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| Staffordshire University Academies Trust | | Trust Policy Document | | | |
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Staffordshire University Academies Trust

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

2019-2022

1. Purpose

Staffordshire University Academies Trust (SUAT) is committed to providing an environment where staff are fully motivated to contribute to and deliver the highest quality education, achieve job satisfaction, and where learners enjoy and thrive in their educational environment to achieve better outcomes.

Staffordshire University Academies Trust's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy's purpose is to:

- 1.1 Shape a positive mental health and wellbeing culture and support Academies to address needs in their individual settings, advocating the sharing of good practice to encourage and develop involvement as a cohesive educational community with accessible arrangements.
- 1.2 Manage, support and assist staff and pupils to maintain and develop their physical and mental health and wellbeing. This will be aided by the development of awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing issues for all staff and pupils by providing appropriate training, support programmes and channels of communication.
- 1.3 Ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the health, safety and welfare of staff and pupils is maintained through the prevention, early intervention and promotion of self-care, taking proactive measures to prevent absence due to mental ill health and ensuring that staff and pupils perform to the highest possible standard.
- 1.4 Promote positive mental health and wellbeing, offering strategies and initiatives, including self-help techniques to develop and preserve resilience by proactively promoting personal responsibility.
- 1.5 Encourage staff and pupils to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle reduce to risks of mental ill health associated with individual lifestyle choices.
- 1.6 Recognise that staff may need to take time off work to due to ill health, or receive appropriate health related support to and assistance to enable them to fulfil their role effectively and assist those with mental health issues to return or remain in work by making reasonable adjustments, in a confidential and supportive manner.
- 1.7 Maintain a safe environment, taking reasonable care to prevent issues surrounding the mental wellbeing from occurring within the workplace. Provide mental health first aid to preserve life where a person may be at risk of harm to themselves or others, provide help to prevent a mental health issue from becoming more serious, promote recovery of good mental health and provide support to a person with a mental health issue.
- 1.8 Provide an open and positive ethos surrounding mental health and wellbeing, offering a network of mutual support and respect between colleagues and also across the Trust, to re-train the calibre of staff needed for an outstanding education system.

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- 1.9 Improve SUAT's effectiveness by actively reducing absenteeism and staff turnover, developing a more motivated workforce with high morale, improving team work, staff development and co-operation.
- 1.10 Promote Academies as hubs within the community which strive to support the development of positive mental health and wellbeing for all stakeholders.
- 1.11 Raise awareness surrounding mental health and wellbeing with parents and carers through the signposting of a range of resources and information which can be used to support their families.
- 1.12 Provide platforms of support for pupils so that they know what help is available when they need it.
- 1.13 Raise awareness of the potential adversities that can affect mental health and wellbeing and promote strategies that can build resilience and self-management.

2. Vision

2.1 SUAT's vision is to achieve better outcomes for all of our children and young people by providing an outstanding set of inclusive and aspirational learning experiences. We will realise this by:

- Raising standards of pupil progress and attainment by focussing on the core business of learning and teaching and by providing learning opportunities and varied experiences for our pupils.
- Delivering a knowledge and skills based curriculum that is tailored to individual learning needs.
- Promoting the spiritual, moral, social, emotional and cultural development of every learner.
- Working together to maximise the power of mutual collaboration and support.
- Sharing resources, staff, areas of expertise and facilities to achieve economies of scale.
- Creating highly effective leadership at all levels and seeking to pool strategic capacity.
- Constantly developing our ability to support the wellbeing of all staff and pupils.

2.2 Working in cohesion to achieve our vision will take many different forms; Staffordshire University Academies Trust and its Academies recognise that one size won't fit all of what we do with regards to positive mental health and wellbeing strategies. Where it makes sense we will integrate services, collaborate to share good practice and learn from others, and work together for the purpose of improving outcomes for the children of Staffordshire. It is essential that we preserve and develop the wellbeing and job satisfaction of staff in a profession which has the extensive potential to positively impact young lives.

2.3 Positive mental health and wellbeing for both staff and pupils must be at the forefront of our approach; ensuring optimum physical and mental health will provide the foundations of high aspirations and excellence for all. Developing a strong partnership between the staff, pupils, and the wider community will support academies in delivering an outstanding learning experience for everyone and the creation of independent learners fit for the demands of the 21st Century.

