MENTAL HEALTH POLICY

Purpose and scope

This is the mental health policy statement for Sparta Systems. It is owned by the Business Manager and sets out our commitment to mental health across all our operations. This has been developed with our partner for mental health, Mates in Mind. Mates in Mind is a registered UK charity raising awareness, addressing the stigma of poor mental health and promoting positive mental wellbeing across workplaces, focussing on construction as well as related sectors.

Introduction

Sparta Systems is committed to ensuring that no employee should be injured or made ill through their work and also recognises that mental health is an integral part of overall employee wellbeing. Consequently, Sparta Systems believes that mental wellbeing is essential to staff engagement and productivity at work. This policy sets out the framework for Sparta Systems to provide a positive environment which promotes and supports mental wellbeing for our employees and others within the workplace.

The policy also aims to raise awareness and address the perceived stigma of poor mental health at work. Further, it aims to ensure that those experiencing mental health issues are supported through a number of measures with respect, confidentiality and without discrimination.

This policy applies to the entire organisation including employees and third-party contract staff. It should be used in conjunction with all other policies and referred to when dealing with any other element of company operations.

Promoting mental wellbeing at Sparta Systems

Mental health problems and stress can affect any staff member regardless of their position within the organisation. Sparta Systems is committed to providing a positive working environment and appropriate support in order to have a positive effect on our staff's mental health.

Sparta Systems will promote a culture of positive mental health and wellbeing to all staff by:

- Educating staff and managers to identify and manage mental health and stress effectively.
- Providing assistance, advice and support to staff suffering with mental health issues.
- Identifying potential workplace stressors and conducting suitable and sufficient risk assessments (including mental health risk assessments) to eliminate, reduce and/or control the risk of stress.
- Adopting a positive approach to employing staff with a history of mental health problems by reviewing employment practices to ensure that people with mental health problems are not excluded, explicitly or implicitly.
- Having mental health champions within the workplace who can be a confidential contact should the employee not want to discuss directly with their line manager.
- Providing staff various platforms to express views.

- Ensuring that the mental health policy overarches all our other relevant workplace policies.

Identifying mental health issues

A pattern of uncharacteristic behaviour that continues for some time may indicate an underlying mental health problem. Managers and staff need to be aware and sensitive to a colleague who may exhibit changes in behaviours and offer support appropriately. These can include for example:

- Absenteeism.
- Significant changes in mood.
- Unusual deterioration in standard of work, reduced productivity, poor decisions or indecision.
- Poor morale or lack of co-operation.
- Uncharacteristic mistakes.
- Frequent complaints of tiredness, aches and pains.
- Alcohol or drug misuse.

Managing stress at work

Sparta Systems considers that the management of stress is essential particularly during change and any temporary increased pressure on resources. Whilst it may not be possible to eliminate all work-related stressors, the aim is to create a culture in which the issue of workplace stress is treated sensitively and seriously. If staff are suffering from non-work-related stress, Sparta Systems will offer support for the member of staff wherever appropriate.

Where work-related stress has been identified as a hazard, Sparta Systems will assess the associated risks to relevant staff health and wellbeing through the risk assessment process. Relevant staff will be consulted during this process in order to ensure full participation in any subsequent preventative/protective control measures identified. These specific risk assessments will be monitored for effectiveness at regular intervals by relevant management.

Responsibilities of managers

Managers will:
- Ensure that individuals suffering from mental health issues are treated fairly, sympathetically and consistently, whatever the cause.
- Consider staff concerns seriously, investigate and, wherever possible, address work or other organisational factors that may contribute to individuals' stress levels or other mental health issues.
- Ensure there is meaningful and constructive consultation and communication during times of organisational change.
- Make adjustments for individuals that allow them to attend counselling or any other support, wherever this is possible within the operational demands of the service.
- Manage any related sickness absence in accordance with the Sparta Systems' sickness policy.
- Encourage staff to consult with our Mental Health First Aiders, their own GP or the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), should concern over an individual's mental health arise.
- Ensure staff have appropriate information on preventative measures and support available.
- Provide sufficient communication to keep employees adequately informed about any information that may impact the organisation and/or their specific roles.
- Manage conflicts effectively and ensure that the workplace is free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and prejudice.

Training

To support staff members, as well as manage their own wellbeing, it is important that managers and other staff members, are educated on mental health issues in the workplace. This awareness will help to break down any potential stigma associated with mental health issues and will assist in recognising how to support a staff member in need. Sparta Systems are committed to;

- Provide new employees with a comprehensive induction programme in order to ensure an understanding of the organisation.
- Provide all new starters with details of established policies/procedures and roles that they are expected to carry out.
- Implement timely training for all staff to encourage an open dialogue about stress and mental health. This may be done through wellbeing awareness training days or toolbox talks.
- Provide adequate resources to enable managers to effectively implement the organisation's mental health policy.
- Encourage staff to have open conversations with line managers or Mental Health First Aiders regarding stress, excessive workloads and any other factors that may undermine personal mental health.
- Ensure that managers are aware of their obligations to promote a good working environment for their staff as defined within this policy. This includes conducting return to work interviews in a timely manner, following through on any concerns raised and conducting regular risk assessments.
- Ensure that new and existing managers are aware of their responsibilities towards their staff, including setting and managing performance in a manner that is consistent with Sparta Systems' policy.

