



## **WELLBEING POLICY**

### **Introduction**

The Firm is committed to providing a healthy working environment and improving the quality of working lives for all employees. This Wellbeing Policy aims to support the Firm's core values of *Accessible, Caring and Effective (ACE)*, and also the Firm's motto of: *Bromleys' working together to be the best*. The Firm recognises that its employees are its greatest asset.

Through the integration of wellbeing in all work activities and practices, a positive environment can be created that is compatible with promoting employee engagement, performance and achievement. Having a common interest in promoting a culture of wellbeing is key to the success of this policy.

This policy's goal is to improve the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees and to prevent work associated ill health, for the overall benefit of all employees and the Firm. This encompasses the physical, mental, and social health of employees, and recognises that employee's values, personal development, and work within the Firm contributes to their overall wellbeing at work.

This policy aims to bring together all the initiatives already in place within the Firm for supporting and maximising the health and wellbeing of its employees.

The time spent at work emphasises the importance of promoting health and wellbeing in the workplace. Investing in employee wellbeing can have positive outcomes both for employees and the Firm. Studies have shown that there is a relationship between the psychological wellbeing of employees and positive organisational outcomes, such as reduced levels of sickness absence as well as enhanced productivity and performance.

This policy is designed to ensure that:

- The Firm provides clear leadership and management in relation to wellbeing,
- Best use is made of the resources available to optimise the delivery of the policy,
- Actions lead to long-term, sustainable improvements in the health and wellbeing of employees.

This policy represents a commitment to an integrated approach to employee wellbeing that creates:

- A sense of belonging,
- An environment and culture based on shared values and trust,
- An environment where employee wellbeing is integrated into day-to-day practices,
- An environment that recognises skills and encourages personal development.

### **Enjoying your time at work**

The Firm places great emphasis on employees enjoying their time at work. Team work is encouraged as is a social side to work. The following are examples of what the Firm offers to achieve a work/life balance: -

- Regular lunchtime gatherings, including charity funding raising events where the entire Firm is encouraged to participate i.e. dress down days, “Foodie Fridays”, etc,
- Flexible working accommodated upon request where possible,
- Remote work licenses available to enable home or out of office working if required,
- Regular work social functions i.e. Christmas party, annual Bonding weekend, Autumn outing,
- Salary sacrifice Cycle to Work scheme,
- Running Club,
- Shower facilities for staff who wish to exercise during their lunch break or cycle to work,
- Provision of refreshments during the working day to include breakfast food,
- Two qualified Mental Health First Aiders in addition to three qualified “Emergency First Aid at Work” First Aiders,
- Partners operating an “open door” policy,
- Generous lunch break for 1 hour 15 minutes,
- Enhanced sick pay policy,
- 21 days annual holiday, plus bank holidays, and 2 days over Christmas and New Year
- Loyalty holiday scheme providing for an additional 5 days annual holiday
- Non-contributory Death in Service scheme.
- Ability to buy holidays,
- Staff Committee,
- Anonymous suggestion box.

### **Bradford Factor**

The Firm uses what is known as the “Bradford Factor” for managing sickness absences. The system works on a scoring basis using the number and length of absences. If an employee’s “score” falls within the Bradford Factor scoring system set by the firm, this triggers a meeting with the Firm’s Practice Manager. The initial meeting is to identify the reasons for the absence(s), to determine if the employee is experiencing any problems, and if so, what could be done to help alleviate the problems. The calculation is made on a rolling 12-month

basis and all employees' Bradford Factor scores are reviewed by the Management Team on a monthly basis.

## **Work/Life Balance**

This section sets out some tips and hints to achieve a work/life balance.

Today work-life balance ranks as one of the most important workplace attributes. Achieving a healthy work-life balance requires management of both people's professional and personal lives in sustainable ways that keeps energy flowing, minds and bodies healthy, and people happy and content. It means giving due attention to all of the things that enrich and fulfil people to include: -

- work and career,
- health and fitness,
- family and relationship,
- spirituality,
- community service,
- hobbies and passions,
- intellectual stimulation,
- rest and recreation.

If you have a good work/life balance, then you will be happier at work and will work more productively and efficiently.

Achieving a work/life balance is not an exact science. Each person must find his or her own way of combining career, relationships, and personal care into an integrated whole. What is right for now will likely change as new circumstances arise. Some of the suggestions set out below may assist in achieving a work/life balance. Even if only a few are implemented they are likely to have a positive and measurable impact.

To get there:

### **(i) Track your time**

Analysing your present situation is the first step in achieving a balanced life. Try keeping a time log of everything you do for one week, including work-related and personal activities. This data will help you understand how you are using, and where you are losing, your time.

### **(ii) Determine your priorities**

Spend some time reflecting on what is most important to you and make a list of your top priorities at work and at home. Then analyse your time by asking yourself these key questions:

- What do I need to start doing?
- Stop doing?
- Continue doing?
- Do more of?
- Do less of?
- Do differently?