3. Mentally Healthy Workforces

3.1 If we're in good mental health, we can cope with life and daily tasks, play a full part in family, workplace and social life as well as make the most of our potential. Positive mental health allows people to:

- Realise their full potential

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- Cope with the stresses of life
- Work productively
- Make meaningful contributions to their communities

3.2 A good indication of the quality of our mental health can be shown by:

- How we feel, think, and behave
- How we cope with the ups and downs of everyday life
- How we feel about ourselves and our life
- How we see ourselves and our future
- How we deal with negative things that happen in our life
- Our self-esteem or confidence

Individuals with good mental wellbeing are therefore able to:

- Feel relatively confident in themselves and have positive self-esteem
- Feel and express a range of emotions
- Build and maintain good relationships with others
- Feel engaged with the world around them
- Live and work productively
- Cope with the stresses of daily life
- Adapt and manage in times of change and uncertainty

3.3 A mentally healthy workforce can be characterised by various factors, including:

- Accurate, timely, informative and appropriate two-way communication, supported by professional relationships based on trust and shared values. Staff work proactively as a team, in collaboration with each other.
- Leaders supporting staff to see where they fit into the bigger organisational picture, and pursue effective line management.
- Staff devote time to effective working practice that makes a positive difference to the lives of young people.
- Staff promote positivity and support leaders in driving the vision, values and development of their Academy setting and the trust as a whole.
- Staff with mental health and wellbeing issues are assisted to return to work, or remain in work by making reasonable adjustments, in a supportive manner. Absence due to mental ill health is managed with due care and confidentiality.
- A culture which allows staff and pupils to talk openly about their mental wellbeing, to minimise related grievances and provide support to those affected is promoted and encouraged.
- Staff have the appropriate knowledge, training and approaches to supporting concerns and issues with mental ill health. Staff can recognise potential symptoms of mental ill health and understand how to assist colleagues and pupils.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Managing and supporting positive mental health and wellbeing is the responsibility of both the employer and the employee. In order for people to feel good and do well it is important that the conditions into which they are born, live and work support their ability to cope with life's pressures,

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build resilience and promote good mental health, as outlined in section three. Most importantly, it is crucial that mental health and wellbeing issues are managed with appropriate confidentiality.

4.2 Local Academy Council:

- Review the results of stress and wellbeing surveys and support the Academy in developing strategies to reduce mental ill health and promote wellbeing.
- Monitor and review the mental health, workload and wellbeing of the Head Teacher/Principal, provide support and guidance.
- Ensure adequate resources for mental health and wellbeing strategies are available, including budgetary requirements.
- Ensure there is a provision of adequate training, induction and resources to enable everyone in the Academy to work and learn in a safe environment, with access to resources and information regarding supportive mechanisms.
- Review and monitor the effectiveness of this policy including the Academy's specific initiatives detailed in the policy appendix.
- Monitor and review mental health, workload and wellbeing strategies and issues.
- Provide a working environment that is safe, healthy and promotes wellbeing.
- Provide adequate welfare facilities for staff and pupils.

4.3 The Principal/Head Teacher:

- Promote a positive and open culture in their Academy, with proactive management of mental health and wellbeing issues.
- Report to LAC members on key mental health and wellbeing issues, including the results of stress and wellbeing surveys, and subsequent proposals for developing a positive approach for mental health and wellbeing based on the results of such surveys.
- Encourage staff to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle, as a proactive resilience technique to support positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Encourage staff to participate in mental health and wellbeing initiatives and training, utilise the resources available and manage their own health and wellbeing through positive health behaviours.
- Seek advice from other organisations or professionals, such as human resources, occupational health, health and safety advisers etc. and make referrals as and when necessary. Provide advice and support for staff to promote their wellbeing, and assist staff who wish to seek advice or self-refer to mental health care professionals in relation to their work.
- Ensure that all staff have access to relevant policies in relation to mental health and wellbeing, leaders and managers have appropriate information and training to support colleagues, including the identification and facilitation of appropriate training programmes.
- Ensure that staff are appropriately inducted to the Academy and have access to key contacts and resources for support.
- Devise and implement wellbeing strategies appropriate for their setting, staff and pupils, with the support of the leadership team and staffing structure as a whole, including the implementation of initiatives to reduce workload which are appropriate to the Academy's individual setting and needs.
- Share good practice with colleagues throughout the Multi Academy Trust.
- Ensure that whole Academy risk assessments, including team stress and wellbeing risk assessments, are reviewed at least on an annual basis, and before, where required.
- Ensure that individual risk assessments are undertaken, with the implementation of suitable control measures where required to reduce the risk to staff and pupils.

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- Ensure return to work interviews are conducted.

