

ST ATHAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY



This is a new policy for Council mental health and workplace wellbeing arrangements.

Adoption

Adopted by St Athan Community Council at the Full General Council meeting held on Tuesday 7th July 2026.

Version: 2.0.

Minute reference: 3504

Review date: May 2027

Signed:

Name:

Chair of St Athan Community Council

Note: This policy is written for Council use in Wales and Great Britain employment, equality and health and safety terms. It should be read alongside the Council's Health and Safety Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Complaints Policy, Disciplinary and Grievance arrangements, sickness absence arrangements, risk assessments, UK GDPR and Data Protection Policy and any staffing procedures adopted by the Council.

1. Purpose

1.1 This policy sets out how St Athan Community Council will promote positive mental health and wellbeing, manage work-related stress risks and support employees, councillors and volunteers where Council activities may affect mental wellbeing.

1.2 The Council recognises that mental health is part of health and safety and that good working relationships, reasonable workloads, fair treatment, clear communication and timely support help to prevent avoidable work-related stress.

1.3 This policy is not a clinical policy and does not replace medical advice, occupational health advice, safeguarding procedures or emergency services. It provides workplace and Council governance arrangements only.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to Council employment, Council and committee meetings, office administration, events, projects, remote working, public-facing work, contractor liaison, councillor and officer working relationships, volunteer activities and other Council business.

2.2 This policy applies to employees, councillors, volunteers and any person undertaking authorised work or activities for or on behalf of the Council. Contractors and consultants remain responsible for their own employees and arrangements, but must work with the Council in a respectful and safe way.

2.3 Councillors are not employees of the Council. However, councillors must support safe and respectful Council working arrangements, comply with the Code of Conduct and avoid behaviour that

may amount to bullying, harassment, victimisation or unreasonable pressure on employees, councillors, volunteers or members of the public.

2.4 Where a matter concerns an employee's health, absence, performance, grievance or disciplinary issue, the Council will follow the relevant employment procedure and maintain confidentiality.

3. Legal framework

3.1 The Council will have regard to the following legislation and official guidance, where applicable:

- the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
- the Equality Act 2010, including disability discrimination, harassment, victimisation and reasonable adjustment duties;
- the Employment Rights Act 1996 and relevant employment requirements, where applicable;
- the Working Time Regulations 1998, where working hours and rest arrangements are relevant;
- the UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018, where health, absence or wellbeing information is recorded or shared;
- Welsh Government and Public Health Wales / Healthy Working Wales guidance on workplace wellbeing and mental health;
- local government, audit, safeguarding, insurance and confidentiality requirements where these affect mental health and wellbeing arrangements.

3.2 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires employers to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of employees. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require suitable and sufficient assessment of risks to health and safety.

3.3 Mental health conditions may amount to a disability under the Equality Act 2010 where the legal test is met. The Council will consider reasonable adjustments where required and will not treat a person less favourably because of disability, mental health-related absence or protected characteristics.

3.4 This policy should be applied proportionately to the size, resources, staffing structure, risks and activities of the Council.

4. Policy statement

4.1 The Council is committed to promoting a culture where mental health and wellbeing are taken seriously, concerns can be raised early and support is considered fairly and confidentially.

4.2 The Council will aim to reduce avoidable work-related stress by identifying foreseeable risks, taking proportionate action, reviewing workloads and deadlines, promoting respectful behaviour and responding promptly to concerns.

4.3 The Council will not tolerate bullying, harassment, victimisation, intimidation, unreasonable behaviour or discrimination by councillors, employees, volunteers, contractors, hirers or members of the public in connection with Council business.

4.4 The Council will support employees who experience mental health difficulties, including by considering reasonable adjustments, signposting to appropriate support and managing absence or return to work sensitively.