**(iii) Set specific goals**

Take your list of priorities and turn them into concrete and measurable goals. Block time into your schedule for activities just like you would for an important meeting.

**(iv) Schedule scrupulously**

Successful people plan their work and then work their plan. You have one life, so try having one diary. Whether paper or electronic, this is the vehicle by which you turn your priorities and goals into reality. Set aside 10 to 20 minutes at the beginning of each day (or the night before) to plan your tasks and activities for the day and evening ahead.

**(v) Establish boundaries**

Set fair and realistic limits on what you can and cannot do both at work and at home. Clearly communicate these boundaries to your supervisor, colleagues, partner and family. For instance, you might commit to not working late on certain days unless there is a crisis. Additionally, set aside a time at home during which you will not check or respond to work-related emails or voice mails.

**(iv) Take care of your health**

Your health should always be your number one priority. If you are not in good shape physically, mentally, and emotionally, both your work life and your personal life will suffer. Take care of yourself by eating healthy meals (especially breakfast), try to exercise at least three times per week and sleep a minimum of seven hours per night. While you may not think you have time to add exercise and extra sleep to your schedule, these practices relieve stress, raise your energy level, increase your stamina, improve your mental clarity, boost your immune system, and make you a happier, more engaged, and more productive person. Additionally, refrain from the excessive use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs to relieve stress. These substances only tend to keep the body in a stressed state and cause even more problems.

**(vii) Nurture your family/relationships**

Relationships with family, friends, and loved ones are, by far, the greatest source of inner satisfaction. If your job or career is damaging your personal relationships, both areas will ultimately suffer. There will be days when you will need to work extra time. The issue becomes problematic when these days become the rule, not the

exception. By making your personal relationships a priority, your productivity and effectiveness on the job will increase.

**(viii) Make time for you**

As much as work, health, and relationships take priority in your life, it is also important to schedule time for your own renewal. Indulge in some small pleasure daily. Take at least 30 minutes of uninterrupted "you time." It will do wonders for your well-being, and your relationships and your career will benefit too. Setting aside a weekly day of rest can be helpful, as well.

**(ix) Leave work at work**

Developing a mental on-off switch between work and home, helps to establish a transitional activity between the two realms. Scheduling activities immediately following normal work hours may assist.

**(x) Work "smarter not harder"**

Using time more efficiently is an important skill that everyone can learn. Adopting the right combination of time-management practices can cut stress and save up to an hour a day. This can include the use of technology to become more organized, grouping emails and voice messages, avoiding procrastination and learning to say "no."

**(xi) Know when to ask for help**

If you are overwhelmed at work, and it is causing undue stress, seek help. Approach your supervisor or a colleague, your place of work's pastoral carer or Mental Health First Aider.

**5 steps to mental wellbeing**

Various wellbeing support organisations (including the NHS and MIND) set out the following which are 5 steps that can help improve mental wellbeing:

- **Connect** – connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships.
- **Be active** – you don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling, or play a game/sport. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.
- **Keep learning** – learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So, consider what would interest you: a cookery course, learning a new language, learning to play a musical instrument, etc.

- **Give to others** – even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you, or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.
- **Be mindful** – be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

### **Stress Container exercise**

The following is what is known as a “Stress Container” exercise. It is a good way to visualise your stress and work out how to deal with it. By picturing it in front of you, you can write down all the things that add into your stress container such as: problems at work, difficulties with your personal relationships, maybe a sick relative, money worries, etc. Then the tap shows how you cope with these stresses, maybe by having support from family or friends. It might be that you bottle things up or ignore them, which is not a good coping strategy, and it will eventually cause the stress to overflow, and you may become ill. By writing it down, you can see ways in which you do cope well and those in which you do not. It is a simple but powerful exercise and can lead to minor adjustments that will help you deal with the situations you struggle with. It may mean getting assistance from outside, perhaps speaking to an advisor, on how best to deal with the situation. (Printed copies of the “Stress Container” exercise are available on the Firm’s noticeboard in the main corridor on the second floor).

### **COVID-19 OUTBREAK**

#### **Adjusting to the ‘new normal’**

You may have a lot of mixed feelings about coming back to the office, especially when the advice is constantly evolving. You may feel anxious and apprehensive about keeping yourself and others safe. The Firm has performed an in-depth risk assessment which you can refer to at any point and raise concerns. If you feel the conditions are not being met or if additional concerns arise, raise these with your manager, office manager or the partners so these can be addressed.

If you find yourself coming up with ideas outside of the recommended safety measures, bring those up to your manager. This is a time where everyone must adapt to a new way of doing things. By becoming more involved, this can provide a refocus of your thoughts and put you in a more optimistic place during this transition. Your ideas could be beneficial to your workplace and improve things for the rest of your team.

If you use public transport to travel to work, you may feel anxious about this. This is perfectly natural. Look at the timetables and try to schedule travel on a less busy route or discuss with your manager about adjusting your start times as you get used to this again. Maintain physical distance, wear a face covering and use hand sanitiser when it is not possible to wash your hands.