4.4 Senior Leaders:

- Promote a positive and open culture in their Academy, with proactive management of mental health and wellbeing initiatives, including effective working practice that makes a difference to the lives of young people, and leading on initiatives to reduce workload.
- Keep up to date with new developments in mental health and wellbeing initiatives for their Academy and support the Head Teacher / Principal in driving such initiatives.
- Ensure employees receive appropriate formal and informal training and supervision to support them in their role, an induction for all staff will be undertaken and records of such induction will be maintained. Leaders should include information regarding academy initiatives for workload, wellbeing and positive mental health.
- Ensure whole Academy and individual risk assessments are accurate, appropriate and reviewed to suitable intervals.
- Carry out investigations into accidents, incidents and violent occurrences which may negatively impact staff members and pupils. Produce reports / statements and amend risk assessments in accordance with findings, and communicate these to staff.
- Provide exemplary practice, guidance and support to staff on mental health and wellbeing issues, including undertaking training as required to support their role and develop their approach to mental ill health. Ensure availability and open door policy to staff who can approach them with concerns.
- Seek advice from other organisations or professionals, such as human resources, occupational health, health and safety advisers etc. making referrals as and when necessary.
- Support staff by ensuring that the working environment is assessed to remain appropriate and fit for purpose.
- Keep staff updated, as appropriate, with developments at work and share an understanding of how this may impact on their job and workload.
- Support the Head Teacher / Principal to devise and implement wellbeing strategies appropriate for their setting, staff and pupils, with the support of the staffing structure as a whole.
- Manage or seek appropriate advice for staff reporting concerns relating to workload, wellbeing and mental ill health, such as unmanageable workloads or lack of control over work, negative relationships or poor communication, lack of support, job insecurity or change management, high-risk roles, lone working.
- Encourage staff to participate in mental health and wellbeing initiatives and training, utilise the resources available and manage their own health and wellbeing through positive health behaviours.
- Provide an opinion about fitness for work, facilitate the successful return to work following absence due to ill health, conduct return to work meetings.
- Provide advice and support for staff to promote their wellbeing, and assist staff who wish to seek advice or self-refer to mental health care professionals in relation to their work.
- Appropriately manage and supervise any disclosures and subsequent referrals. Support pupils making disclosures and ensure staff who have received disclosures are debriefed in accordance with safeguarding procedures.
- Appropriately manage, report, debrief and support staff who have been subject to violent and aggressive incidents.
- Appoint a wellbeing champion for their Academy to raise awareness and promote positive mental health strategies and initiatives.

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4.5 Academy Staff:

- Read the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy.
- Report accidents, injuries and incidences of ill health to the appropriate person and in a timely manner.
- Staff are encouraged to participate in mental health and wellbeing initiatives and training, utilise the resources available and manage their own health and wellbeing through positive health behaviours.
- Maintain a healthy and active lifestyle, as a proactive resilience technique to support mental health and wellbeing.
- Comply with the Academy's health and safety arrangements, including the adherence to risk assessments, health and safety procedures and policies.
- Staff are encouraged to be supportive of colleagues and pupils who may be experiencing mental ill health, utilising techniques from training and support from line managers.
- Staff are encouraged to attend or be supported by sessions with professionals to improve and develop wellbeing, where this would provide beneficial outcomes.
- Provide accurate, timely and appropriate communication, maintained by professional relationships based on trust and shared values. Work proactively as a staffing team, in collaboration with each other and the leadership team.
- Staff are encouraged to participate in wellbeing activities and support the Academy in identifying and making improvements to the working environment.
- Staff are responsible for ensuring that whilst they are absent from work due to ill health, they do not undertake anything that could unnecessarily exacerbate or prolong their ill health/absence.
- Recognise the potential symptoms of mental ill health in staff and pupils, communicate, support the individual and escalate concerns in an appropriate and confidential manner.
- Communicate issues or concerns to an appropriate member of the leadership team, and in a timely manner.

4.6 The Premises Manager (or the member/s of staff assigned to that role):

- Support staff by ensuring that the working environment is assessed to remain appropriate and fit for purpose; ensure that any work that has health and safety implications is prioritised.
- Maintain the premises in a condition that is safe and suitable to work in and without significant risk and report any concerns regarding unresolved hazards in the Academy to the Senior Leadership Team immediately.
- Ensure that the premises are clean, the working environment is comfortable for staff and pupils.
- Ensure that all staff have access to academy risk assessments and health and safety documentation.
- Ensure that staff and pupils have access to welfare facilities which are maintained to a clean and safe standard.

4.7 Pupils / students:

- Follow safety rules intended to protect the health and safety of themselves and others.
- Follow safety instructions of teaching and support staff.
- Understand the support mechanisms in place at the Academy and how to access help where required, including pastoral support.
- Pupils are encouraged to talk about how they feel and communicate concerns or worries to Academy staff or agencies employed to support pupils.

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- Pupils are encouraged to participate in mental health and wellbeing initiatives instigated by the Academy, and offer feedback to improve the quality and success of such programmes.

