



## SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

<b>POLICY NAME</b>	Stress, Mental Health and Wellbeing at Work
<b>VERSION NUMBER</b>	1.0
<b>POLICY AUTHOR</b>	HR Shared Services
<b>POLICY OWNER</b>	Head of HR
<b>BUSINESS AREA OWNER</b>	Human Resources
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<b>NEW/REVISED POLICY</b>	New
<b>CONSULTATION</b>	This policy has been developed in consultation with SQA's recognised trade unions.

### VERSION CONTROL

Version number	Revision date	Summary of changes	Author
1.0	03/23	Taken from the previous Mental Health and Wellbeing policy, adding the word 'Stress' to the title. Simplified into policy, procedure, flowchart and appendix. Focus is on providing an overview of SQA's approach to supporting members of staff with stress and mental health concerns.	ZM/NM/MB

# Part A — Policy

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## 1. Introduction

We are committed to promoting and protecting mental health and wellbeing at work, treating you fairly regardless of your mental health status. We are also committed to identifying, tackling and preventing the causes of work-related stress. We recognise that you may need short or long-term support and we will ensure that we:

- ◆ encourage safe and healthy workplace settings
- ◆ promote good mental health and wellbeing
- ◆ use policies, training and communication to: (1) promote open conversations about mental health and stress; (2) allow you to raise concerns about your work or working environment; and (3) help build an understanding to recognise the causes of mental ill health and stress, and how to address them
- ◆ provide a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation, addressing inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action
- ◆ use risk assessments that include or specifically address work-related causes of mental ill health and stress
- ◆ carry out performance reviews which will include monitoring of the suitability of workloads, working hours and use of holiday entitlement
- ◆ facilitate requests for flexible working in accordance with our Flexible Working Policy, taking into account advice from Occupational Health and other medical practitioners where these are linked to improvements to mental ill health

Together with this policy, there is a range of other policies to help us to do this, which we have detailed in section 7 below. It is intended that this policy will help you and your line manager make it easier to access support.

If you experience symptoms of mental ill health or stress, you will be supported in the workplace by your line manager; you will also have access to initial support from Mental Health First Aiders, Occupational Health, the employee assistance programme, Able Futures, and Human Resources. Section 4 and the appendix outline the support available to you.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of staff.

It complies with the terms of the *Health and Safety at Work Act 1974*, the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999* and the provisions of the *Equality Act 2010*.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment; however, it does impose obligations on you that you must observe and comply with.

We may amend this policy and its application at any time through consultation with our trade unions. Please ensure you are using the latest version published on the intranet.

### 3. Purpose and standards

Our aim is to create a working environment where you feel comfortable discussing mental ill health and stress, and where managers are proactive in their support.

We recognise that we have a duty of care to protect your mental health and wellbeing while at work. We are also committed to tackling disability discrimination, including discrimination relating to people who experience mental health problems.

If any aspect of this policy causes you difficulty on account of a disability, please inform HR Shared Services.

Beyond our legal obligations, we wish to promote good mental health and wellbeing by providing a healthy and nurturing working environment.

### 4. Support

For HR support, contact the HR Shared Service Team at [hr.shared.service@sqa.org.uk](mailto:hr.shared.service@sqa.org.uk) or by calling 6060.

The [employee assistance programme](#) can provide you with confidential support and guidance, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Trade union representatives can provide members with advice, help and support. Information about Unite and Unison can be found on the intranet homepage under [A-Z](#).

[Mental Health First Aiders](#) are available for first point of contact support.

The [Able Futures service](#) can be contacted for ongoing professional support for mental health and wellbeing.

The MAC (Make a Change) Group maintains awareness of workplace mental health through promotional activities; up-to-date information about these can be found through the [MAC homepage](#).

See the appendix for more support options.

