

## NHS Education for Scotland

### Occupational Health and Wellbeing Policy

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# Introduction

## 1. Occupational Health and Wellbeing Policy Statement

Clear links exist between employment and health. NES is committed to working in partnership to improve the current and future health of all employees, and strongly believes that developing a focus on health and wellbeing will enable the organisation to become more successful and resilient in the future.

The Occupational Health and Wellbeing Policy aims to deal positively and constructively with health-related issues that may impact on the work life of employees, and, through early identification, aims to support employees before issues develop into problems for both the employer and the employee.

It incorporates or signposts to separate policies on:

- ❖ **Occupational Health and Employee Assistance**
- ❖ **Mental Health & Wellbeing**
- ❖ **[Work-related Stress Policy](#)**
- ❖ **[Alcohol and Other Substances Policy](#)**
- ❖ **[Smoking and Vaping Policy](#)**
- ❖ **Health Promotion**

Other policies, for example, the Managing Health, Safety and Welfare Policy, Attendance Policy, Disability Policy and the Home Working Policy should be read in conjunction with this policy.

NES supports the principle of achieving a work/life balance for staff and this includes giving staff wherever practicable, the opportunity to work more flexibly. Its separate Home Working Policy has been designed as a mutually advantageous arrangement and another tool in supporting staff welfare.

HR will provide advice on return to work, rehabilitation, job modification, home working arrangements, transfer or early retirement on request.

NES is committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity, and to ensuring that all employees are treated fairly.

# **Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Policy**

## **1. Introduction and Policy Statement**

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) recognises that the health and wellbeing of employees are matters of paramount importance both to the individual and to the organisation and that employees who have concerns about health issues may not be able to make an effective contribution to their work.

NES is committed to ensuring that an occupational health service which is accessible and convenient is available to all employees and line managers. The occupational health service is responsible for giving advice at an early stage in matters of long and short term ill-health through appropriate contact with the employee and the employee's medical adviser.

Additionally, NES will ensure the provision of independent support for employees in the form of a comprehensive Employee Assistance Scheme, accessible to all employees and their immediate family 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

## **2. Occupational Health Service (OHS)**

### ***2.1 Role of the Occupational Health Service***

The role of the Occupational Health Service is to advise both employee and employer of the impact of the employee's work on their health and welfare, and the effect of the employee's health on their ability to perform their work satisfactorily. Advice from the Occupational Health Provider may be requested by either the employee or the employer, and will be given on a confidential basis.

### ***2.2 Current Occupational Health Provider***

The Occupational Health provider currently used by NES is

National Services Scotland  
Occupational Health  
Healthy Working Lives  
Gyle Square  
Area 107B  
1 South Gyle Crescent  
EDINBURGH  
EH12 9EB

Email: [nss.occupationalhealth@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.occupationalhealth@nhs.scot)

Tel: 0131 275 6360

Fax: 0131 275 7607

## **2.3 Types of Occupational Health Referral**

### **2.3.1 Pre-employment Referral**

In accordance with the NHSScotland PIN Guideline “Safer Pre and Post Employment Health Checks” candidates who have been selected for appointment by NES (“preferred candidates”) may be requested to undergo a health assessment which complies with equal opportunities legislation and good occupational health practice in order to:

- ❖ Ensure that the preferred candidate has the capacity and capability to meet the demands of the post;
- ❖ Provide the preferred candidate and the organisation with expert independent advice and recommendations for adjustments to the job or the environment that would enable the preferred candidate to achieve effective performance in the role and the employer to comply with the obligations imposed by equal opportunities legislation;
- ❖ Identify anyone at risk of developing work-related diseases from hazardous agents in the workplace.

As the majority of positions within NES are office-based, and since work-related hazards are rare, it is generally the case that pre-employment health assessments will only be used in cases where expert occupational health advice is required to enable NES to make adjustments to the role or working environment which will allow the preferred candidate to achieve effective performance.

Individuals should be assured that **no prospective employees will be refused employment on health grounds unless:**

- ❖ Expert occupational medical advice has been sought;
- ❖ The individual has had the opportunity to discuss issues raised with an occupational health professional; and
- ❖ All facts have been considered by the employing manager and HR.