4.8 Employer – SUAT

- Encourage a trust wide culture that enables employees to be able to talk openly about their mental wellbeing will minimise related discrimination and grievance incidents at the same time as providing support to those affected.
- Support Academies in shaping a mental health and wellbeing culture and initiatives to address needs in their individual settings, and advocate the sharing of good practice to encourage and develop involvement as a cohesive community with accessible arrangements.
- Provide advice and guidance to help Academies fulfil their health and safety responsibilities, promote and maintain a mentally healthy workforce.
- Promote the creation of a safe environment for employees and fulfil the duty to take reasonable care to prevent issues surrounding the mental wellbeing of their staff from occurring within the workplace.
- Aid Academies in taking proactive steps to maintain the mental health of all employees and to assist those with mental health issues to return or remain in work by making reasonable adjustments.
- Support Academies in conducting and reviewing stress risk assessments, the implementation of control measures and reviewing risk assessments to an appropriate frequency to measure the effectiveness of control measures.
- Identify the common causes of stress to plan what steps need to be taken to minimise the risk to their employees.
- Increase mental health awareness and offer support, resources and facilitate training for staff to be able to recognise the common symptoms and how to support colleagues experiencing poor mental health.
- Draft and/or advise on procedures and guidance relating to mental health and wellbeing and human resource management.
- Interpret and advise on new legislation impacting on the working environment.
- Be supportive during meetings, as required, to advise on occupational safety issues.
- Lead the SUAT Wellbeing Committee, conducting meetings on a termly basis to drive strategy and provide support.
- To encourage staff and pupils to maintain an active and healthy lifestyle and use self-help techniques to develop and preserve resilience by proactively promoting personal responsibility.
- Recognise that that staff may need to take time off work to due to ill health, or receive appropriate health related support to and assistance to enable them to fulfil their role effectively. To assist those with mental health issues to return or remain in work by making reasonable adjustments, in a confidential and supportive manner.
- Provide an open and positive culture surrounding mental health and wellbeing, offering a network of mutual support and respect between colleagues and across the trust.

5. Identifying Mental Health Conditions

5.1 Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It's about how we think, feel, act and also how we manage stress. The Health Education Authority defines Mental Health as “the emotional resilience which allows us to enjoy life and survive pain, disappointment and

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sadness. It is a positive sense of wellbeing which mental health is just as important as physical health and having good mental health can help people to feel better, sleep better and provide support in managing relationships, difficult situations and stress in everyday life.” Mental health can affect anyone and whilst most of the time those feelings pass, sometimes they develop into a more serious problem.

It is important to understand that everyone is different. Some may bounce back from a setback whilst others else may feel weighed down by it for a long time. Mental health doesn't always stay the same; it can change as circumstances change and as people move through different stages of their life.

Mental health issues are common, especially depression, anxiety and those associated with the misuse of drugs and alcohol. There can be a stigma attached to mental health problems which means that people feel uncomfortable about them and don't talk about them much. Many people aren't comfortable talking about their feelings, however, it is healthy to know, understand and say how you are feeling, to act as a positive coping mechanism and promote positive mental health.

Things that affect an individual's mental health can include:

Genes - some individuals are more likely to develop certain kind of mental health problems.

Upbringing - brings out personality traits and ways of thinking.

Life circumstances - situations, events and changes that happen to us throughout our life, like illness, relationships, money worries and financial wellbeing, work and employment issues.

Life choices - such as diet and exercise.

Support - how individuals cope can also be affected by how well other parts of life are going and how well supported we feel.

5.2 If an individual is experiencing one or more of the following feelings or behaviours can be an early warning sign of a problem:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking, or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused, forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Experiencing severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Having persistent thoughts and memories you can't get out of your head
- Hearing voices or believing things that are not true
- Thinking of harming yourself or others
- Inability to perform daily tasks like taking care of your children or getting to work or school

Staff should also be aware of potential signs of mental ill health specifically in pupils, and the routes of reporting this to the designated safeguarding lead to ensure a programme of appropriate support can be provided for pupils in need:

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- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Decline in academic achievement
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

6. Strategy

SUAT recognises that a wide range of factors may impact the mental health and wellbeing of both staff and pupils. Therefore, the overall strategy to promote and support mental health and wellbeing strategy must be reflective of such factors. Academies will tailor strategies to improve and develop mental health and wellbeing initiatives to their own individual setting and needs, which is reflective within the Appendix in Section 12 of this document. Trust-wide strategies are detailed below.