### 5. Policy

#### 5.1 Definitions

The terms **mental health**, **mental ill health**, **mental health and wellbeing** and **stress** are used throughout this policy. We define these terms as follows:

- ◆ **Mental health** is used as an umbrella term encompassing all of the above terms and referring to both the concepts of mental health problems and mental health and wellbeing.
- ◆ **Mental ill health** refers to the presence of symptoms that meet the criteria for 'clinical' issues: diagnosis of mental illness, or symptoms which interfere with emotional, cognitive or social function. Examples include common mental ill health conditions such as

depression and anxiety, and severe and enduring mental ill health conditions such as schizophrenia. Mental ill health combined with, or related to, other forms of disability is also covered by this policy guidance.

- ◆ **Mental health and wellbeing** include aspects of subjective wellbeing (positive and negative feelings and life satisfaction) and psychological wellbeing (such as a sense of control, having a purpose in life, a sense of belonging and positive relationships with others).
- ◆ **Stress** is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or demands placed on them. This can be at work or outside of work (for example, as a result of an accident, illness, bereavement, personal relationships or financial concerns).

Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enable individuals to meet their full potential, and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure is excessive, it can produce stress.

Intense and persistent stress can lead to mental and physical ill health. What triggers stress and the capacity to deal with stress vary from person to person.

## 5.2 Support for you

We will support you to raise any issues that may be impacting on your mental wellbeing. We will provide confidential assistance through support from line managers, HR, our Occupational Health service, and by signposting you to the employee assistance programme or Able Futures (see section 4). This support can be accessed through both self-referral and management referral routes.

At an organisational level, we know that mental ill health can result in a deterioration of morale and performance, leading to higher absence and staff turnover.

We understand that mental health is just like physical health — it is an important part of life and we all need to take care of it. Mental health can impact our day-to-day lives and ranges from good to poor health. Poor mental health can affect the way we think and behave, affecting our work and relationships.

You may be able to manage any challenges with your mental health alongside your job, with effective treatment and support. We understand that you may experience symptoms but may never be diagnosed with a condition. We think it is important to remember that everyone's experience of mental health is different. That is why we believe working with you on an individual basis is so important.

If you feel that your mental health is getting worse, we want you to feel comfortable asking for support at any stage. There are a number of practical steps we would encourage you to take. In addition to the support channels outlined in section 4 and the appendix, you may want to consider sharing how you feel with your line manager or a colleague.

There is written guidance available (for example, <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/a-z-topics/prevention-and-mental-health>). Your GP and other suitable medical practitioners should also be able to offer you advice and support.

### **5.3 What to do if your work is causing you stress**

If you believe your work is causing you stress or you have been diagnosed as having work-related stress, you should raise any concerns with your line manager or HR (if you prefer not to discuss the matter with your line manager directly). Your manager or HR will discuss the concerns with you, consider and identify what, if any, steps need to be taken, including potential plans to alleviate the situation. Where appropriate in the circumstances, this may include (but is not limited to):

- ◆ reviewing your workload and reallocating work
- ◆ completing a stress risk assessment (available from HR at [hr.shared.service@sqa.org.uk](mailto:hr.shared.service@sqa.org.uk) or by calling 6060)
- ◆ agreeing a change to your role, responsibilities, working hours or working environment
- ◆ providing additional mentoring or training to you and/or colleagues as detailed in our Learning and Development Policy
- ◆ monitoring future workload
- ◆ referring you for medical advice or treatment from our Occupational Health advisors or any medical practitioner who has been treating you — a full summary of available services from Occupational Health can be found on the intranet
- ◆ entering into a return-to-work programme if you are on sickness absence
- ◆ considering appropriate actions to take if it appears your stress has been the result of bullying or harassment — please see our Dignity at Work Policy for more information

Human Resources will ensure that all agreed actions, such as stress risk assessments, Occupational Health advice and any other supportive discussions, will be appropriately owned and actioned by the identified responsible staff member.

If agreed changes to your working arrangements will significantly impact on workforce planning, your line manager and/or head of service must discuss this with their Human Resources business partner. This is to ensure agreed actions will not cause a negative impact on operational plans.

You should also consider making use of the employee assistance programme or Able Futures, even if we have not referred you, taking advice from your GP or our Occupational Health advisors.

At all times, we encourage you to be open and raise any concerns as soon as possible.

