

# Scottish autism

WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE  
ARE VALUED

## Wellbeing Policy

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Director Responsible</b> | <b>Director of Autism Services</b>                          |
| <b>Author/s</b>             | <b>David Harkins, Karen Sweeney &amp; Jeanie Macfarlane</b> |
| <b>Date</b>                 | <b>April 2019</b>   |
| <b>Version Number</b>       | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Approved by</b>          | <b>Board</b>  |
| <b>Review Date</b>          | <b>April 2022</b>   |

## DOCUMENT HISTORY

| Date       | Author/Editor                                       | Summary of Changes   | Version No. |
|------------|---|--|-------------|
| July 2013  | K Sweeney   |  | 1           |
| July 2015  | K Sweeney / V McMillan                              | Imbed ATLASS. Updates from BILD Code of Practice 4 <sup>th</sup> Edition | 2           |
| March 2019 | David Harkins<br>Karen Sweeney<br>Jeanie Macfarlane | Policy Revamped Throughout   | 3           |

## CONSULTATION AND RATIFICATION SCHEDULE

| Name of Consultative Body  | Date of Approval            |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Board                      | 30 <sup>th</sup> April 2019 |
| Senior Management Team     | 13 <sup>th</sup> March 2019 |
| Regional Managers Forum    | N/A                         |
| New Struan Leadership Team | N/A                         |

## CROSS REFERENCE TO OTHER POLICIES / STRATEGIES

| This policy should be read in conjunction with: | Detail  |
|---|---|
| Policy 1  | Corporate Risk Strategy, Policy & Guidelines 2017 |
| Policy 2  | Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy 2018            |
| Policy 3  | Complaints Handling Policy 2018                   |
| Policy 4  | Participation and Involvement Policy 2017         |
| Policy 5  | Child Protection Policy 2018                      |
| Policy 6  | Adult Support and Protection Policy 2018          |

**KEYWORDS:** Wellbeing, Stress, Autism, Health

## Contents

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. INTRODUCTION.....                        | 1 |
| 1.1 The Transactional Nature of Stress..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Service User Wellbeing: .....           | 1 |
| 1.3 Staff Wellbeing.....                    | 2 |
| 1.4 Staff Training .....                    | 2 |
| 1.5 Culture.....                            | 2 |
| 2. STRESS.....                              | 3 |
| 3. VALUES INTO PRACTICE .....               | 4 |
| 4. SERVICE USER SUPPORT .....               | 6 |
| 5. EMPLOYEE SUPPORT .....                   | 6 |
| 6. COMPLAINTS.....                          | 6 |
| 7. POLICY REVIEW .....                      | 6 |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Our model of service provision, Values into Practice (VIP) Appendix 1 has, at its core, a focus on the happiness and wellbeing of those we support.

The VIP model recognises the transactional nature of stress and its impact on wellbeing. This means that we commit to understanding how stress impacts on the wellbeing and behaviour of staff and service users and others who are involved in support relationships and networks such as parents, carers and other family members.

This policy is intended to correlate with Key guidance and legislation around peoples' wellbeing that can be obtained from the Scottish Government website and includes Wellbeing for the general population across Scotland National Health and Wellbeing Outcomes. The Children and Young People (**Scotland**) Act 2014 improving the **wellbeing** of children and young people in **Scotland** includes getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and The National Health & Social Care Standards – Wellbeing.

### 1.1 The Transactional Nature of Stress.

Mental health problems can affect anyone regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity or social group. The most common forms of mental ill health are anxiety, depression, phobic anxiety disorders and obsessive compulsive disorders.

Scottish Autism recognises and is proactive in its duties under health and safety law to assess and take measures to control risks from work-related stress for its employees. This is done by promoting good working practices such as Healthy Working Lives, Health & Safety awareness, access to Occupational Health, Risk Assessing, supervisions and various Learning and Development opportunities for health and wellbeing awareness (e.g. Scotland's Mental Health First Aid training).

Good mental and physical health in employees contributes to a healthy workforce and in turn this can positively impact service users' health and wellbeing.

For Autistic people, mental health problems are more common than within the general population. This is mainly due to the everyday demands placed upon them by a physical and social environment tailored to neurotypical individuals. This in turn can create daily stress.