6.1 Internal Support Programmes

6.1.1 SUAT supports a number of wellbeing strategies and mechanisms, including:

- The SUAT annual conference provides opportunities for networking and staff development.
- Internally funded CPD programme to reduce training costs in Academies and Involving, encouraging and enabling staff to actively manage their own professional and personal development.
- Half termly Head Teacher/Principal and Business Team meetings provide clear lines of communication.
- Expectations surrounding workload and emails out of hours; SUAT supports its colleagues to have a good work / life balance and to work flexibly where they choose to. There is no expectation to respond immediately if staff receive this emails outside of their normal office hours.
- Compilation of policies, template procedures and the sharing of resources to reduce workload in Academies.
- Promotion of the clear identification (through routinely/annually reviewed job descriptions) of the duties and responsibilities relating to the employee roles, to aid them in the delivery of their work and managing the expectations of the job.
- Promotion of performance management processes for all staff with realistic and agreed targets for them and related to whole school priorities/targets.
- Behaviour policy and codes of conduct clearly outline expectations of pupils, staff members and Local Academy Council members.
- Annual calendar to aid advance planning, prioritisation and communication of key dates.
- Support for Academies ensuring statutory requirements are met.
- Continued use of vouchers for eligible display screen equipment users.
- Documentation and guidance to support the management and attendance at work, return to work discussions and compilation of risk assessments.
- Central team support for educational improvement and business functions, including on site and remote support, email circulations and communications containing links to resources.

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- Promotion of consultation with staff on decisions relating to their employment, encouraging them to seek third party advice i.e. to confer with their professional and union representatives where appropriate
- Granting special leave, as appropriate, in accordance with special leave guidance.
- Providing opportunities, where possible, for flexible working practices.
- Supporting the provision of adequate workplace facilities for breaks and relaxation.
- Providing an induction programme for new staff on an annual basis.
- Encouraging and developing digital links, to progress efficiencies including the sharing of good practice and resources to reduce workload; to improve inter-trust communications which emerge a supportive digital network for SUAT colleagues.

6.1.2 Training Programmes, CPD and Workshops

- Termly CPD to support and develop teaching and learning, governance, leadership, health and safety, data protection and finance.
- Partially or fully funded training to reduce strain on academy budgets in developing and supporting staff.
- The Trust invites staff from all Academies to the annual conference as an opportunity to network, share good practice and develop knowledge and skill bases.
- The apprenticeship levy is available to all academies to upskill their team staffing teams, provide confidence in staff and support their role in their individual setting.
- Access to training programmes at a reduced cost to improve accessibility to CPD by Academy staff.

6.1.3 Mental Health and Wellbeing Committee

Staffordshire University Academies Trust's Mental Health and Wellbeing Committee will:

- Comprise of the SUAT Deputy CEO, Operations Manager and academy representatives with a key interest in mental health and wellbeing and who hold the role of driving such culture and initiatives in their own setting.
- Meet termly, scheduling the dates for meetings every summer term, for the next academic year. Agendas will be set in advance of each meeting.
- Provide staff with the opportunity to provide their representative with information surrounding good practice and also issues, for discussion at each meeting.
- Promote the wellbeing of all employees and pupils within the Trust.
- Report meeting outcomes to Academy Leaders, Local Academy Councils, the Trust Senior Leadership Team and the Trust Board.
- Identify issues that challenge the wellbeing of the staff, communicate these issues to Leadership Teams, Local Academy Councils and the Trust Board, suggesting strategies for resolution.
- Evaluate the impact of any intervention to resolve wellbeing issues.
- Review the content and impact of the SUAT Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and Strategy annually, and report any alterations Trust-wide.
- Inform staff of mental health and wellbeing strategies via the most appropriate format for each individual Academy setting.
- Share positive practice with all Academies in the Trust.

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6.1.4 Head Teacher / Principal Wellbeing

Each Local Academy Council holds responsibilities for promoting and supporting the wellbeing of the Head Teacher / Principal in their particular Academy setting. LACs will take appropriate steps to ensure that the workload and wellbeing of the Head Teacher / Principal is monitored and reviewed, provide appropriate guidance and seek external support where this would be beneficial to improve the wellbeing of the Head Teacher / Principal and / or the workforce.

The Head Teacher / Principal and Leadership team have key roles in promoting academy culture and in turn should discuss issues or concerns with the Local Academy Council (or designated members thereof) as a form of two-way communication. Being instrumental in maintaining their own health is key as a positive demonstration of the Academy's ethos surrounding mental health and wellbeing and commitment to such developments.

Half termly EIP reports will consider and report on mental health and wellbeing, supporting each Academy by highlighting areas of good practice and successful strategies, and also where further support may be required.

6.1.5 Communication

Each individual Academy has an internal programme of support and associated points of contact which will be provided for staff upon induction. Pupils will also be taught about how to access the pastoral support which is available within each setting, details of which will be published by Academies using Section 12 of this document.

It is accepted that work-related stress is an integral part of human resource management and its effective management revolves around an open and positive culture of mental health and wellbeing, offering a network of mutual support and respect between colleagues and also across the Trust. The workplace culture should encourage good two-way communications and close employee involvement. SUAT encourages such communication which is made in an appropriate and professional manner, is accurate and timely, where all members of the team can contribute ideas and influences decision making processes as far as is reasonably practicable in the workplace.