4.5 The Council will handle health and wellbeing information lawfully, fairly, securely and on a need-to-know basis.

5. Key definitions

Term	Meaning
Mental health	A broad term covering emotional, psychological and social wellbeing, ranging from positive mental wellbeing to periods of poor mental health or diagnosed mental health conditions.
Mental wellbeing	Feeling good and functioning well, including resilience, positive relationships, confidence, purpose and the ability to cope with ordinary pressures.
Work-related stress	The adverse reaction a person may have to excessive pressures or demands placed on them at work or in Council activity.
Psychological risk	A work or Council-related factor that may cause or contribute to stress, distress, burnout, anxiety, depression or other mental health harm.
Reasonable adjustment	A change or support measure that may be required to remove or reduce a disadvantage experienced by a disabled person, including some people with mental health conditions.
Wellbeing conversation	A supportive discussion intended to understand concerns, identify practical support and agree proportionate steps. It is not a disciplinary meeting unless clearly stated under a separate procedure.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Main responsibilities
St Athan Community Council	Has overall responsibility for governance of this policy, provision of reasonable resources and ensuring that significant mental health, wellbeing and work-related stress risks are considered in decision-making.
Chair of Council	Supports respectful Council working arrangements, may coordinate urgent confidential matters involving the Proper Officer where authorised, and ensures serious concerns are referred to the appropriate committee or Council process.
Personnel / Staffing Committee, where appointed	Considers confidential staffing matters, sickness absence, wellbeing concerns, return to work arrangements and reasonable adjustments in accordance with delegated authority and employment procedures.
Proper Officer	Coordinates day-to-day administration of this policy, keeps confidential records, raises workload or wellbeing risks with the Chair or relevant committee, supports risk assessment and signposts staff, councillors or volunteers to appropriate procedures.
Responsible Financial Officer	Ensures that any agreed wellbeing-related expenditure, training, occupational health advice, staffing resources or adjustments are recorded and managed in accordance with financial regulations and budget authority.
Councillors	Must promote respectful working relationships, avoid unreasonable demands on employees, raise concerns through appropriate channels, maintain confidentiality and comply with the Code of Conduct and Council policies.

Role	Main responsibilities
Employees	Should take reasonable care of their own wellbeing and that of others, raise concerns early where possible, follow Council procedures, engage constructively with support and report bullying, harassment, excessive workload or stress concerns.
Volunteers	Should follow Council instructions and risk assessments, act respectfully, report concerns and avoid undertaking activities that create unreasonable stress or risk for themselves or others.
Contractors and hirers	Must behave respectfully, comply with relevant booking or contract conditions and avoid conduct that creates unreasonable stress, intimidation, harassment or risk to Council employees, councillors, volunteers or the public.

7. Preventing work-related stress

7.1 The Council will take proportionate steps to identify and manage foreseeable work-related stress risks arising from Council work, projects, meetings, employment arrangements, public contact and workload demands.

7.2 The Council will consider the following common psychological risk areas when reviewing work-related stress: demands, control, support, relationships, role, change, public-facing pressures, lone or remote working, meeting workload, deadlines, conflict and repeated unreasonable contact.

7.3 Stress risk assessments may be carried out for the Council as a whole, for a role, project, activity or individual circumstances. The process should focus on practical controls rather than blame.

7.4 Examples of controls may include clearer priorities, realistic timescales, revised workloads, additional support, better meeting planning, training, contractor support, use of committees, clearer communication routes, improved handover arrangements and agreed boundaries for contact outside working hours.

7.5 Where the Council has only a small staffing structure, councillors must be particularly mindful that repeated requests, unclear instructions, urgent demands, unmanaged projects or direct approaches outside agreed procedures can create significant pressure on employees.

8. Supportive working culture

8.1 The Council will encourage open, respectful and proportionate conversations about workload, pressure, wellbeing and support.

8.2 Employees, councillors and volunteers should be treated with courtesy at meetings, by email, by telephone, on social media, during site visits and at public events.