Be honest with your manager if you need certain arrangements or additional support. When you create an open line of communication, you can keep them informed on your day-to-day, as well as alleviate apprehensions you may have about your work situation.

Keep abreast of current news developments around COVID-19 if you feel that being informed helps you. However try and limit what you read to the facts and stick with official sources - <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> has in depth information and guidance.

Returning to work after a period on furlough can feel overwhelming. Give yourself time to adjust back into the working day. Ask for support if you are struggling and establish new routines to help you return to your full level of productivity.

If you have been going to work as normal throughout lockdown, things might not seem to change much to start with – but as traffic increases, and more people are going about their lives the pressures on key workers of all sorts will increase, but the demands may not fall. Raise any concerns you have and discuss any additional support you require with your manager, office manager or the partners.

As with any period of intense and unrelieved stress, when the stress is lifted, there can be an impact on physical or mental health. It is possible that as lockdown eases, you may realise how hard it has been and get unwell, or low. It is important that you try and use things like annual leave to recharge even if the instinct is not to.

Anxiety and fear are completely normal emotions to be experiencing. **AnxietyUK** suggests practising the "Apple" technique to deal with anxiety and worries.

- **Acknowledge:** Notice and acknowledge the uncertainty as it comes to mind.
- **Pause:** Don't react as you normally do. Don't react at all. Pause and breathe.
- **Pull back:** Tell yourself this is just the worry talking, this apparent need for certainty is not necessary. It is only a thought or feeling. Don't believe everything you think.
- **Let go:** Let go of the thought or feeling. It will pass. You don't have to respond to them.
- **Explore:** Explore the present moment, because right now, in this moment, all is well. Notice your breathing and the sensations of your breathing. Notice the ground beneath you. Look around and notice what you see, what you hear, what you can touch, what you can smell. Right now. Then shift your focus of attention to something else - on what you need to do, on what you were doing before you noticed the worry or do something else - mindfully with your full attention.

If you realise that you are not able to manage these feelings, ask for help. Your Mental Health First Aider is available for a confidential discussion and will be able to point you towards resources.

## Working from Home Tips

**Communicate:** Keep in touch with colleagues, be it discussing where you are up to with work, asking for help and assistance with duties or just having a catch up. It is very easy when working at home to get used to working alone and before you know it, you have spent a whole working day without communicating.

**Fresh Air:** Try and get some time outdoors where possible, even a walk around the block can give you a welcome break from your screen and clear your head a little.

**Routine:** Work on having a routine. It is very easy for some to completely abandon any routine in times like this, have no structure to your day and wonder what time/day/week it is. Try to establish some sort of routine in your day and have your lunch break away from your desk, even if it is just a 30 minute respite.

**Switch off:** When working at home you may find yourself working longer hours than in the office as the distinctions between home and work are blurred. Try to stick to your working hours where possible and if you feel that you are constantly unable to complete your tasks in your working hours, discuss this with your manager.

**Limit news:** a constant influx of information is overwhelming and addictive at the same time. It feels responsible in some ways to always be 'up to date' with what's going in the world, knowing all the facts and figures etc but this constant stream can be really detrimental to your wellbeing. Try to step away from the statistics for a while. Likewise, for social media, it can be rife with untrue, scaremongering information that somebody's uncle's cousin's sister knows so it must be true. Where possible unfollow the main culprits or 'snooze' their feeds to give yourself a break.

**Talk:** If you are struggling or if you just need to get something off your chest, please reach out to someone: Your mental health first aider is available for a confidential discussion. **Samaritans** are available 24/7 – call 116 123. **Shout** are a text service, again 24/7: Text 85258. Below are further contacts if needed, general and those more tailored to specific mental health issues and groups in society.

## Seeking help

If any employee is experiencing anything which is worrying them, be it problems at work at home with their health or for any other reason, they are urged to seek help. The Firm hopes that it has a culture that if an employee is struggling, they can approach anyone at the Firm for help, be it a colleague, their Head of Department, a partner, the Firm's Practice Manager.

The Firm has two qualified Mental Health First Aiders (Laura Stansfield and Hailie Applegate). They offer a confidential and non-judgemental line of support for any employee to discuss any issue that might be concerning them. The issue does not have to be work related. They can offer support and/or control measures, including signposting to appropriate external support organisations in relation to areas including: bereavement, financial problems, substance abuse and addiction, suffering abuse, suicide prevention, etc.

The following are external organisations that can be contacted direct:

- Samaritans – tel: 116 123 (Freephone 24 hours a day)  
Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)  
<https://www.samaritans.org/>
- Mind Infoline – tel: 0300 123 3393 (Local call rates 9am – 6pm Mon-Fri)  
Text: 86463
- Anthony Seddon – tel: 0161 376 4439 12  
In person: George Street, Ashton under Lyne, OL6 6AQ  
<https://tasfund.org.uk/>