



Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Boxley Parish Council is committed to the promotion and protection of the mental health and wellbeing of its staff and Councillors.

The Parish Council will:

- strive to improve the mental health environment and culture of the Council by identifying, eliminating or minimising all harmful processes, procedures and behaviours that may cause physical harm or illness.
- recognise that, in delivering services to its residents, employees and Councillors are subject to pressures and that, in the way it manages its staff, the Council is responsible in ensuring that these pressures are not excessive.
- recognise that workplace stress is a Health and Safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stress.

1. Wellbeing

Boxley Parish Council will promote and encourage the 5 ways to wellbeing

- Connect with other people
- Be physically active
- Learn new skills
- Give to others
- Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

2. Stress

- 2.1 Boxley Parish Council has the responsibility to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that Council duties do not adversely affect the health, safety and welfare of Councillors or employees. This includes taking reasonable and practicable steps to reduce stress created by Council activities and in the workplace.
- 2.2 Stress is a natural reaction to the pressures which individuals are put under in life; its function is to trigger physiological reactions to challenging situations.
- 2.3 At work short term stress can offer some advantages to some people, however, prolonged exposure to raised levels of stress can cause certain risks, including:
 - Physiological effects**, e.g. Raised heart rate, high blood pressure, increased sweating, headaches, dizziness, blurred vision, aching neck and shoulders, skin rashes, lowered resistance to infection and illness.
 - Behavioural effects**, e.g. Increased anxiety, irritability, increased alcohol/cigarette consumption, drug abuse, inability to sleep, poor concentration and a heightened emotional state.
 - Workplace Effects**, e.g. Increased absenteeism, reduced efficiency and output, poor time-keeping or time management, impaired judgement, poor performance and/or quality of work, conflict with other staff, mood swings and loss of temper.
- 2.4 Boxley Parish Council will:
 - Comply with the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
 - Comply with national guidance and approved codes of practice on occupational stress.
 - Provide confidential support for Councillors and staff that feel they are suffering from occupational stress as a result of their Council activities.

- 2.5 All Councillors should recognise that stress is detrimental to both individual welfare and the Council's efficiency. Steps are to be taken to reduce stress to the lowest practicable levels and to prevent reoccurrence.
- 2.6 Stress has the potential to damage the health of individuals, to undermine efficiency and to expose the Council to civil litigation. All reasonable steps should therefore be taken to avoid excessive levels of stress and where it does occur to remove the causative factors.

Responsibilities

Stress management is the responsibility of all Councillors, who have a responsibility to ensure adequate provision for the health and safety of their employees. They also have a similar responsibility to their colleagues under the Code of Conduct.

Boxley Parish Council (through the Personnel Committee) will:

- Conduct and implement recommendations of risks assessments (through Wellness Action Plans) within their jurisdiction.
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking.
- Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside of work e.g. bereavement, separation or the serious illness of a close family member.
- To ensure that, in the event of a member of staff being absent from work as a result of stress in their job:
 1. A review of the risk assessment through a Wellness Action Plan has been completed.
 2. Any further controls identified following the assessment process are implemented

Employee's:

- To acknowledge that the management of health and stress hazards in the workplace is a joint responsibility between the Parish Council and its employees.
- To take personal preventative action in terms of stress management.
- To highlight to the Council through the correct procedure working practices (Wellness Action Plan or speaking to their line manager) and environments which, if allowed to continue, may lead to stress or other health related hazards.
- To identify health and stress related hazards in themselves, at the earliest opportunity, and to seek appropriate help.
- To avoid harmful ways of coping with stress, such as being aware that excessive drinking and smoking can increase stress levels.
- To respect the needs of others and to take responsibility for actions which may have an effect on the health of other individuals.
- To ensure annual leave is used to good effect in reducing stress hazards
- Raise issues of concern with the Clerk and or Personnel Committee.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

Whenever feasible, the Council will encourage and support employees to take steps to manage their own stress. Support may be through the application of Council policies—such as Dignity at Work and/or by encouraging staff to consult their own General Practitioner, or other medical support as may be appropriate.

Adopted by Council October 2025