

KINGS CHAMBERS

A SET APART FROM THE REST



Document	Health & Wellbeing Policy
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Kings Chambers (the “Chambers”) seeks to promote and support the health and wellbeing of its employees, members and pupils (all “Chambers’ personnel”) at every level.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the measures that Chambers take to support all chambers personnel, in maintaining their health and wellbeing in the workplace. We are committed to creating a safe and supportive working environment that promotes good mental health for anyone all.
- 1.3 Work can have a positive impact on our health and wellbeing. Healthy and well-motivated Chambers’ personnel can have an equally positive impact on the productivity and effectiveness of Chambers. Fostering a working environment that promotes the physical and mental wellbeing of its people is self-evidently good for Chambers’ business.
- 1.4 This policy provides a framework within which Chambers encourages and facilitates working practices and services that support wellbeing. It aims to draw upon good practice, recognising information support arrangements, particularly amongst barristers, and to be flexible rather than prescriptive. Such flexibility should allow for appropriate support and its management in relation to any particular set of circumstances concerning all Chambers’ personnel.

- 1.5 This policy is in addition to and separate from the Health & Safety legal requirements which Chambers is required to comply with, and which can be found in the Health & Safety Policy.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Chambers' personnel.

3. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 3.1 Responsibility for health and wellbeing at work is in the ownership of everyone in Chambers, from the top to bottom. Factors that can influence whether people will have a positive or negative relationship with work include (but are not limited to):

- Relationships between all Chambers' personnel and between work groups and departments;
- Relationships between line managers and other employees;
- Whether all Chambers' personnel feel involved in organisational issues and decisions;
- Income to meet more than just basic needs;
- Availability and acceptability of flexible working;
- Awareness of occupational health issues and support
- Whether the principles of fairness, equality and diversity are experienced;
- Opportunities to develop and progress
- Whether the principles of fairness, equality and diversity are experienced in the workplace

- 3.2 Line managers are responsible for supporting the wellbeing and mental health policy for Chambers' employed personnel by:

- monitoring workloads to ensure that they are manageable;
- becoming familiar with Chambers' policies and procedures that are likely to affect wellbeing, including those concerning equality, diversity and inclusion, bullying and harassment and flexible working;
- becoming familiar with support services provided by Chambers;

- encouraging individuals to participate in wellbeing initiatives;
- liaising with the relevant professionals, including HR, occupational health and other medical professionals where appropriate, to ensure the successful rehabilitation of any individual who is on sick leave; and maintaining the confidentiality of any individuals that they are supporting.

4. MENTAL WELLBEING

- 4.1 The promotion and protection of the mental wellbeing of all Chambers' personnel is important and directly relevant to individuals' physical health, social wellbeing and productivity. Mental ill health and stress are associated with many of the leading causes of disease and disability in society. Chambers seeks to take a proactive approach to the maintenance of the wellbeing of all people in Chambers.
- 4.2 Mental wellbeing in the workplace is relevant to all and everyone has a responsibility to contribute to improved mental wellbeing at work. Addressing workplace mental wellbeing can help strengthen the positive, protective factors of employment, reduce risk factors for mental ill health and improve general health. It can also help promote the employment of people who have experienced mental health problems and support them once they are at work.
- 4.3 Important aspects of mental health and wellbeing include providing information and raising awareness, management skills to deal with issues around mental health and stress effectively, providing a supportive work environment, offering assistance, advice and support to anyone experiencing a mental health problem or returning to Chambers after a period of absence due to mental health problems.

5. COMMITMENT

- 5.1 Chambers is fully committed to supporting all personnel by fostering a positive working environment with a transparent approach. To develop a supportive culture, address factors that may negatively affect mental wellbeing and to develop management skills we will:
- Reduce discrimination and stigma by increasing awareness and understanding of all forms of disability;
 - Give employees information on, and increase their awareness of, mental wellbeing;

- Give non-judgemental and proactive support to individual members of Chambers' personnel that experience mental health problems;
- Include information about Chambers' mental health policy in induction sessions;
- Provide opportunities for all Chambers' personnel to look after their mental wellbeing, for example through physical activity, stress reducing activities and social events;
- Offer Chambers' employed personnel flexible working arrangements and encourage barristers and pupils to have a good work- life balance;
- Set Chambers' employed personnel realistic targets that do not require them to work unreasonable hours;
- Ensure all Chambers' employed personnel have clearly defined job descriptions, objectives and responsibilities and provide them with good management support, appropriate training and adequate resources to do their job;
- Manage conflict effectively and ensure the workplace is free from bullying and harassment, discrimination and racism; and
- Establish good two-way communication to ensure the involvement of all Chambers' employed personnel, particularly during periods of organisational change.