### 1.2 Service User Wellbeing:

Service users' wellbeing will be supported by their service employees in line with their service agreement, Support Plan and/or Child's Plan. Plans will be developed using The Ethical Framework within VIP as a basis. This means that individual needs in relation to the following will be reflected in the support plan.

- A focus on wellbeing enables happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.
- Low stress environments provide safe space for personal growth.
- By understanding thinking styles we can support individuals to plan their life and achieve their aspirations.
- Understanding communication enables us to listen to a person's individual voice and choice.

- Positive interactions nurture meaningful relationships and supportive communities.
- Staff understands their role and relationship with service users
- Continuous learning empowers us to share and apply knowledge.
- Collaboration with families and agencies encourages holistic support for individuals.

### 1.3 Staff Wellbeing

Scottish Autism policies are developed with staff health, safety and wellbeing in mind. Staff should familiarise themselves with the range of related policies associated with relevant policy, organisational and local procedures for safe and ethical practice for example: Health, Safety & Wellbeing, Corporate Risk Policy, Complaints Handling Policy, Health & Safety Training Policy and Child & Adult Protection Policies.

Staff are also encouraged to access and participate in organisational initiatives that aim to promote wellbeing such as “Healthy Working Lives” Employee benefits scheme and support services as well as practice related improvements achieved through our Autism Practice Improvement Framework (APIF)

### 1.4 Staff Training

We recognise that staff training is fundamental to the delivery of our practice model which has wellbeing as its core.

New staff will be introduced to the theory and practice relating to the model via induction. Following this they will access a programme of continuous professional development via a range of training opportunities.

Experienced staff will, in agreement with their manager, plan their learning and development in a way that is relevant to their role and the people they support.

This will include:

- Face to Face Training as offered by L & D
- E- Learning. Our VIP academy and associated learning materials. Staff will be supported through supervision and team meetings to apply learning to their practice. Staff will undertake self- directed learning in keeping with their needs and those of the people they support. Staff will also be expected to engage in collaborative practice based learning with colleagues via team meetings and discussions.  
Access to relevant external training events and networking opportunities with other organisations and individuals who share our organisational aims and values.

### 1.5 Culture

It is essential that our values and commitment to wellbeing are reflected in our communication and conduct with the people we support, colleagues and others associated with the organisation including the families of and professionals involved with the people we support.

All staff should familiarise themselves with and apply our “Language and Terminology Statement”.

We work in stressful environments and this can be exacerbated when staff feel ill-informed or there is miscommunication. Scottish Autism is committed to improving and sustaining excellent internal communication. Staff will be informed of any organisational initiatives, events and issues via formal communication channels such as HR, Source, direct communication from line manager or SMT. Other sources of information or speculation are not reliable and can result in unnecessary anxiety and disruption.

It is the responsibility of all staff in all roles to ensure our organisational culture reflects our stated commitment to healthy, happy environments for service users and staff.

## **2. STRESS**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them" (hse.gov.uk). There are many factors, both inside and outside of the workplace, which can lead to stress. Stress can be defined as: as ‘A state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances. (Siders 2014).

Positive stress is called eustress or good stress and can give an extra burst of adrenaline to help you accomplish goals and meet deadlines. Eustress provides mental alertness, motivation, and efficiency and can increase self-esteem. The way a person perceives stress impacts on their health. People who view stressful situations as chances for growth usually avoid stress-related symptoms. In that sense, stress can be beneficial.

Negative stress is called distress. It occurs when your body cannot return to a relaxed state even in the absence of the stressor. Physical signs of distress include changes in eating or sleeping patterns, weakness, dizziness, frequent headaches, neck and back pain, and frequent colds and infections. Emotional signs of distress include persistent hostile or angry feelings, increased frustration with minor annoyances, nervousness, and lack of concentration, anxiety, and depression. If the underlying stress/or are unsupported, these symptoms may lead to mental health problems.

Mental health problems can affect anyone regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity or social group. The most common forms of mental ill health are anxiety, depression, phobic anxiety disorders and obsessive compulsive disorders.