Providing support to staff suffering with mental health issues

It can be challenging to understand how to respond and support someone with mental health issues. If there is any doubt about how to proceed such matters, staff should consult a project manager, a director or the Business Manager for guidance. Managers are expected to;

- Deal with mental health related issues in a sensitive manner and refrain from the use of any judgement or prejudice based on personal feelings towards mental health issues.
- Proactively make employees aware of the Employee Assistance helpline on where staff can seek information, advice and support.
- Refer staff to a Mental Health First Aider in order to establish how to best support the staff member during their absence from work and establish a 'Return to Work' plan. In the event that the staff member does not wish to consult occupational health, a medical report should be obtained from the GP with the consent of the staff member.
- Support a staff member in situations where they experience a period of absence from work due to mental health. Work with the employee, the Business Manager and their GP to develop a 'Return to Work' plan that provides the best opportunity for the employee to return to work as soon as is reasonably practicable. Reasonable adjustments should then be made for the staff member to settle back into their work.
- Identify and remediate any factors within the workplace that are contributing to any negative mental health issues by carrying out a mental health risk assessment. This can be with the support and guidance of the Business Manager and/or Health and Safety if required. Determine whether any identified factors could affect other co-workers. The Business Manager/Director(s) should consult with other employees to ensure that any identified issues do not pose a risk to their wellbeing.
- Offer continued employment where practicable, subject to appropriate adaptations to the role.
- Ensure that the staff member receives paid sick leave as per the company sickness policy and

ensure that the staff member remains informed about their entitlement.

- Designate a contact person (either the line manager or Business Manager manager) as the point of contact for the staff member and keep a log of all the communication and correspondence. If the staff member is willing, person of contact to organise a home visit.
- Keep the staff member informed of any relevant organisational changes.

Confidentiality

Treat all matters relating to individuals and mental health problems in the strictest confidence. A manager does not need to know the diagnosis or other personal information, unless the individual is willing to disclose this. Exceptions to this may occasionally occur if the health and safety of others, or indeed the individual might be compromised.

If adjustments are being made, the manager should discuss with the individual how these are communicated to other staff. Anyone breaching such confidentiality may be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Mental Health and the Law

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, it is a duty of the employer to ensure the working environment should be safe and without risks to health (inclusive of mental health). Employers must do whatever is reasonably practicable to achieve this.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require suitable and sufficient assessment of the nature and scale of risks to health in the workplace and the effective implementation of adequate control measures. Risk assessment includes identifying hazards, including those with the potential to harm mental health, and evaluating the risks involved.

The Disability Discrimination Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people with long term mental health problems (i.e. those which have lasted or are likely to last up to twelve months). Where a person has a disability, reasonable adjustments must be made. The Human Rights Act gives individuals the right not to suffer degrading treatment and the right not to suffer discrimination.

Recruitment

Having experienced a mental health problem does not mean that someone cannot be a valued member of staff, working efficiently and contributing positively to the workplace.

If the issue of mental health does arise during the recruitment process, it may be appropriate at the interview to ask the person if they require any kind of adjustment or support, both during the recruitment process and in order to do the job as specified.

Managers should not:
- Ask for information about the specific diagnosis, treatment, the history of the illness or any information that is not relevant to the work situation;
- Assume that a person with a mental health problem will be more vulnerable to workplace stress than any other employee.

Mental Health First Aiders

Our Mental Health First Aiders are trained to sensitively and confidentially support staff who experience mental health issues. They have attended appropriate training. They will continue to update their knowledge and skills

by attending further workshops.

Available platforms to voice staff opinions

Contact any of the Sparta Systems managers or directors you feel comfortable speaking to by phone, email, text or in person.

Access to confidential, professional support services

We proactively make employees aware of our Employee Assistance helpline, where staff can seek information, advice and support in the event of any situation that poses a threat to their wellbeing. Such situations may include bereavement, relationship breakdown, debt concerns, legal worries and addiction.

As supporters of Mates in Mind, we use their resources throughout the year to point all staff towards professional support services. Mates in Mind have partnered with the National Counselling Society to deliver a free assessment and up to 8 counselling sessions at a fixed rate of £30 per session for all Mates in Mind supporters. Staff can find a counsellor using the link: https://nationalcounsellingsociety.org/counselling-directory

Construction Industry Helpline 0345 605 1956

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