Staffordshire University Academies Trust has two members of central staff who have Mental Health First Aid training for staff, who are available to support colleagues via the following methods of contact:

Deputy CEO – tward@suatrust.co.uk

Operations Manager – hkirkham@suatrust.co.uk

Mental Health First Aid recommends a strategy of communication for those who identify a person displaying signs of potential mental ill health. This is known as the ALGEE method and comprises of five stages of communication with the individual:

- Assess the individual for the risk of harm
- Listen non-judgementally, without expressing negative cues
- Give reassurance to the individual, and suitable information
- Encourage appropriate professional help
- Encourage self-help and other support strategies

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6.1.6 Managing Attendance at Work

Staff attendance at work is supported by the SUAT Managing Attendance at Work Policy, which strives to provide an open and positive ethos surrounding mental health and wellbeing, offering a network of mutual support and respect between colleagues and also across the Trust.

It recognises that whilst a certain level of absence due to ill health may be inevitable, a reasonable balance must be maintained between the needs of the business and those of employees to take time off from work due to ill health.

The Managing Attendance at Work Policy outlines what is expected from managers and employees when such situations occur (both short and long term sickness absence) in order to ensure that support and treatment is consistent, lawful, fair and equitable. SUAT expects its employees to take responsibility for managing their own health wherever possible to ensure regular attendance at work, and to engage fully in the attendance management process when sickness absence occurs.

Return to work meetings will be conducted with staff following an absence from work due to ill health as a method of two-way communication, providing an opportunity to discuss and update the absent staff member on any work related issues or changes that have taken place or occurred during their absence and for the staff member to communicate outstanding or underlying issues or concerns which can be supported by the Academy.

6.1.7 Surveys

Whole Academy wellbeing surveys can be a useful mechanism for identifying trends and/or key areas which trigger stress in the workplace, therefore impacting on mental ill health. Such surveys will investigate the levels and/or causes of stress amongst the staffing body as a whole and should be undertaken at appropriate intervals to aid the process of risk managing stress in the workplace, and implementing suitable control measures informed by the results of the survey.

It is therefore integral to the process of managing stress and mental ill health in the workplace, that employees make such valuable contributions by completing surveys at such intervals.

6.1.8 Risk Assessments

Employers must by law carry out risk assessments with regard to any work process which poses a potential risk to the health and safety of employees, therefore, the academy risk management process must consider wellbeing and work related stress.

As part of the general risk assessment process, managers must consider whether staff may be suffering from work related stress. Stress is can be revealed by observations of employee difficulties or employee complaints of difficulties and ill-health. It may also be revealed through the following sources of qualitative and quantitative data; sickness absences, personal development review process, team meetings, stress survey results, high staff turnover/staff leaving, exit interviews, low productivity, focus groups, audit findings, etc.

Whilst Academies utilise a team stress risk assessment which is informed by the results of wellbeing and stress surveys amongst other academy based methods of communication and gathering of such data, individual risk assessments may also be required as an additional mechanism to support individuals indicating mental ill health.

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The team stress risk assessment must be reviewed at least annually and following any significant change. A stress risk assessment is a continuous process which should be refined and adjusted as pressures change; control measures should be monitored and developed if necessary.

Research has identified six aspects of work which, if managed poorly, could create stress in the workplace and should be considered as part of the team stress risk assessment:

Demands – such as workload and work environment.

Control – a person’s own influence over how their job is carried out.

Support – from colleagues, line-manager and organisation.

Relationships – to reduce conflict and deal with unacceptable behaviour.

Role – understanding of the job content and expectations.

Change – how change is managed in the organisation.

The outcomes of any stress risk assessment must be communicated to all relevant employees to ensure that they are aware of the hazards and the actions to be taken to prevent and minimise the potential for ill health caused by work related stress.

Individual employees may differ in their ability to cope with work related as well as external pressures. Where this is identified, the employee’s concerns and the action taken to manage the sources of negative pressure shall be recorded within the individual’s personnel file by the appropriate means. Confidential/sensitive information provided by individual employees should be taken into account when completing the team stress risk assessment, however, such information about individuals should be recorded separately and treated in confidence.

At times, employees may highlight concerns regarding stress that are caused by factors outside of work. Action taken to help or support employees through such time will also be documented within the personnel file through an individual risk assessment, or where a risk assessment is not appropriate, another format of written recordings.

When deciding upon the control measures needed to eliminate or minimise the causes of negative pressure, it must be approached in the same way as any other workplace hazard. It must be assessed and, where found to be excessive, appropriately modified. The following three levels of interventions provide the categories of controls that can be implemented to help eliminate and reduce the causes of negative pressure as well as minimise the effect of negative pressure. Whenever possible primary interventions should be used as these tackle the root causes.