A referral may be requested by the employer to investigate the health of an employee who has developed a pattern of absence or who is absent from work for an extended period.

Advice may be sought on any of the following:

- ❖ An up-to-date prognosis on the health of the employee;
- ❖ A prospective date of return to work if appropriate;
- ❖ Advice on rehabilitation or redeployment; or
- ❖ A review of existing arrangements for home working.

In such cases a report would be prepared by the Occupational Health Service and made available for the Line Manager or nominated individual for consultation with the HR Business Partner.

### **2.3.2 Self-referral**

Employees can seek assistance through self-referral to the Occupational Health Service or to the Employee Assistance Provider, AXA ICAS, for help with issues such as managing work-related stress, smoking, bereavement and alcohol and substance misuse etc.

A Self-Referral is confidential between the employee and the provider and a report will not be provided. Should an employee wish a detailed consultation they should raise this with their Line Manager who will instigate a management referral where appropriate. Line Managers should then contact their HR Business Partner.

Contact details for the Occupational Health Service can be found in section 2.2, above, and contact details for the Employee Assistance Provider can be found in section 4.1, below.

### **2.4 Additional Therapeutic Services, including physiotherapy**

The Occupational Health Service may recommend an additional therapeutic service such as Physiotherapy or Occupational Therapy.

NES will support an initial assessment and a further 5 appointments where appropriate (a total of 6 appointments in all) for additional therapeutic services.

***Employees should note that they will be unable to access additional therapeutic services through self-referral; an initial management referral will be required.***

## **3. Eye Tests**

In line with legislative requirements, eye tests will be made available for employees who regularly use Display Screen Equipment every two years. For staff with specific eye disorders, such as Glaucoma, eye tests will be made available on an annual basis.

NES undertakes to pay for the costs of occupational eye tests and to meet the basic cost of any special corrective appliances (usually spectacles), that are recommended for DSE use as a result of the test, up to a maximum of £70.00.

The costs for this service will be based on a charge for a test to the standard of current legislative requirements. The charge for the test will be independent of the charge for any spectacles required as a result of the eye test. A standard form for applications and guidance on the process for the provision of eye tests and corrective appliances for users of DSE is attached at Appendix A

Where bifocal or varifocal spectacles are prescribed as special corrective appliances NES will contribute to meet the cost required for DSE work to a maximum of £70.00.

## **4. Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

### **4.1 EAP Services**

NES is continually striving to improve its “duty of care” to employees. The organisation believes that providing employees with an effective Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) will enhance the support provided by existing policies, services, initiatives and HR structures.

The NES EAP provider is Optima HELP who can provide counselling and confidential advice and information on a range of issues including:

- Alcohol and drug misuse
- Bereavement
- Bullying and harassment
- Childcare
- Debt and money management worries
- Eldercare
- Sickness absence
- Legal /consumer issues
- Relationships
- Retirement
- Stress
- Trauma
- Work life balance
- Health and wellbeing

Optima HELP can be contacted 24 hours a day 365 days a year on freephone 0800 032 9849.

Alternatively, colleagues may wish to refer to the intranet for information in the first instance:

[Employee Assistance Programme - Optima Help](#)

The website [Optimise](#) also provides a wealth of information on health and wellbeing topics.

## **4.2 Optima HELP Counselling Service**

Optima HELP also provides a one-to-one confidential counselling service which is available for employees and their immediate family members who wish help to cope with issues such as smoking, alcohol and substance misuse, bereavement, work-related stress or where aspects of their personal lives are affecting performance.

It is available to:

- All NES Employees
- Eligible Employees' spouses and partners;
- Other dependant family members living in the Employees' household including but not limited to parents, siblings and children;
- Children over 16 of the Eligible Employees who may be living with a former partner
- Children over 16 who are dependant students living away from home
- Where Employees are aged under 21 and living in the family home the Eligible Employees' brothers or sisters also living with her or him in that home
- But excluding in all cases persons under the age of 16
- Onward counselling, legal and financial information and advice is not provided to immediate family

Advice and counselling are delivered using the following methods depending on which is most appropriate:

- Telephone
- Face to face
- On-line

## **4.3 Specialist Support for Managers**

HELP provides coaching for managers supporting team members through issues Managers can call **0800 032 9849** for advice about how best to provide support to an employee/ manage a difficult situation.