5.2 To provide support for all Chambers' personnel experiencing mental health difficulties, we will:

- Ensure individuals suffering from mental health problems are treated fairly and consistently;
- Where appropriate, clearly communicate to colleagues who are able to support when the symptoms of stress become apparent to prevent further stress;
- Ensure individuals are aware of the support that can be offered through occupational health (where appropriate) or the individual's own GP;
- In cases of long-term sickness absence, put in place, where possible a graduated return to work or practice;
- Make every effort to identify suitable alternative employment or practice, in consultation with the individual, where a return to the same role is not possible due to identified risks or other factors;

and

- To ensure personnel will not be subject to detriment or discrimination for seeking help with a wellbeing or mental health issue.
- To support Chambers' Mental Health First Aid Champions in their work.
- Treat all matters relating to individuals and their mental health problems in the strictest confidence and share on a "need to know" basis only with consent from the individual concerned

5.3 To demonstrate a positive and enabling attitude to employees and job applicants with mental health issues we will:

- Have positive statements in recruitment adverts and literature;
- Ensure that all Chambers' personnel involved in recruitment and selection are briefed on mental health issues and the Equality Act, and are trained in appropriate interview skills;
- Not make assumptions that a person with a mental health problem will be more vulnerable to workplace stress or take more time off than any other employee or job applicant;
- Ensure all line managers have information and training about managing mental health in the workplace;
- Recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue; and
- Ask about health and wellbeing in exit interviews to help identify factors that may cause stress.

5.4 Chambers arranges training events to support this policy for both new pupils, new practitioners, clerks and other staff joining Chambers and seeks to review the effective implementation and support of this policy amongst its membership and employees.

6. SUPPORTING WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH

6.1 Wellbeing impacts our day-to-day life including how we operate within the workplace. Chambers is committed to promoting wellbeing in order to create an environment where individuals can thrive and feel supported.

6.2 Wellbeing is subjective to each individual and is made up from different factors dependent on what an individual's priorities are.

6.3 Factors can include:

- Good work/life balance
- Being active and spending time outdoors
- Eating a balanced diet
- Connecting with others
- Mindfulness

6.4 Chambers offers several initiatives through our staff benefits package which include:

- Generous holiday allowance, incremental with length of service
- Flexible & hybrid working policies*
- Cycle to work scheme
- Company Sick Pay (CSP)* incremental with length of service
- Eye tests (biennial)
- Access to discounted full Private Medical Insurance scheme
- Health care Medicash Plan which includes Virtual GP / Cash plan, contribution to dental and optical amongst other health & wellbeing benefits. Also includes discount on gym memberships nationally
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which gives staff access to confidential advice and support should they need it. The scheme includes an online portal and telephone counselling service
- Chambers organises walks with Freshwalks which usually take a full day and are hosted at the weekends. All Chambers employees are invited to join these walks if they would like to.

*Subject to qualifying conditions

6.5 Throughout the course of any person's life, it is highly likely that they will either develop mental ill health themselves or have close contact with someone who does. We spend a large part of our daily lives at work, so chances are high that we will encounter mental ill health either through direct experience or with colleagues.

6.6 Despite changing attitudes, there remains a stigma associated with mental ill health. Stigma may have several negative effects such as prompting people to hide their difficulties from others or feeling ashamed to discuss mental health with those around them. They may also be reluctant to seek treatment and support for mental health issues because of concerns about what others think of them.

- 6.7 Chambers recognise that mental ill health or issues related to mental health can be a very personal matter and each individual's experience will differ, however in Chambers we are committed to ensuring that every individual has the support available to talk about these types of issues in a safe environment, free of judgement or repercussions.

7. SIGNS OF MENTAL ILL HEALTH

- 7.1 Mental ill health is an umbrella term which covers a multitude of issues and disorders. As such, those suffering with mental health issues can experience and exhibit a variety of different signs and symptoms.

