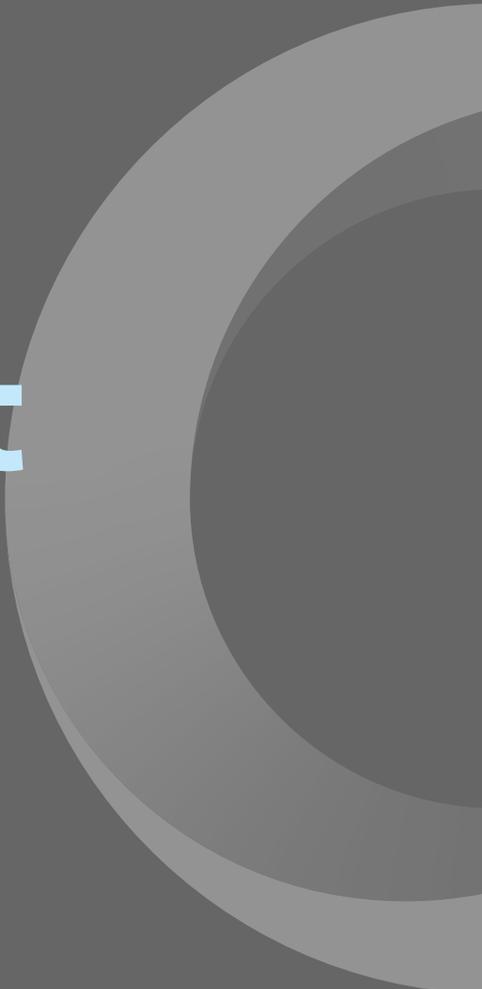


Mental Health Support Policy

A decorative graphic on the right side of the page consists of several overlapping circles in shades of gray, creating a sense of depth and movement.

This policy was developed following consultations with the An Post group of unions and An Post employees who have voluntarily provided data, advices and recommendations on its content.

This policy should be read in conjunction with An Post's;

- [Live Well - Our Commitment to Wellbeing](#)
- [Disability Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#)
- [Dignity at Work Policy](#)
- [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#)

Effective Date of this Policy is: May 2024

Policy Review Date is: May 2026 (subject to changes in legislation)

Queries to; Employee Relations, Diversity & Inclusion.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** An Post are striving to develop an inclusive workplace where everyone feels accepted, supported, and valued – a place where every employee feels they belong. Aligned to our behaviours and values, we care about the wellbeing of each and every one of our employees and are committed to implementing sustainable plans to support their wellbeing now and into the future.
- 1.2** The purpose of this policy is to; demonstrate how we support our employees' mental health and more importantly, let our employees know they are not alone if they experience issues with their mental health.
- 1.3** As per national research conducted by See Change¹ in 2020, just over one third (35%) of the population of Ireland have had a personal experience of a mental health issue². With the right supports and interventions, the majority of people will recover, and can maintain their wellbeing.

2. Understanding mental health

- 2.1** The World Health Organisation constitution states that:

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

An important implication of this definition is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities.

Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community’.”

- 2.2** We all have mental health. Being mentally healthy means you can cope with life's everyday challenges and understand your own general wellbeing. There is a difference between mental health and mental ill-health. Everyone has mental health, while only some people experience diagnosed mental illness.
- 2.3** Life events or other outside factors can affect anyone's mental health, whether or not mental illness is present. Some days we cope better, adapt faster, and work more productively than other days.
- 2.4** All of us experience difficulties with our mental health from time to time. This is nothing to be ashamed of, as we all have mental health and experience dips. Mental health difficulties can affect our thoughts, feelings and behaviour, the same way some physical illnesses can.

¹ See Change is Ireland's national mental health stigma reduction partnership.

² See Change Green Ribbon Campaign Impact Report, 2021.

2.5 It is important to note that mental health is a continuum and has a wide spectrum. At one end of the scale is perfect mental health, while the other end is where mental illness severely restricts our ability to function. In reality, few people exist at either extreme ends of the continuum. Our mental health can drift towards the left or right of the scale depending on a myriad of factors.