Management Support is also available on the [website](#)

#### **4.4 Confidentiality**

Optima HELP provides NES with anonymised statistical reports regarding service uptake rates for the organisation on a quarterly basis. No information regarding individual service users is shared with NES; this is to maintain strict confidentiality and to ensure that colleagues can have faith in the integrity of the Employee Assistance Scheme.

# **Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy**

## **1. Introduction and Policy Statement**

### **1.1 Policy Statement**

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) believes that people are its most important asset and is committed to protecting employees from the risks to mental health which arise from the workplace, and to providing a supportive working environment for those experiencing or recovering from mental ill health.

By working in partnership with relevant agencies and service providers, NES aims to preserve and enhance all aspects of employee health and wellbeing by providing staff with access to a range of health-related policies, services and information. NES anticipates that this will lead to clear benefits for both individual members of staff and the organisation as a whole.

This policy has been developed to provide employees and line managers with advice and guidance regarding how to protect and promote mental health and wellbeing in the workplace. It is anticipated that this document will also fulfil an important signposting role, directing individuals to help and assistance should they encounter any issues relating to mental health and wellbeing.

### **1.2 Scope**

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy applies to the following individuals:

- ❖ All NES employees regardless of grade, length of service or working pattern/hours;
- ❖ All staff on secondment to NES from external organisations;
- ❖ All temporary, agency and contractual workers.

### **1.3 Mental health awareness and training**

NES is committed to providing mental health awareness and training activities for all employees.

## **2. Definitions**

### **2.1 Mental Health & Wellbeing**

Mental health is a wide-ranging concept with a variety of definitions which relate to how people think, feel and behave. It is an integral aspect of an individual's overall health and wellbeing and it is widely accepted that poor mental health can lead to physical illness and disease.

A number of mental health conditions such as stress, depression and anxiety can manifest as a result of issues that individuals experience in the workplace. Moreover, negative workplace issues also have the potential to make it more difficult for individuals to manage existing mental health conditions.

## **2.2 Work-related Stress**

The Health and Safety Executive defines work-related stress as “the process that arises where work demands of various types and combinations exceed a person’s capacity and capability to cope”. Work-related stress is a significant cause of illness and disease and is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other indicators of organisational underperformance, including human error.

Refer to the Work Related Stress Policy in the suite of [NHS Scotland Workforce Policies](#)

## **3. Support for employees with mental health problems**

NES recognises that the mental and physical health of employees is equally important. The organisation has signed the “see me” pledge, further strengthening its commitment to protecting and enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of employees and ending the stigma and discrimination of mental ill-health. To this end, an action plan has been developed which supports the ongoing health promotion agenda, and aims to contribute to embedding employee health and wellbeing into the wider organisational culture. This clearly demonstrates that the organisation is steadfast in its support of employees experiencing mental health problems, and concerned to ensure that individuals are treated fairly and consistently across the board.

### **3.1 Management of sickness absence**

It may be the case that employees suffering from mental health problems are required to take a period of time away from work to support their wellbeing and recovery. The Managing Sickness Absence Policy outlines the processes and procedures relating to sickness absence and applies to staff who are absent from work for any reason.

NES is committed to supporting the return to work of all members of staff who have been on a period of sickness absence and the organisation uses a range of methods to help employees become re-integrated into the workplace. These include:

- ❖ Return to work interviews;
- ❖ Encouraging employees to maintain contact with their Line Manager during periods of sickness absence;
- ❖ Assessing the needs of employees and making any necessary adjustments to enable a return to work;
- ❖ Negotiating with employees to agree a planned approach to their return after an extended period of absence.

### **3.2 Reasonable adjustments on return to work**

As mentioned above, NES is committed to making reasonable adjustments to support staff with a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010. In the case of staff with disabilities related to their mental health, it is likely that the reasonable adjustments may take one or more of the following forms:

- ❖ Reconfigured work pattern;
- ❖ Temporary removal of duties;
- ❖ Buddying up with a colleague;
- ❖ Mentoring;
- ❖ Temporary reduction in contractual working hours;
- ❖ Phased return (as per advice from individual's GP/Occupational Health Service).