1. **Primary Interventions** – those that seek to remove or modify the cause at source;
2. **Secondary Interventions**- those that seek to equip people to deal more effectively with the pressures they encounter in life;
3. **Tertiary Interventions** - seek to treat any damage that is already done.

6.2 Professional support

SUAT recognises that internal programmes of support may need to be supported by external agencies to develop effectiveness of the mental health and wellbeing strategy in academy settings.

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6.2.1 Occupational Health

Occupational health is a specialist branch of medicine that looks at health and work together, rather than as two separate issues. It deals with the effect that work can have on health and health can have on work. This is because under certain circumstances work can affect our health, or our own health problems can affect our ability to work.

Occupational health works to help prevent people being made ill by their work. It also works with people and employers to try and prevent people with health problems becoming disadvantaged or excluded from the benefits of paid employment.

It looks for reasonable ways to adapt to health problems that are causing problems with someone's work, protecting their ability to contribute and earn their living even if suffering poor health. It is therefore a branch of preventive medicine, existing to advise those affected by problems created through ill health - namely working people and their employers.

SUAT Academies have access to Occupational Health support via referrals through Staffordshire County Council which can be made upon assessment of an individual's situation by the Academy/Trust and with their consent to do so.

6.2.2 General Practitioner Referrals

The GP's role is to provide care and treatment and help people recognise that getting back to work can be good for recovery and health. They are helped in this by the 'fit note', which, unlike the old medical statement or certificate that it replaced in 2010, focuses on what people can do rather than what they can't do. The fit note helps to improve the flow of information between employers, individuals and GPs by enabling patients to convey information to their employer about when the GP thinks they may be ready to return to work and what adjustments might help facilitate that.

Staff who are experiencing mental ill health can seek advice, support and received referrals to professionals who will provide specific help in relation to the needs of the individual to which the referral relates. A GP will be involved in diagnosing conditions and in prescribing or advising on treatment, and may provide the individual with support such as medication, counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy and psychotherapy.

6.2.3 Absence Insurance

Academies have the option to insure their staff against absences from work. Such policies can provide supportive mechanisms including mental health support, counselling services, relationship therapy, nurse advice lines and health checks. Academies inform staff upon induction should such services be available in their setting. The decision to purchase this type of insurance is made by the LAC of that Academy.

6.2.4 Resources

There is a wealth of external resources which are easily accessible online. Links to some key online resources relating to mental health and wellbeing support are detailed within section nine of this policy.

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Staff are encouraged, through a programme of self-care and proactive management of their own mental health, to access online resources and external programmes of support such as GP referrals and occupational health, where this will aid the improvement of their mental health and wellbeing.

6.3 Reducing workload

The format in which individual academies pursue the reduction of workload in their setting will be dependent on the specific operations of each Academy in accordance with both their education and business functionality and will therefore be detailed in Section 12 of this document.

SUAT promotes its expectations surrounding workload and emails out of hours and supports its colleagues to have a good work / life balance and to work flexibly where they choose to, and promotes a number of techniques and strategies to reduce workload as detailed in section 6.1 of this policy.

6.4 Self-help and resilience techniques

Mental Health Organisations provide various self-care techniques for individuals to be proactive in developing their own positive mental health. These include the following techniques:

1. *Talk about your feelings* - Talking about your feelings can help you stay in good mental health and deal with times when you feel troubled.

2. *Keep active* - Regular exercise can boost your self-esteem and can help you concentrate, sleep, and feel better. Exercise keeps the brain and your other vital organs healthy, and is also a significant benefit towards improving your mental health.

3. *Eat well* - Your brain needs a mix of nutrients in order to stay healthy and function well, just like the other organs in your body. A diet that's good for your physical health is also good for your mental health.

4. *Drink sensibly* - We often drink alcohol to change our mood. Some people drink to deal with fear or loneliness, but the effect is only temporary.

When the drink wears off, you feel worse because of the way the alcohol has affected your brain and the rest of your body. Drinking is not a good way to manage difficult feelings.

5. *Keep in touch* - There's nothing better than catching up with someone face to face, but that's not always possible. You can also give them a call, drop them a note, or chat to them online instead. Keep the lines of communication open: it's good for you!

6. *Ask for help* - None of us are superhuman. We all sometimes get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel or when things don't go to plan. If things are getting too much for you and you feel you can't cope, ask for help. Your family or friends may be able to offer practical help or a listening ear. Local services are there to help you.

7. *Take a break* - A change of scene or a change of pace is good for your mental health. It could be a five-minute pause from cleaning your kitchen, a half-hour lunch break at work, or a weekend exploring somewhere new. A few minutes can be enough to de-stress you. Give yourself some 'me time'.