2.6 Mental health difficulties

2.6.1 Mental health difficulties are any conditions which affect your thinking or behaviour and include (but are not limited to); depression, stress, anxiety disorders, and more severe and complex mental illnesses such as schizophrenia, eating disorders or bipolar disorder, which may result in burnout or a breakdown if not handled appropriately. Substance abuse or addictions³ may also perpetuate mental health issues.

2.6.2 Each person's experience of mental health difficulties is unique, even if they have received the same diagnosis. Many people conceal their difficulties, as they can feel a sense of shame, and believe that revealing their difficulties could have a negative effect on their job, or on their career prospects.

2.6.3 An Post have signed the **See Change Workplace Pledge**⁴ which is specifically designed to reduce mental health stigma in Irish workplaces. As Ireland's national mental health stigma reduction programme, See Change is supporting us to create an open culture around mental health, for managers and employees, through national training programmes, policy review, and engagement in The Green Ribbon campaign⁵.

3. Stigma

3.1 Stigma is a significant problem for people who experience mental health difficulties. Stigma is recognised as a barrier to the recovery process, as people do not seek help as they fear being labelled as mentally ill. The consequences of stigma are shame and humiliation and can lead people to delay or avoid seeking help.

3.2 Stigma occurs in;

Stereotyping - having a fixed, or over-generalised belief about a particular group or class of people e.g. 'people with mental health difficulties are dangerous'. This makes it easier to ignore people, which can lead to social distancing, exclusion, and isolation.

Prejudice - having a preconceived opinion of a person or group of people that is not based on reason or actual experience e.g. 'people with mental health difficulties are dangerous and I am afraid of them'. Prejudice occurs when people form opinions without being fully aware of the facts.

³ Please see An Post's Policy and Procedures for dealing with Alcohol or Substance Misuse and Addiction Related Disorders

⁴ <https://seechange.ie/see-change-workplace-pledge-2/>

⁵ <https://seechange.ie/green-ribbon/>

Discrimination - the unjust treatment of different categories of people (for example on the grounds of age, sex, or disability) - e.g. 'I do not want to work with someone who has a mental health difficulty'. Discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably or appropriately than others, due to their mental health difficulty.

3.3 Self-stigma

People can also experience self-stigma. This occurs when a person starts to believe what is being said, or reported in the media, about their mental health issue. Self-stigma can lead a person to believe myths such as they will not recover, or that they cannot hold down a job. Self-stigma may cause a person to withdraw socially, and lead to lower self-esteem and confidence, and can be very damaging. However, not everyone will experience self-stigma.

3.4 The language of mental health stigma

Words matter. The use of language to describe a person experiencing mental health difficulties can be demeaning and isolating. Derogatory words/language are very hurtful and compound negativity and stigma, which may lead to someone concealing their difficulty.

4. Our Commitment

An Post is committed to;

- Developing an inclusive workplace where every employee feels accepted, supported, and valued - a place where every employee feels they belong.
- Ensuring every employee is treated in a fair and equitable way.
- Ensuring that application forms and medical assessment processes do not discriminate.
- Creating a culture where mental health can be discussed more openly.
- Raising awareness of mental health issues across the organisation.
- Providing stigma reduction training in association with our partners See Change to raise awareness of what stigma is and how to counteract it.
- Reducing risk factors in relation to mental health difficulties (e.g. bullying, stress, discrimination, or harassment) through our Dignity at Work policy.
- In consultation with the employee, supporting the provision of appropriate and timely reasonable accommodations for those experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Providing employees and managers with access to information and training.
- Providing employees with access to professionals who have mental health related experience; the An Post Occupational Health team, and via our Employee Assistance Programme. This also includes free counselling as deemed appropriate.
- Respecting people's privacy and maintaining confidentiality. This is imperative to supporting people to confide in their line managers and seek the support they need.

- Confidentiality may not always be guaranteed in some instances, e.g. where there is a serious risk of harm or danger, to either themselves or another.
 - If confidentiality needs to be broken for reasons of preservation of life and safety, this will be discussed with the employee directly prior to next steps being taken. It will then be escalated to the appropriate people in order to provide the supports required.
 - A breach of confidentiality by a manager (outside of the risk of harm) will be considered a disciplinary matter.
- Acting according to Data Protection legislation regarding information about any employee's sensitive personal data (including mental health difficulties).
- Having zero tolerance for stigma, or the discrimination, bullying, or harassment of someone who is experiencing, or has experienced, mental health difficulties.