We believe education and training are important factors in promoting wellbeing in the workplace, and we will continue to educate and support everyone to deal with mental health problems positively.

### **5.4 Absence due to stress or mental ill health**

If you are absent due to stress or mental ill health, you should follow the reporting procedure in our Attendance Management Policy.

Cases of long-term or frequent short-term absence may trigger the absence management procedure set out in the Attendance Management Policy.

## 5.5 Confidentiality

Information about stress, mental health and mental wellbeing is sensitive personal information.

All employees and others involved in the operation of this policy are expected to observe a high level of confidentiality. We treat managing confidentiality seriously and any breaches of confidentiality by an employee may give rise to disciplinary action under our Disciplinary Policy. In serious cases, this may be treated as gross misconduct leading to dismissal without notice.

However, there may be circumstances in which, because of the nature of an investigation or disclosure, it will be necessary to disclose matters reported in terms of this policy to third parties. We will endeavour to discuss this with you first, except in certain circumstances where we need to take immediate action, for example, where we have reason to believe that your own safety, or the safety of others, is at risk.

Occupational Health self-referrals are confidential, and no report or information is provided to us. No clinical or personal details are ever disclosed unless with your consent, except for where there is a risk to yourself or others.

Occupational Health management referrals are confidential and a report containing only necessary information is provided to us with your consent. Any clinical or personal details are only disclosed if they are relevant and only with your consent.

Our employee assistance programme, Able Futures service and Mental Health First Aiders assistance are completely confidential and will not share any of your information unless you provide your consent.

## 6. Roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities are described below.

We will ensure all managers are aware of this policy and their responsibilities under it.

<b>You</b>	<b>Your line manager</b>	<b>Human Resources</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ make your line manager aware if you or your colleagues are experiencing work-related stress or other mental health issues</li> <li>◆ seek support or counselling through self-referring to Occupational Health and/or the employee assistance programme where appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ monitor workloads to ensure colleagues are not overwhelmed</li> <li>◆ support and assist colleagues who are experiencing mental health problems</li> <li>◆ involve others in seeking solutions</li> <li>◆ undertake risk assessments in their own area of responsibility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ make sure that organisational policies, procedures and codes of conduct are adhered to</li> <li>◆ facilitate discussions</li> <li>◆ analyse and evaluate staff data including attendance, conduct, turnover, exit interviews and other relevant sources of information</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ speak to a Mental Health First Aider for guidance</li> <li>◆ seek support from your GP</li> <li>◆ recognise your training needs and submit development requests</li> <li>◆ recognise that mental ill health is not a weakness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ encourage a workplace culture where mental and physical wellbeing is regarded as equally important</li> <li>◆ ensure that the physical work environments for colleagues are safe and do not expose them to risk that may give rise to stress at work</li> <li>◆ ensure good communication between management and colleagues, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes</li> <li>◆ ensure colleagues have appropriate support and training to carry out their jobs</li> <li>◆ provide clear objectives and have regular one-to-one meetings to review progress</li> <li>◆ resolve work-related issues at individual and team level</li> <li>◆ keep in touch with any colleagues who are on prolonged absence and agree with them, Occupational Health, and HR, how to support their return to work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ promote positive cultural change within the workforce</li> </ul>
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<b>Occupational Health</b>	<b>Trade unions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ advise managers and colleagues on causes of workplace stress and the risk assessment process</li> <li>◆ provide support for colleagues at every level who may be experiencing the negative effects of stress or other mental health problems</li> <li>◆ provide support for colleagues at every level with assistance to return to work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ encourage their members to speak up as soon as they feel their working environment is beginning to affect their mental health</li> <li>◆ use the facilities laid out in the <i>Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations</i> and <i>Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations</i> to tackle work-related stress</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ monitor work-related stress and mental ill health through analysis of sickness absence referrals; provide appropriate feedback to the organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ assist with the resolution of work-related issues at an individual level and within the Joint Engagement Forum</li> <li>◆ encourage a workplace culture where mental and physical wellbeing is regarded as equally important</li> </ul>
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## 7. Associated policies