8.3 Concerns should be raised through appropriate channels. Personal criticism, public humiliation, aggressive communication, unreasonable repeated contact and bypassing agreed procedures should be avoided.

8.4 The Council will seek to ensure that staff and councillors understand the distinction between robust democratic debate, lawful scrutiny and unacceptable personal behaviour.

8.5 Meeting arrangements should, where reasonably practicable, support wellbeing by allowing clear agendas, realistic timings, appropriate breaks, lawful exclusion of confidential staffing matters where required and respectful conduct by all participants.

9. Raising a concern

9.1 A person who is concerned about work-related stress, mental wellbeing, bullying, harassment, excessive workload or inappropriate behaviour should raise the matter as early as possible with the Proper Officer, Chair, Vice-Chair or Personnel / Staffing Committee, depending on the nature of the concern.

9.2 Where the concern relates to the Proper Officer, it should be raised with the Chair, Vice-Chair or the relevant authorised committee. Where the concern relates to the Chair, it should be raised with the Vice-Chair or another appropriate authorised councillor or committee.

9.3 The Council will consider whether the matter should be handled informally, under this policy, under the Complaints Policy, under the Code of Conduct process, under employment procedures, under safeguarding procedures or through another appropriate route.

9.4 A wellbeing concern will not normally be treated as misconduct merely because it has been raised. However, knowingly false, malicious or abusive allegations may be considered under the appropriate policy.

10. Wellbeing conversations and support

10.1 A wellbeing conversation may be offered where a person raises a concern, shows signs of stress, returns from mental health-related absence, requests support or where workload or behaviour issues may be affecting wellbeing.

10.2 The purpose of a wellbeing conversation is to understand the concern, identify practical support, agree next steps and decide whether any further process or advice is needed.

10.3 Possible support may include temporary workload adjustments, prioritisation of tasks, revised deadlines, additional supervision or check-ins, signposting to Welsh Government / Healthy Working Wales resources, occupational health advice where authorised, consideration of flexible working or reasonable adjustments, or referral to another Council procedure.

10.4 Notes of wellbeing conversations should be factual, proportionate and confidential. Medical details should not be recorded unless necessary and lawful.

10.5 The Council should not attempt to diagnose mental health conditions. Where medical advice is needed, the person should be encouraged to seek advice from an appropriate health professional.

11. Reasonable adjustments

11.1 Where a person has a mental health condition that may amount to a disability, the Council will consider its duty to make reasonable adjustments.

11.2 Reasonable adjustments will depend on the circumstances and may include changes to working hours, duties, deadlines, meeting arrangements, communication methods, supervision, phased return, workspace arrangements, contact boundaries, training or temporary support.

11.3 The Council may seek appropriate medical, occupational health, HR or legal advice before agreeing adjustments, particularly where the adjustment has resource, legal, confidentiality or service delivery implications.

11.4 Adjustments should be reviewed at agreed intervals and updated where circumstances change.

12. Sickness absence and return to work

12.1 Mental health-related sickness absence will be managed sensitively, consistently and in accordance with the Council's employment procedures.

12.2 Contact during absence should be reasonable, supportive and agreed where possible. The Council should avoid unnecessary pressure while maintaining appropriate communication about work, pay, certificates, support and return to work planning.

12.3 Return to work planning may include a return to work discussion, phased return, temporary adjustments, amended duties, occupational health advice, review of work-related stress factors and follow-up meetings.

12.4 Absence records and health information must be kept confidential and processed in accordance with data protection law and the Council's UK GDPR and Data Protection Policy.

13. Bullying, harassment and unreasonable behaviour

13.1 The Council will not tolerate bullying, harassment, victimisation, intimidation or discrimination in Council business.

13.2 Examples may include aggressive communication, offensive comments, repeated unreasonable demands, public humiliation, isolation, threats, misuse of social media, discriminatory remarks, unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic or behaviour that undermines dignity at work.

