# Guide to Wellness Action Plans (WAPs)

Developing a Wellness Action Plan (WRAP) can help employees to actively support their own mental health by reflecting on the causes of stress and poor mental health, and by taking ownership of practical steps to help address
these triggers.

This process can also help managers to open up dialogue with employees, understand their needs and experiences and ultimately better support their mental health.

Managers should work together with employees to develop a personal action plan to proactively manage their mental health. This allows people to plan in advance and develop tailored support for a time when they're not coping so well. It also facilitates open dialogue with managers – leading to practical, agreed steps which can form the basis for regular monitoring and review.

*An action plan should cover:*
- Actions and behaviours that support the employee's mental wellbeing
- Symptoms, early warning signs and triggers for poor mental health or stress
- Potential impact of poor mental health or a mental health problem on their performance
- What support they need from their line manager
- Positive steps for the individual to take if they are experiencing stress or poor mental health
- An agreed time to review the support measures to see if they're working.

It should be written by the employee, with support from occupational health should the employee and/or manager feel this is beneficial.

The WRAP should be held confidentially and regularly reviewed by the employee and their manager together. Employees need only provide information that relates to their role and the workplace, and that they are comfortable sharing. The WAP is not legally binding but is intended to allow a line manager to agree with employees how they can be practically supported in the workplace and how to address any health needs.

As a manager, when supporting your employee to develop their WAP, be positive and encouraging, but do not try to influence them.

. Remember:
• People are often experts when it comes to identifying the support or adjustment they need and how to manage their triggers for poor mental health.  If they suggest something you need further advice on, talk to the person or arrange for an Occupational health in-service medical or workplace assessment.
• The plan must be written by the individual:
• The plan needs to include all the things that are important to the individual and their mental wellbeing.

Ask the person you are supporting to think about:
• What are they like when they are feeling well and flourishing at work
• What their environment is like when it is supporting their wellbeing
• What are the things they need to do to maintain good health and wellbeing
• Coping strategies they already use and what makes these effective

• How they've managed to work through challenging situations previously
• What hasn't worked in the past and why they think this might be.

**What can managers do to promote wellbeing**

The WAP is intended not only as a tool to support employees when they are experiencing problems, but also as a means of identifying how an individual's wellbeing can be proactively promoted. When it comes to supporting a member of staff's wellbeing, the following actions and approaches can be helpful.

**Your managerial style:**

• Be supportive, approachable and responsive
• Be available for regular work-related conversations and increase the frequency of supervision or catch-up time with the team member if required
• Proactively support staff to monitor their workload and encourage healthy working hours and a positive work/life balance
• Ensure you are setting realistic targets and be clear about priorities
• Ask your team what they need from you and use one-to-ones and catch-ups and MyPlan meetings to cover a wider agenda than just your employee's to-do list, including reflecting on what has gone well and what has been difficult in the past month, and forward planning together, for example by identifying upcoming pinch points, challenges and required support
• Encourage positive relationships with colleagues
• Provide staff with meaningful work and opportunities for personal development and growth
• Ensure people are working in an appropriate physical environment

**Providing support**

• Encourage staff to talk and be open about problems they are experiencing
• Ensure confidentiality and provide an appropriate place for confidential conversations
• When talking about an individual's mental health listen, be respectful and do not make assumptions
• Be positive – focus on what employees can do, rather than what they can't,
• Work together and involve people in finding solutions as much as possible
• Support staff to develop personal resilience and coping strategies
• Recognise and praise good work and commitment, providing regular opportunities to discuss, review and reflect on positive achievements – this can help people to build up positive self-esteem and develop skills to better manage their triggers for poor mental health
• Encourage staff to seek further advice and support (for example Council network groups, occupational health, counselling), and seek advice and support yourself and for your team if needed.

**Support yourself**

Sometimes supporting your employees can lead to you needing support yourself. Remember managers may need to get referred to occupational health, or need ongoing support with certain issues as may the team as a whole.