Other policies that support our approach to mental health are shown below with explanations of how they are related to mental health in the workplace. These HR policies can be found [here](#):

- ◆ Alcohol and Substance Misuse
  - The policy provides information on the risks and consequences associated with alcohol and substance misuse, including a commitment to provide help and support to you if you have an alcohol or substance-related problem.
- ◆ Attendance Management
  - The aim of the policy is to help reduce short and long-term employee absence through promoting positive attitudes to work and effectively working in partnership with all parties. The scope of this policy includes mental health-related absence.
- ◆ Dignity at Work
  - The purpose of this policy is to promote dignity and respect at work and to help foster a positive, dignified workplace culture. It is also written to support and help you if you are experiencing bullying, harassment or victimisation.
- ◆ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
  - We are committed to fostering a non-discriminatory working environment and a diverse workforce with the skills to tackle inequality. This policy complies with the *Equalities Act 2010* and the scope includes mental ill health disability.
- ◆ Flexible Working
  - We are committed to equal opportunities and the promotion of flexible, employee friendly working practices for all staff.
- ◆ Recruitment and Selection
  - The policy gives clear guidance on non-discriminatory recruitment practices, including reference to our adoption of the Disability Confident Leader standards. This guidance is incorporated into management training. Our HR Shared Support Services provide guidance and support to managers and applicants throughout the recruitment process and record equalities monitoring information.
- ◆ Gender Recognition and Transitioning at Work
  - We view discrimination against staff in any form as unacceptable. If you are transitioning or have transitioned, you have the right to equal treatment and protection from discrimination and harassment.

## **Part B — Procedure**

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## **1. Occupational Health — referrals**

### **1.1 Management referrals**

We can ask for your consent to submit a referral to our Occupational Health provider at any time.

It is important to note your rights under the *Access to Medical Reports Act 1988*.

Your consent to an Occupational Health referral and for your line manager to subsequently see a summarised version of their report helps us to manage your attendance in the best way possible. Your consent ensures we can access expert medical advice from Occupational Health and work with your line manager to implement any recommendations, in order to fully support you while you are off work and when you return to work.

If you refuse to consent to an Occupational Health referral, there may be a significant subsequent effect on our ability to make an informed decision about the right support to offer you to when you return to work, as we would not have the appropriate medical information. This means our decision may be less favourable to you than it might have been if we had been provided with full details of your condition and prognosis.

Human Resources will ask if you consent to share a summary of the report with your line manager.

After receiving your consent, Human Resources will share a summarised report with your line manager, providing only information relevant to the management of your attendance at work, and your line manager will consider any recommendations.

### **1.2 Self-referrals**

You can contact Occupational Health at any time to request a self-referral.