- 7.2 Common examples of mental health issues can include but are not limited to:

- Depression (including bipolar disorder and perinatal depression)
- Anxiety
- Panic disorder
- Phobias
- Stress disorders
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Eating disorders (including bulimia and anorexia)
- Self-harm
- Psychosis
- Substance misuse
- Suicidal thoughts or intentions

- 7.3 This list is not designed to provide a definitive catalogue of disorders or issues which people with mental ill health may suffer from, rather it is to signpost some of the most common issues which people can experience.

- 7.4 Mental ill health may manifest itself in a variety of different forms and each person's experience is unique to their own circumstances and the nature of the issue they are dealing with. In general terms, some of the more common psychological, physical and behavioural signs are:

Psychological

- Irritability
- Aggression
- Tearfulness
- Loss of confidence
- Inability to concentrate
- Indecision
- Difficulty remembering things

Physical

- Constant tiredness
- Sickness absence
- Being run down and frequent minor illnesses
- Headaches
- Difficulty sleeping
- Rapid weight loss or gain
- Lack of care over appearance

Behavioural

- Not getting things done / missed deadlines
- Erratic or unacceptable behavior such as arguments / conflicts with others
- Withdrawing socially / not participating
- Increased errors or accidents
- Overworking
- Increased use of caffeine, alcohol or other substances
- Evidence of self-harm
- Evidence of eating disorder related behaviour

8. MENTORING

8.1 As part of Chambers' commitment to its people, it operates a mentoring scheme and provides training to support:

- Managers with the skills to manage people, practice development and the business as a whole;
- Other personnel of Chambers with new knowledge and skills to develop their roles, maintain their interests and expand their horizons, and utilise new systems and technologies with confidence;
- Pupils and junior tenants with support and guidance from more senior colleagues;
- Greater awareness of equality and diversity, including disability and mental health issues;
- Professional development for barristers relevant to their area of work;
- Awareness of the signs of stress in ourselves and in others

8.2 At Chambers, we recognise that the fact that a barrister is self-employed does not dictate that they have control of their work- life balance. A lack of control may be caused by any number of factors including, for example, a desire to maintain a busy practice and to keep clerks and solicitors happy

resulting in taking on too much work, or the pressures experienced by a self-employed person which are not experienced by employees. A lack of control over work-life balance may lead to unhealthy work-related stress. Chambers seeks to raise awareness of the risks posed by self-employment, as identified above, and an unhealthy work-life balance.

- 8.3 All Chambers' personnel, as human beings, may be given to behaviour which is reactive to any number of external factors. That is simply part of normal life. However, any barrister, pupil or member of staff who displays more than occasional cognitive, emotional, physical or behavioural symptoms of stress, so as to give rise to concerns by colleagues or senior staff, will be invited through a supportive referral scheme, in the first instance, to meet with a member of the Wellbeing Committee the "WBC"). This is led by Constanze Bell and Erica Bedford and made up of a representative from each team: Sophie Allan, John Hunter and Chelsea Carter. The committee also includes Jake Brooke, Debbie Andres and Lewis Martin. Members of the WBC are available to discuss possible solutions and a strategy for tackling that barrister's difficulties, including discussing workload and management of the barrister's practice in both the immediate and longer term.
- 8.4 Any barrister or pupil may arrange to see one of the designated mentors, Chief or Senior Clerk in their practice area if he or she feels a need to re-balance his or her practice for whatever reason. Chambers have dedicated Pupil Liaison Officers that are available for pupils to speak with confidentially with any concerns they may have.

9. FLEXIBLE WORKING

- 9.1 There is substantial evidence that a flexible approach to working patterns can have significant organisational benefits, including reduced absenteeism, improved morale and greater productivity. There are many different ways of structuring working patterns and Chambers will consider requests from staff members for part-time working, flexible working hours, compressed working hours, annualised hours, job-sharing, working at or from home, or any other reasonable request relating to working patterns and working hours.