For further information, please refer to the NES Disability Policy which is available on the NES Intranet.

# Health Promotion Policy

## 1. Introduction and Policy Statement

NHS Education for Scotland (NES) is committed to providing a healthy and safe working environment for all employees. It recognises that a healthier workforce provides positive benefits to the organisation. In addition, NES, through partnership working with relevant agencies, wishes to promote wherever appropriate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. In adopting this aim, NES undertakes to promote a healthy working environment and provide opportunities for employees to have access to information about health events throughout the regions.

NES also recognises that much can be done to encourage employees to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle, although the range of activities may differ from Region to Region. In order to facilitate this, a Health Promotion Group has been convened to address all of the issues covered in this policy. The remit of the Health Promotion Working Group is to exist as a sub-group of the Managing Health, Safety and Welfare Committee and to identify, recommend and report to the Committee on the actions required to be taken by NES to promote health within the organisation.

## 2. Aims of the Working Group

- Raise and support issues relating to health within NES;
- Prepare annual Action Plan documents showing how NES promotes the health of its employees;
- Provide information, co-ordination and support for local and central health promotion events;
- Achieve and maintain the Healthy Working Lives Award Programmes;
- Report to the Managing Health, Safety and Welfare Committee regularly on the above;
- Support health awareness issues raised by management.

The NES Health Promotion Working Group will meet quarterly and the membership will consist of HR representatives and an employee(s) from each region to ensure equal representation.

The objectives are part of the overall NHS Scotland Occupational Health and Safety strategy “Safe and Well at Work” (2011) which demonstrates

commitment to developing a comprehensive, accessible and inclusive Occupational Health and Safety Service for all employees.

**Ratified by the Staff Governance Committee 25 April 2008**

**Revised Policy Ratified by the Staff Governance Committee 16 October 2012**

**Revised Policy ratified by the Staff Governance Committee 24 July 2014**

**Interim Policy amendments made on 11 March 2026 in response to launch of phase 3 Once for Scotland Policies**

# APPENDIX A

NHS Education for Scotland

## PROVISION OF EYE TEST AND SPECTACLES FOR USERS OF DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT

*(see overleaf for instructions for completing form)*

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### PART A: AUTHORISATION FOR EYE EXAMINATIONS

This authorisation entitles a NES employee, who is a regular user of display screen equipment, reimbursement towards the cost of an eye test. If a special corrective appliance is prescribed for DSE use, then a maximum of £70.00 towards the cost of spectacles and eye test will be reimbursed by NES.

Name of Employee: ..... Payroll No: .....

Department: .....

Signature of Line Manager: ..... Date: .....

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### PART B: AUTHORISATION FOR PROVISION OF CORRECTIVE SPECTACLES – TO BE COMPLETED BY OPTICIAN

Address of Opticians .....  
or Opticians Stamp .....

Name of Examining Optician .....

Complete as appropriate:

- I confirm that the cost of the eye test is £ .....
- I confirm that a portion of this prescription is for DSE use.
- I confirm that the cost of spectacles are £ ..... (Receipt attached)

Signature ..... Date .....

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### PART C: AUTHORISATION OF PAYMENT – TO BE COMPLETED BY BUDGET HOLDER

Name of Budget Holder: .....

- I authorise payment of spectacles and eye test, where appropriate, at a cost of: £ .....  
(Maximum £70.00)

Signature of Budget Holder: .....

Date .....

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING AUTHORISATION FORM

1. **The Line Manager should sign PART A.**
2. The employee should take the signed form to the optician when attending for an eye test.
3. The optician is responsible for the completions of **PART B**. If this is not completed then a letter from the optician detailing the outcome of the test is also acceptable.
4. The form (with Part B or letter signed by the optician) and a receipt for the spectacles and eye test should be forwarded to your department budget holder for authorisation and to complete **PART C**.
5. The completed form should then be submitted as an eExpense claim.