5. Impact on working life

- 5.1** Disclosure is defined as the deliberate informing of someone in the workplace about one's disability.
- 5.2** There is no obligation on individuals to disclose a disability or mental health difficulty to existing or prospective employers, except under health and safety legislation where it could create a risk to the; employee, employer, or other individuals. Examples include:
- Risk of Harm: If an employee discloses information that indicates they are at risk of harming themselves or others, the employer may need to breach confidentiality to ensure safety.
 - In circumstances where there is a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan in place for an employee.
- 5.3** An employee may decide not to disclose (the existence of) a mental health difficulty to their employer for fear that they may be discriminated against or stigmatised. An Post will provide the highest level of support and assistance possible without a disclosure. Employees should be aware however, that this support may be limited if some information is not shared in relation to the accommodations that may be required.
- 5.4** An Post would like to remove the fear of disclosure for employees, and encourage people to disclose so that they can be assisted in reaching their full potential.
- 5.5** In a situation where a mental health difficulty is interfering with an employee's ability to do their job, regardless of disclosure, An Post will work with the employee to explore and clarify the following:
- What difficulties are being experienced, and how is this affecting their ability to do their job?
 - What supports (reasonable accommodations) are needed to assist the employee to do their job?
 - How can we effectively and sensitively implement a reasonable accommodation?

- If and when the team may be told about an issue, or a reasonable accommodation being put in place, and what may need to be shared if impacting the team or their work. This will be a collaborative conversation, and the decision will be the employee's - on how and what will be shared, if anything at all.
- 5.6** Personal and medical information that is disclosed will be kept strictly confidential and stored securely in accordance with our legal responsibilities under Data Protection legislation.

6. Reasonable Accommodations

- 6.1** An Post supports employees with a disability (in this case a mental health difficulty) should they require a reasonable accommodation, to support them in the performance of their role. At all times the employee will be consulted on the reasonable accommodations that the Company will provide.
- 6.2** Reasonable accommodations are supports put in place which enable an employee to carry out their duties while they are experiencing the mental health difficulty, for example; time off to attend medical or counselling appointments, or changes to workloads/deadlines.
- 6.3** Reasonable accommodations can also be agreed and provided for employees during the recruitment process, during work, or on their return to work following a sick absence. An Post will fully consult with the employee before, during, and after the accommodation has been provided.
- 6.4** Employees can complete a confidential reasonable accommodation passport to ensure there is formal documentation of their agreed accommodation, to avoid the need to ask for the accommodation again if job circumstances change, or if a new line manager is appointed. Reasonable accommodations are reviewed at agreed intervals and are subject to change depending on the person's circumstance or experience with the difficulty.
- 6.5** An Post has a duty to provide reasonable accommodations unless the level of accommodation required would constitute a disproportionate burden on the Company. Please refer to the An Post Reasonable Accommodation Policy [here](#).

7. Line manager responsibilities

- 7.1** Line managers play a crucial role in supporting employees who experience distress and/or mental health difficulties. They are the first official contact between An Post and an employee and set the tone for someone feeling supported. Managers are not expected to know everything about mental health difficulties, but they do have a duty of care for employees, a duty to take appropriate action, and to signpost to appropriate supports.
- 7.2** Line Managers should refer to the separate document entitled: **'Discussing Mental Health - A Support Guide for Line Managers'** on the Company intranet.
- 7.3** Should an employee not be comfortable talking to their line manager, Occupational Health & Support (OHS) should be contacted, (please see Appendix 1 for contact details).