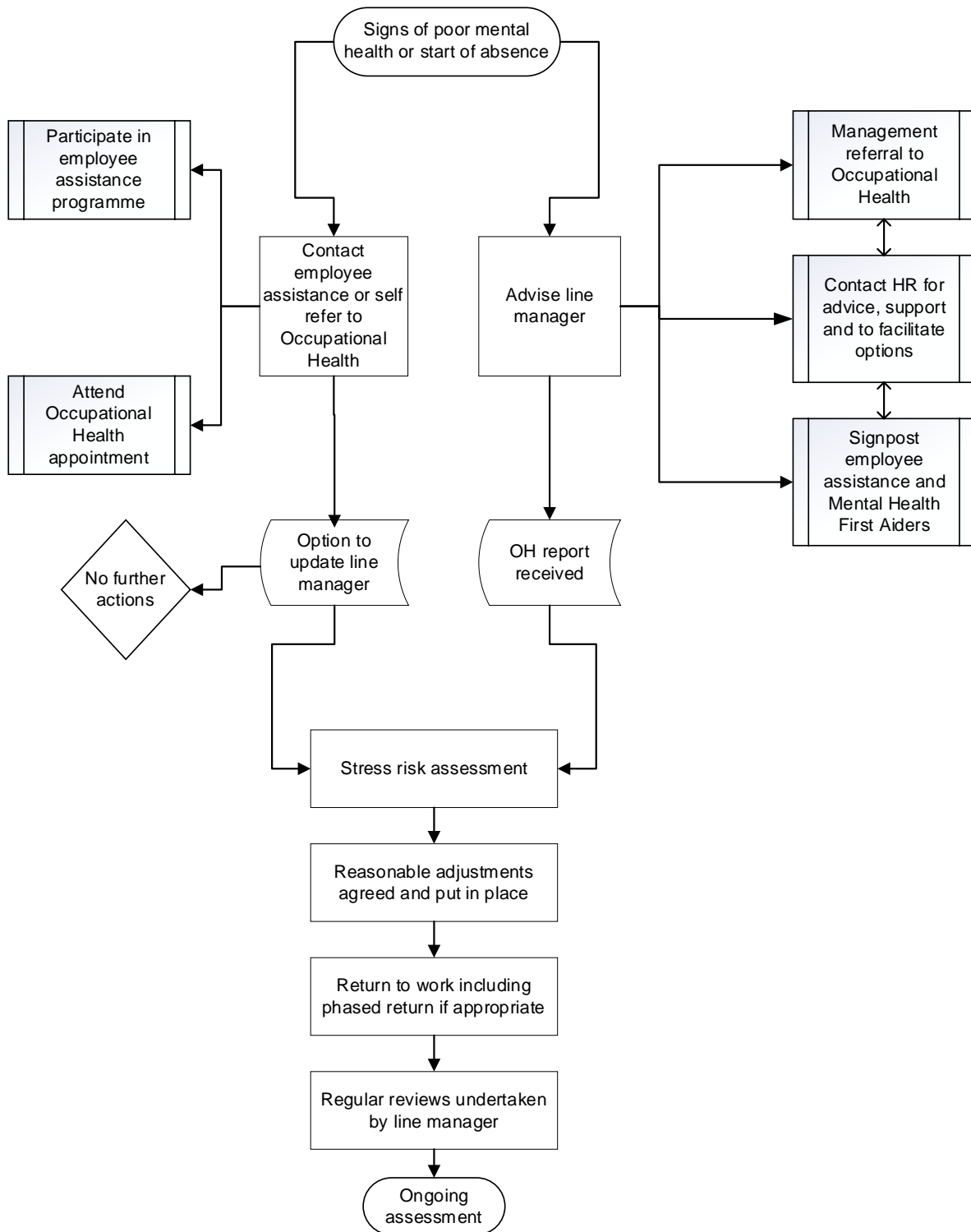
Occupational Health will treat your referral confidentially and will control and store your records relating to your referral.

Occupation Health will make appointment arrangements directly with you.

Following your appointment, Occupational Health will issue you with a report summarising their findings and any recommendations.

Occupational Health have a duty of confidence to their clients and your information can only be shared with your consent. This confidence cannot be broken unless it is necessary to do so to protect others or if a legal duty overrides the duty of confidence.

## 2. Flowchart



## **Appendix — specialist support contact details**

### **Support available internally**

SQA Occupational Health advisor  
0845 213 5587

Employee assistance programme helpline  
0800 587 5670

Mental Health First Aiders (for first point of contact support)

<https://sqa.now.sharepoint.com/sites/C196800107/SitePages/SQA-Mental-Health-First-Aiders.aspx>

Able Futures service (for ongoing professional support for mental health and wellbeing)

<https://sqa.now.sharepoint.com/sites/C196800123/SitePages/Introducing-Able-Futures---New-wellbeing-support-service.aspx>

### **Support and information available externally**

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/>

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

[www.seemescotland.org](http://www.seemescotland.org)

[www.breathingspace.scot](http://www.breathingspace.scot)

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

<https://young.scot/get-informed/who-to-contact-for-mental-health-support/>

### **Information for line managers and colleagues**

<https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4661/resource4.pdf>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else/>

[Mental Health Matters \(sqaacademy.org.uk\)](http://MentalHealthMatters.sqaacademy.org.uk)