10. SUPPORT

- 10.1 One of the most difficult steps in addressing mental ill health is knowing when to seek help. The decision if and when to seek help will vary from person to person and will be informed by the nature of the mental ill health issue.
- 10.2 Chambers has appointed Mental Health First Aid Champions who are responsible for developing policies and organisational procedures that prioritise mental health in Chambers.
- 10.3 Chambers recognise that the first step in seeking support can often be daunting however we operate an 'open door' policy; our MHFA Champions have been trained to provide practical support and to signpost employees to the relevant support either inside or outside of work.
- 10.4 Please note that the MHFA Champions are not medically trained professionals, nor are they therapists or psychiatrists and are not trained in such matters. They have however been trained by St. John Ambulance and MHFA England in the principles of supporting wellbeing and mental health in the workplace and are available to assist you if you are suffering from a mental health issue, are concerned about a colleague and / or would like further information or support.
- 10.5 How first contact is initiated is entirely up to the individual – it could be via email, in person or a phone call however all discussions will be treated confidentially. The MHFA Champions will not, under any circumstances, share details of any discussions (whether verbally or in writing) held with employees unless that employee is an immediate danger to themselves or others or there is a risk to life.
- 10.6 The MHFA Champions for Chambers are listed below and can each be contacted in person, by phone or via email:

Erica Bedford	07979 357395	ebedford@kingschambers.com
Debra Andrés	0161 819 8807	dandres@kingschambers.com
Lewis Martin	0161 819 8252	lmartin@kingschambers.com
Jake Brooke	0121 200 3573	jbrooke@kingschambers.com
Harry (Gary) Young	0161 819 8803	hyoung@kingschambers.com

- 10.7 Once contact has been made the first step is to arrange an informal discussion with the MHFA Champion (this will be in a neutral and confidential space) where the individual will have the opportunity to discuss and share as much or as little as they wish. There are no set or prescriptive protocols for this discussion, it will be led by the individual and the MHFA Champion who is there to listen and signpost to relevant support if required.
- 10.8 There are many possible outcomes following a first discussion, it could be the MHFA Champion provides further practical support and guidance or simply provides an open forum to listen.
- 10.9 A member of employed personnel should inform their line manager at an early stage if they are finding their work commitments too demanding, even if the reasons for such difficulties are external to Chambers. If for any reason you are unable to approach your line manager, you can speak to the Chambers Director or HR Business Partner.
- 10.10 We urge you to be as open as possible about any particular issues that you are experiencing or adjustments that you need to ensure that you are provided with the right level of support. This includes situations whereby the difficulties experienced at, to some extent, external to Chambers.
- 10.11 Any health-related information disclosed by you during discussions with any of the aforementioned personnel in 9.1 above, will be treated sensitively and in confidence.
- 10.12** In some cases, you may be referred to occupational health so that they can advise on the type of support that may be appropriate. Occupational health may also signpost you to external sources of help and advice.

11. FURTHER SUPPORT & USEFUL RESOURCES

- 11.1 There are numerous resources available to support your wellbeing and mental health at Chambers, these include but are not limited to:

EAP	https://www.medicash.org/customer-service/#benefits
Hub of Hope	https://hubofhope.co.uk/
Wellbeing at the Bar	https://www.wellbeingatthebar.org.uk/
MIND	https://www.mind.org.uk/

Wellbeing Committee

Erica Bedford	07979 357395	ebedford@kingschambers.com
Constanze Bell	07704 545736	cbell@kingschambers.com
Debra Andrés	0161 819 8807	dandres@kingschambers.com
Lewis Martin	0161 819 8252	lmartin@kingschambers.com
Jake Brooke	0121 200 3573	jbrooke@kingschambers.com
Harry (Gary) Young	0161 819 8803	hyoung@kingschambers.com

12. CONFIDENTIALITY

- 12.1 Chambers recognises the need to treat all matters relating to wellbeing and mental health with the utmost confidentiality.
- 12.2 It is important to note that discussions with the MHFA Champions are informal in nature and therefore are not recorded and no data relating to those conversations, general wellbeing or specific mental ill health issues is retained in any format.
- 12.3 The only exception to the rule of confidentiality is where the nature of the mental ill health issue disclosed would pose a danger to the employee or others or where there is a risk to life.

13. COMMUNICATION AND REVIEW

- 13.1 All Chambers personnel will be made aware of this Health and Wellbeing Policy. This will be part of a health at work approach that will be emphasised at induction sessions.
- 13.2 The WBC will be responsible for reviewing the Health and Wellbeing Policy and for monitoring how effectively the policy meets its aims and objectives.