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8. *Do something you're good at* - What do you love doing? What activities can you lose yourself in? What did you love doing in the past? Enjoying yourself can help beat stress. Doing an activity, you enjoy probably means you're good at it, and achieving something boosts your self-esteem

9. *Accept who you are* - We're all different. It's much healthier to accept that you're unique than to wish you were more like someone else. Feeling good about yourself boosts your confidence to learn new skills, visit new places and make new friends. Good self-esteem helps you cope when life takes a difficult turn.

10. *Care for others* - 'Friends are really important. We help each other whenever we can, so it's a two-way street, and supporting them uplifts me.' Caring for others is often an important part of keeping up relationships with people close to you. It can even bring you closer together.

11. *Switch off from distractions*; make time for yourself as a regular part of your routine. Schedule a reminder if you need to.

12. *Spending less of your free time in front of a screen, phone included*. Don't feel pressured to always be 'doing' something.

13. *Accept that mistakes will happen*; chasing perfection can create unrealistic expectations. Bottling up your feelings and assuming they will go away; this can make things worse in the long run.

7. Pupil Health and Wellbeing

Educational establishments have a key role in promoting positive mental health in children and helping to prevent mental health problems. Each individual SUAT Academy offers their own programme of mental health and wellbeing education for pupils. Through demonstrating and supporting communication surrounding positive mental health in Academies, creating an ethos, policies and behaviours that support mental health and resilience, and which everyone understands, children are helped to develop social relationships, support each other and seek help when they need it.

Academies:

- Help children to be resilient learners.
- Teach children social and emotional skills and an awareness of mental health.
- Train staff in the early identification of children who have mental health needs and planning support to meet their needs, including working with specialist services.
- Implement care plans and risk assessments as required for the individual.
- Work with parents and carers to support children.
- Support and train staff to develop their skills and their own resilience.
- Utilise child specific mental health and wellbeing resources to aid their approach.
- Deliver PHSE and RSE education.
- Follow the E-Safety Policy and develop e-safety strategies to keep children safe from online influences and harm and educate children in the safe use of technology.

Each Academy has different approaches to pupil mental health and wellbeing, which may include:

- Pupil-led activities.

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- Campaigns and assemblies to raise awareness of mental health.
- Peer mentoring – children working together to solve problems and planned sessions where identified adults mentor a designated child.
- Transition programmes.
- Mental health teaching programmes
- Information around the Academy about positive mental health and where to go for help and support.
- Nurture groups and interventions.
- Forest school.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Staffordshire University Academies Trust Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and associated strategies is scheduled for formal review on or before 31st October 2022. The policy and strategies, will however, be subject to regular review of effectiveness throughout the three-year lifespan. This document will be subject to review by the Deputy CEO, Operations Manager and Mental Health and Wellbeing Committee.

Each Academy will review their own arrangements, strategies and initiatives for effectiveness at least annually, and feed back to the Trust Mental Health and Wellbeing Committee and Local Academy Council.

9. Resources

Mental Health First Aid - <https://mhfaengland.org/>

World Health Organisation - <https://www.who.int/>

Young Minds - <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

Education Support Partnership - <https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/>

Mentally Healthy Schools - <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/whole-school-approach/supporting-staff-wellbeing/>

National Children's Bureau - <https://www.ncb.org.uk/>

Samaritans - <https://www.samaritans.org/>

10. SUAT Policies and Procedures

- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Health, Safety and Welfare Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Behaviour Policy
- Attendance at Work Policy
- Pupil Attendance Policy

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- Promoting Welfare and Wellbeing by Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Safeguarding Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Performance Management Policies
- Managing Violence and Aggression Policy
- Accident and Incident Reporting Guidance
- First Aid Policy
- Flexible Working Application
- Return to Work
- Special Leave Guidance

11. Key Legislation and Policy

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Mental Health Act 1983
- National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990
- National Service Framework for Mental Health 1999/2004
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- National Health Service Act 2006
- Mental Health Act 2007
- Health and Social Care Act 2008
- Equality Act 2010
- No Health Without Mental Health 2011
- Preventing Suicide in England 2012
- Parity of Esteem (Health and Social Care Act 2012)
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Mental Health Discrimination Act 2013
- Crisis Care Concordat 2014
- Future in mind: promoting, protecting and improving our children and young people's mental health and wellbeing 2015
- Five Year Forward View for Mental Health 2016
- Social Work for Better Mental Health 2016

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12. Academy Specific Arrangements

Academy specific arrangements will comprise of the following aspects amongst other strategies detailed within section 12 of this policy.

- Staff wellbeing and positive mental health initiatives
- Pupil wellbeing and positive mental health initiatives
- Key points of contact in the Academy setting and pastoral care
- Methods of reducing workload and promoting work/life balance
- Academy specific policies, procedures, resources and tools