8. Employee responsibilities

- 8.1** Employees also have responsibilities, in particular there is an onus on employees to;
- Be respectful of other people's experiences and views.
 - If requesting a reasonable accommodation, engage in the process in a timely manner; i.e. complete forms, and attend assessments/meetings.
 - Manage their own workload.
 - Take appropriate sick leave when necessary as advised by their GP/mental health practitioner/OHS - (e.g. not to be in work if they should be off, or if they are unwell, or to come back prior to being well enough to do so).
 - Engage with appropriate services and supports outside of work.
 - Update their manager if, and when, circumstances change.
 - Try to be appropriate in how they openly speak about their mental health difficulty at work (i.e. if possible, not divulge too much information to colleagues/overshare, not share triggering information, not discuss very personal or private details at inappropriate times or in inappropriate places).
 - Be respectful in how they speak about issues they feel strongly about relating to mental illness.
 - Engage fully with interventions and services provided (both by An Post, and externally) in the interest of meaningful recovery.
- 8.2** If an employee is no longer able to perform their duties despite reasonable accommodations being agreed and in place, the Company will review the;
- Reasonable accommodation process.
 - Decision making process, and timelines of any changes decided upon.
 - Notification period (regarding changes to circumstances).
 - Inclusion of internal and external professionals for the management of the situation (e.g. referral to an Occupational Support Specialist, assessments, reports, mediation etc.).

8.3 The role of Trade Unions

An Post recognises the valuable contribution to be made by the Trade Union Representatives within An Post, in providing information, assistance and supports to employees experiencing mental health difficulties, and providing representation where an employee feels they have been treated unfairly.

9. Practical Supports Available

9.1 Employee Assistance Programme with Spectrum Life

- 9.1.1 An Post provides an **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** to all employees. This includes a confidential 24/7/365 helpline service that gives employees, their partners, and their dependent children over the age of 16 still living at home access to advice, information and support on matters relating to health, financial and social issues, as well as personal, mental health or family challenges. Employees can access this service by calling Freephone 1800 903 542.
- 9.1.2 Employees should be aware that personal information will be required (i.e. name, address, eircode, phone number) on making initial contact with the EAP. This information is necessary for their records and safety considerations. None of your personal information, nor the fact that you contacted the EAP, will ever be disclosed to An Post. The EAP is 100% confidential in this regard.
- 9.1.3 As part of the initial contact with the EAP service, employees will also be asked some potentially challenging questions such as “What is your issue / reason for ringing; Are you under the influence of alcohol or drugs; Are you a danger to yourself or another person” so that they can triage the call & get the most appropriate and timely support for the employee. While these questions may be challenging for people who are already distressed, they are necessary in order to provide the appropriate supports.
- 9.1.4 In circumstances where the EAP provider determines that an employee would benefit from additional counselling sessions relating to their mental health (in addition to the 6 available under the EAP), An Post will look to support up to 3 additional sessions of counselling. These additional counselling sessions will be at no charge to the employee.
- 9.1.5 The EAP also offers an online platform that can be accessed through an app or via the intranet, and provides An Post employees access to lots of different information about staying healthy in mind and body.
- 9.1.6 When signing up to the platform or mobile app for the first time, employees should visit anpost.spectrum.life. The organisation code is **AnPost**.

9.2. An Post Occupational Health & Support

- 9.2.1 The EAP complements existing services provided by our Occupational Health & Support (OHS) team. Occupational health is about how work affects a person's health and how someone's health affects their work. Occupational Health & Support is a resource to management and employees for advice on both personal and workplace health issues, including reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities (including mental health difficulties).
- 9.2.2 Employees are welcome to self-refer to OHS, or agree for a manager to make a referral. All consultations between employees and OHS are confidential. No information is disclosed to a third party without prior knowledge and consent of the employee, except; in life threatening situations, or where there is a risk of harm to the person or another. Should a report from OHS to the referring Manager/Human Resources (HR) Manager be required, the content of the report will be shared and agreed with the employee in advance of sharing.

9.2.3 The OHS team are regionally based, should any employee or manager wish to reach out at any time. The team's email address for general queries is: ohsreferrals@anpost.ie

9.3. Financial Wellbeing

9.3.1 Financial wellbeing is about feeling secure and in control of your money. This includes planning for your future, saving, dealing with unexpected costs, and spending within one's means.

9.3.2 Money problems can have a devastating effect on mental health. To support employee's financial wellbeing, An Post are continually looking at ways to educate our employees about financial health, whether through live events with financial planners, tax refund guidance, or one-to-one consultations with financial experts. All wellbeing supports may be found under the 'Live Well' section of the Company intranet.

9.3.3 If your financial wellbeing is negatively impacting your mental health or your work, and you feel you need additional support, consider contacting your line manager, the EAP, or OHS.