13.3 Allegations involving employees will be handled under the relevant employment policy. Allegations involving councillors may need to be considered under the Code of Conduct or standards process. Allegations involving members of the public, contractors or hirers may be addressed through access restrictions, contract terms, booking conditions or other lawful measures.

13.4 The Council will consider immediate measures to protect wellbeing where there is a serious or continuing risk, while ensuring fairness and confidentiality.

14. Confidentiality and records

14.1 Mental health, sickness absence, occupational health, reasonable adjustment and wellbeing records are confidential and may include special category personal data.

14.2 Such information must be shared only where necessary and lawful, for example with the relevant authorised councillor or committee, HR adviser, occupational health provider, payroll provider, insurer, legal adviser or regulator where there is a proper reason.

14.3 Councillors and employees must not discuss confidential wellbeing or health matters outside the authorised process.

14.4 Records should be accurate, factual, proportionate, securely stored and retained in line with the Council's records retention arrangements.

15. Training, awareness and signposting

15.1 The Council will provide proportionate awareness information to councillors and employees about this policy, respectful working relationships, work-related stress and reporting routes.

15.2 Where resources allow, the Council may arrange training or briefing on mental health awareness, stress risk assessment, bullying and harassment, equality duties, line management, absence management or safeguarding.

15.3 The Council may signpost employees, councillors or volunteers to external resources such as Welsh Government / Healthy Working Wales information, NHS or GP services, occupational health advice where authorised, or appropriate independent support.

15.4 The Council will not require a person to disclose a mental health condition unless there is a lawful and necessary reason, such as health and safety, reasonable adjustment, absence management or safeguarding.

16. Crisis or immediate safety concerns

16.1 If there is an immediate risk of serious harm to any person, emergency services should be contacted without delay.

16.2 Where a person appears to be in serious distress but there is no immediate emergency, the Council should act calmly, maintain dignity and privacy where possible, encourage the person to contact an appropriate health professional or trusted contact, and consider whether any safeguarding or employment procedure applies.

16.3 Councillors, employees and volunteers are not expected to provide clinical support. Their role is to respond proportionately, escalate concerns appropriately and avoid actions that increase risk.

16.4 Any incident involving immediate safety concerns should be recorded confidentially and reviewed to identify follow-up action and support.

17. Monitoring and review

17.1 The Council will monitor the effectiveness of this policy through review of wellbeing concerns, sickness absence patterns, workload issues, complaints, grievances, exit feedback, incident reports, meeting conduct issues and risk assessments, where information is available and lawful to use.

17.2 Significant wellbeing or work-related stress risks should be reported to Council or the appropriate committee in a way that protects confidentiality.

17.3 This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner where there is a significant change in legislation, guidance, staffing, Council activities, workload, incidents or risk profile.

18. Related policies and records

18.1 This policy should be read alongside the following Council documents and records, where adopted or applicable:

- Health and Safety Policy;
- Equality and Diversity Policy;
- Code of Conduct for Members;
- Member / Officer Protocol, where adopted;
- Disciplinary and Grievance procedures;
- Sickness Absence Policy or procedure;
- Flexible Working Policy or procedure, where adopted;
- Safeguarding Policy;
- Complaints Policy;
- Social Media and Digital Communications Policy;
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Policy;
- Records Retention / Document Retention Policy;

- risk assessments and stress risk assessments;
- wellbeing conversation notes and agreed action plans;
- training and awareness records.

Appendix 1 - Quick checklist for the Proper Officer

- Keep this policy under review and ensure councillors and employees know where to find it.
- Raise significant workload, meeting conduct, public contact or staffing pressure concerns with the Chair or appropriate committee promptly.
- Record wellbeing conversations factually and confidentially where a record is needed.
- Consider whether concerns should be handled under this policy, employment procedures, the Code of Conduct, safeguarding procedures, complaints procedures or health and safety arrangements.
- Review work-related stress risks where workload, demands, deadlines, relationships, role clarity or change appear to be causing concern.
- Check whether reasonable adjustments may be required where a mental health condition may amount to a disability.
- Ensure health and wellbeing records are stored securely and shared only on a need-to-know basis.
- Consider whether external advice is needed, such as HR, occupational health, legal, safeguarding or insurance advice.
- Signpost to appropriate Welsh Government / Healthy Working Wales, NHS, GP or other support routes where relevant.
- Report anonymised or confidential staffing matters to Council or committee only where necessary and lawful.

