with the consent of the staff member.

## **8.0 Monitoring Arrangements**

- 8.1 Human Resources will monitor the policy on a regular basis to assess effectiveness and consider the equality implications.

## **9.0 Communication Plan**

- 9.1 This Policy will be uploaded to the College intranet and referred to in staff induction and training.

## **10.0 Review**

- 10.1 This Policy will be reviewed biennially, or when the need for change has been identified.

## Appendix 1: Document Change History

Version	Date	Change Detail
1.0	December 2020	Created
1.1	June 2023	Updates Made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Update at Para (now) 5.1 Objectives to reflect MH Action plans are developed and in place.</li><li>• Update at Para (now) 6.2 to clarify role of College's internal equality group.</li></ul>
1.2	August 2023	Transferred to new Accessibility Template