9.4. Promoting a healthy work life balance

9.4.1 An Post encourages people not to work beyond their scheduled working hours and encourages office-based employees to disconnect from work during home time as per our [Right to Disconnect policy](#).

9.4.2 We have quarterly wellbeing bulletins and an annual wellbeing week, which encourages people to take stock, and reflect on their current wellbeing and a healthy work/life balance.

9.4.3 If you feel your workload is negatively impacting your work/life balance, it is important that you bring it to your manager's attention and put a plan in place to manage tasks and timelines appropriately to reduce the impact.

10. Engaging with employees

10.1 We will consult with An Post employees on an ongoing basis to gather their views about mental health and equality issues, and their feedback about the potential impact of policies, procedures and programmes on workplace mental health.

10.2 We will also consult with external parties as appropriate.

10.3 Together with our partners See Change we offer virtual sessions on mental health stigma reduction which are available on the Post People app and the Company intranet.

11. Responsibility, implementation & review

- 11.1** The An Post HR function in conjunction with our group of unions will take responsibility for the implementation and regular review of this policy.
- 11.2** This policy should be read in conjunction with An Post's;
- [Live Well - Our Commitment to Wellbeing](#)
 - [Disability Inclusion Policy](#)
 - [Reasonable Accommodation Policy](#)
 - [Dignity at Work Policy](#)
 - [Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#)
- 11.3** This policy will be; reviewed every two years and updated when legislation or related policies change.

12. Appendix 1: An Post Contacts

12.1 An Post Employee Assistance Programme with Spectrum Life

Freephone, 24/7/365: 1800 903 542

<https://anpost.spectrum.life/eap>

Organisation Code: AnPost

12.2 An Post Occupational Health & Support

The team's email address for general queries is: ohsreferrals@anpost.ie

Within Occupational Health there are two disciplines;

- (i) **Occupational Support Specialists** are designed to assist employees manage personal difficulties, which, if left unattended, may adversely affect their work performance and/or attendance. They provide unbiased, confidential assistance and a wide range of supports to both employees and managers in relation to personal, or job-related issues, including; mental health, stress, addictions, retirement, deployment, bereavement, trauma, bullying & harassment.
- (ii) **Occupational Health Advisors** provide specialist advice and support in areas of work-related wellbeing. These include; sick absence, rehabilitation, health promotion, and health screenings.

13. Appendix 2: External Contacts

- 13.1 Anam Cara Ireland** (provide support to bereaved parents)
T: 01 404 5378
E: info@anamcara.ie
- 13.2 Aware** (provide support to people impacted by anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder)
Freephone 1800 80 48 48
E: supportmail@aware.ie
- 13.3 BeLonGTo** (for LGBTQ+ young people)
T: 01 670 6223
E: info@belongto.org
- 13.4 HUGG** (Healing Untold Grief Groups - Suicide bereavement support)
T: 01 513 4048
E: support@hugg.ie
- 13.5 Men's Aid** (supporting men experiencing domestic abuse)
T: 01 554 3811
E: gekki@mensaid.ie
- 13.6 Money Advice & Budgeting Services (MABS)** (provide support on problem debt)
T: 0818 07 2000
E: helpline@mabs.ie
- 13.7 Pieta House** (provide counselling to those who are in suicidal crisis)
Crisis helpline: 1800 247 247
E: info@pieta.ie
- 13.8 Rape Crisis Centre** (support victims of sexual violence)
T: 1800 778 888
E: info@rcc.ie
- 13.9 Samaritans** (provide support for those in emotional distress or struggling to cope)
Freephone 116 123 anytime, 24/7
E: jo@samaritans.ie
- 13.10 Text 50808** (support for mental health and wellbeing)
Text HELLO to 50808 anytime, day or night
Visit www.text50808.ie

- 13.11 Threshold** (national housing charity providing advice & support to people in housing difficulty)
Freephone: 1800 454 454
E: advice@threshold.ie
- 13.12 Women's Aid** (supporting women experiencing domestic abuse)
Freephone 1800 341 900
E: helpline@womensaid.ie
- 13.13 Your Mental Health**
(provide information & advice on mental health supports and services available to you)
T: 1800 111 888
E: www.yourmentalhealth.ie