Appendix 2 - Wellbeing conversation record

This form should be used only where a written record is needed. Keep the record factual, proportionate and confidential.

Field	Details
Name	
Role	
Date of conversation	
People present	
Reason for conversation	
Main concern raised	
Work factors discussed: demands / control / support / relationships / role / change / other	
Any immediate safety or safeguarding concern identified	
Support requested by the person	
Practical support or adjustments agreed	
Actions for the Council	
Actions for the person	
Further advice needed: HR / occupational health / legal / safeguarding / other	
Review date	

Field	Details
Confidential storage location	
Completed by and date	

Appendix 3 - Wellbeing action plan template

This template may be used to agree practical support. It should be reviewed regularly and amended when circumstances change.

Area	Current position / concern	Agreed support or action	Owner / review date
Workload and priorities			
Deadlines and urgent work			
Meetings and communication			
Contact boundaries / out-of-hours contact			
Public-facing work or difficult contact			
Support, supervision or check-ins			
Reasonable adjustments			
Training or guidance			
Return to work arrangements, where applicable			
Other agreed support			

Plan agreed by: _____ Date: _____

Review date: _____

Appendix 4 - Work-related stress risk assessment template

Risk area	Possible issue	Who may be affected	Existing controls	Further action required	Owner / review date
Demands	Workload, deadlines, meeting volume, urgent requests, public contact				
Control	Level of autonomy, ability to plan work, clarity over priorities				

Risk area	Possible issue	Who may be affected	Existing controls	Further action required	Owner / review date
Support	Access to advice, supervision, resources, training and councillor support				
Relationships	Bullying, harassment, conflict, unreasonable behaviour, isolation				
Role	Unclear responsibilities, conflicting instructions, blurred councillor/officer boundaries				
Change	Projects, staffing changes, new systems, restructures, policy changes				
Environment	Remote working, lone working, public-facing spaces, confidentiality, interruptions				
Other	Any other Council-specific stress risk				

Assessment completed by: _____ Date: _____

Approved / reviewed by: _____ Review date: _____

Appendix 5 - Mental health and wellbeing acknowledgement

Name: _____

Role: _____

I confirm that I have received or been given access to the Council's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy and agree to follow it when carrying out Council business or authorised Council activities.

I understand that I must:

- treat employees, councillors, volunteers, contractors, hirers and members of the public with respect;
- avoid bullying, harassment, discrimination, intimidation or unreasonable behaviour;
- raise mental health, wellbeing or work-related stress concerns through appropriate channels;
- keep health, wellbeing, absence and reasonable adjustment information confidential;
- follow agreed procedures for contact, workload, meetings and reporting concerns;
- support a Council culture where mental health and wellbeing are taken seriously.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Reference sources used for this policy

This policy has been prepared by reference to current Great Britain legislation and Wales workplace wellbeing guidance. The Council should check current legislation, Welsh Government guidance and Healthy Working Wales resources when reviewing or applying this policy.

- legislation.gov.uk - Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- legislation.gov.uk - Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
- legislation.gov.uk - Equality Act 2010;
- legislation.gov.uk - Employment Rights Act 1996;
- legislation.gov.uk - Working Time Regulations 1998;
- Welsh Government - Employment support if you have a physical or mental health condition;
- Business Wales - Safe, healthy and inclusive working environment resource pack;
- Healthy Working Wales - Mental health and wellbeing at work;
- Healthy Working Wales - What employers can do.