



Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Policy statement

Little Elms recognises that mental health is just as important as physical health. Little Elms believes that the wellbeing of our employees is the key to a healthy and happy workplace, which in turn will enable us to provide the best possible environment and outcomes for the children who attend our nurseries. Little Elms aims to provide initial and ongoing support and help for employees with mental illness.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- promote awareness of and reduce stigma associated with mental health
- provide a culture where mental health can be openly and honestly discussed
- identify signs and symptoms of mental illness and support individuals to access professional help
- encourage individuals to take responsibility for their own mental health and wellbeing

Scope

This policy applies to all Little Elms employees.

Legal Obligations

Little Elms understands the role it has in ensuring that health and safety legislation is adhered to. Little Elms undertakes to create a safe workplace where any risks to mental health and wellbeing are limited as far as possible. Additionally, Little Elms recognises that mental illness can be a disability and the protection employees with a disability have against discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

Mental Illness

Mental illness may be detrimental to an individual, as it can impact happiness, productivity and communication. Mental illness can also have a significant impact on an individual's physical health.

There are different types of mental illnesses, some of which are common and may impact people in different ways; for example:

- Addiction and substance misuse
- Anxiety disorders and panic attacks
- Bi-polar disorder
- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Personality disorders
- Phobias
- Postnatal depression
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Psychosis

Mental health issues may affect our workplace in the form of:

- Turnover of staff
- Absence
- Reduced employee performance
- Employee substance abuse
- Work-related accidents
- Workplace violence or harassment
- Impact on team morale

The early signs that an individual may be suffering from a mental illness may often be first noticed by the individual's immediate colleagues or their Manager. The Early signs may include:

- behavioural, mood or temperament changes, of highs and lows
- feeling sad or down
- decrease in productivity and focus
- confused thinking or reduced ability to concentrate
- significant tiredness, low energy or problems sleeping
- inability to cope with daily problems or stress
- withdrawal from friends or unable to take part in hobbies they usually participate in
- reducing intake of food or increasing intake of alcohol, cigarettes etc.

Mental Health First Aid

Little Elms has invested heavily in providing Mental Health First Aid training to Nursery Managers and Senior Management.

Mental Health First Aid is the help offered to a person developing a mental health issue, experience a worsening of an existing mental health issue or in a mental health crisis. The aims of Mental Health First Aid are to:

- Preserve life where a person may be at risk of harm to themselves or others
- Provide help to prevent the mental health issue from becoming more serious
- Promote recovery of good mental health
- Provide comfort to a person with a mental health issue.

The role of Little Elm's Mental Health First Aiders is to identify the early signs of a mental health issue, offer and provide initial help and guide a person towards appropriate treatment or other sources of help. Little Elm's Mental Health First Aiders are not medically trained and will not diagnose individuals or provide treatment/therapy.

Little Elms employees are actively encouraged to openly share with their Manager, any difficulties or issues they may be experiencing with regards to their mental health, physical health and wellbeing. Equally, we encourage colleagues to support each other in a respectful way.

Safeguarding is paramount and therefore, it is imperative that all Little Elms employees seek help from a Manager, if they feel a colleague may be at risk of harm to themselves or others.

A list of trained Mental Health First Aiders across the company (and their contact details) is available within all Little Elms nursery settings. Any Little Elms employee can contact any Mental Health First Aider, if they feel they are in mental health crisis or feel they may require support or help with a mental health issue. Employees are not restricted to only speaking to someone based at their own setting and therefore, can contact anyone on the list provided for help.

Helpful Resources and Professional Services

In addition to support and treatment available from GP's and other NHS Services, all Mental Health First Aiders have access to a list of support groups, professional organisations and charities, who individuals can be signposted to, to access support and treatment for diagnosed or possible mental illness.

Working at Little Elms with a Mental Illness

Employees who have been diagnosed with a mental illness or who are in the process of being diagnosed with a mental illness will be treated fairly and consistently with our non-discriminatory practices.

Mental illness does not mean that an individual cannot work for Little Elms.

In the same way as physical illness is approached, Managers will assess, jointly with the individual, the impact the mental illness or potential mental illness may have on their capability to carry out their duties to the required standard. The support of medical practitioners (GP's, Consultants, Occupational Health Specialist) may be required, with the individual's consent, to fully assess each individual situation. If required, Managers will complete an Employee Health Risk Assessment jointly with the individual and any reasonable adjustments within the workplace will be discussed and agreed.

Responsibilities of Leaders

- Be alert to and recognise the early signs of mental illness
- Recognise possible mental crisis and act without delay if an individual is a risk of harm to themselves or others
- Be open and listen non-judgementally
- Respect confidentiality and hold all discussions regarding mental health in private
- Treat all individuals fairly and in a non-discriminatory manner
- Ensure any discrimination in relation to mental health is managed formally and stopped
- Make reasonable adjustments where appropriate to support individuals
- Regularly review the wellbeing of employees with known mental illness

Responsibilities of Employees

- Take personal accountability for your own wellbeing and mental health
- Seek help from medical professionals as required
- Be open and share with your Manager any impact mental illness may have on you at work
- Ask for support from your Manager and be specific about what support is required
- Be open minded, supportive and helpful towards colleagues who may be coping with mental illness
- Inform your Manager immediately if you feel a colleague may be at risk of harm to themselves or others

Confidentiality

Information concerning an employee's mental health is classed as a special category of personal data. This information will only be disclosed to others in line with Little Elm's General Data Protection Regulations policy.

An individual's right to confidentiality will be respected and maintained. Discussions regarding mental health will take place in private and only those individuals who need to be informed in order to carry out their role will be made aware, with the individual's agreement.

If an individual is considered to be at risk of harm to themselves or others, Little Elms may make the decision to contact emergency services (e.g. the Ambulance or Police services) or if appropriate the individuals nominated emergency contact/next of kin, without the individual's permission.

Associated Documents:

- ***Mental Health Helpful Resources***
- ***Employee Health Risk Assessment***
- ***Bullying & Harassment Policy***
- ***Absence Management Procedure***
- ***General Data Protection Regulations Policy***