Scottish Autism recognises and is proactive in its duties under health and safety law to assess and take measures to control risks from work-related stress for its employees. This is done by promoting good working practices such as Healthy Working Lives, Health & Safety awareness, access to Occupational Health, Risk Assessing, supervisions and various training opportunities for health and wellbeing awareness (e.g. Scotland’s Mental Health First Aid training). Good mental and

physical health in employees contributes to a healthy workforce and in turn this can positively impact service users' health and wellbeing.

Ultimately, by supporting stress in service users and employees, we hope to experience the 'synergistic' effect of decreased stress for service users and employees.

### 3. VALUES INTO PRACTICE

Values into Practice (VIP) is our model of service delivery and at the core of what we do. VIP has three inter-related components:



- 1) Our ethical framework: the 'Heart' of Scottish Autism
  - a. A focus on wellbeing enables happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.
  - b. Low stress environments provide safe space for personal growth.
  - c. By understanding thinking styles we can support individuals to plan their life and achieve their aspirations.
  - d. Understanding communication enables us to listen to a person's individual voice and choice.
  - e. Positive interactions nurture meaningful relationships and supportive communities.
  - f. c) Staff understands their role and relationship with service users
  - g. Continuous learning empowers us to share and apply knowledge.
  - h. Collaboration with families and agencies encourages holistic support for individuals.



- 2) The Autism Practice Improvement Framework (APIF): the 'Head' of Scottish Autism

Continuous improvement of our practice and service delivery is supported by the use of Autism Practice Improvement Framework (APIF). Designed by Scottish Autism it is a bespoke adaptation of the theory and methodology used in the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) model.

The aim of APIF is to improve autism practice, which in turn should improve the lives of all service users and pupils that Scottish Autism supports. The framework will be used to self-assess services to reflect, rate and quantify where Scottish Autism is with autism practice.





### 3) Our Wellbeing Support model: the 'Hand' of Scottish Autism.

Scottish Autism has a holistic approach to wellbeing (Appendix 1) that is delivered through our VIP Academy. Our Wellbeing Support model (see diagram below) demonstrates what we do in practice to support and enable service user's wellbeing. This is based on a low arousal approach to support wellbeing as well as reduce stress. Collectively the various elements of the model are used to inform a stress reduction plan (SRP).

#### *Human Development:*

- Understanding typical and atypical development
- Appreciating the neuro-developmental nature of autism
- Exploring the development of agency and self

#### *Continually exploring and developing our understanding of autism*

- Learning from the VIP Academy
- Peer mentoring
- Engaging with the people we support
- Reflective practice

#### *Sensory Processing*

- Understanding how we take in information via our senses and process it for meaning
- Organisation of the senses and how we attend to and interpret stimulus
- Exploring sensory processing differences for autistic individuals

#### *Stress and Coping*

- Understanding the neuro-physiology of stress and links to our health and wellbeing
- Understanding the transactional nature of stress
- Supporting low arousal approaches
- Developing our understanding of coping mechanisms and styles
- A move towards holistic stress reduction planning for the autistic individuals we support

#### *The role of environment and relationships in the stress transaction*

- Supported individuals/staff teams/families and carers
- Environmental auditing

#### *Happiness and Positive Psychology*

- Understanding the impact of cultures and perceptions on practice approaches
- Wellbeing and flourishing; defining quality of life
- The role of appraisal in positive practice approaches

#### *Creating Cultures of Mindfulness and Reflection*

- Encouraging reflective practitioners
- Taking personal responsibility for self-care and professional development

#### *Change Talk and Motivation:*



- Motivational interviewing technique: Open ended questions, Affirmation, Reflection, Summary (OARS)
- Facilitating change talk
- Encouraging reflective listening

A range of staff are involved in the implementation, training and advice of VIP (See Appendix 2).

#### **4. SERVICE USER SUPPORT**

Service users' wellbeing will be supported by their service employees in line with their service agreement, Support Plan and/or Child's Plan.

#### **5. EMPLOYEE SUPPORT**

Scottish Autism employees will be supported to promote their own wellbeing through wellbeing initiatives, health & safety initiatives, training, supervision, appraisal and Employee Assistance Programme.

#### **6. COMPLAINTS**

Any complaints about the application of this policy should be addressed through Scottish Autism's complaint procedures.

#### **7. POLICY REVIEW**

This policy will be monitored on an annual basis and reviewed in line with the organisation's 3 year policy review cycle.