

WELLBEING & MENTAL HEALTH IN BRASS BANDS



SCOTTISH



Manual/Policy

BAND NAME _____

Created and Published by



www.sbba.org.uk
2022

www.modefor.co.uk
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Wellbeing & Mental Health in Brass Bands

As a band manager, secretary, conductor, wellbeing champion or mental health lead you are not expected to be a medical expert, but this brief look at mental ill health will give you an insight into why people become mentally unwell, and what you can do about it.

Anyone can develop mental ill health at almost any time in their life, just as they can a physical illness. Mental ill health is not fussy of age, background or circumstances. It can be triggered by a range of things, including seemingly happy events such as getting married, having a baby, a new job or promotion.

Further triggers could include (but not limited to):

- joining a new band with new musicians and colleagues
- poor relationships with a boss or conductor
- coping with increased workloads
- bereavement
- having children
- health scares or physical illness
- divorce or relationship breakdown
- redundancy or fear of redundancy
- financial worries
- change in work, family, life or band structure
- stress
- nerves and performance anxiety

Other things that may cause mental ill health:

- trauma, neglect or abuse in childhood
- body chemistry
- substance misuse

Mental ill health affects people in different ways, including the length of time they experience it for. Mental ill health is usually categorised as temporary, fluctuating or ongoing.

Temporary the person experiences the condition for a short time and recovers after treatment

Fluctuating sometimes the person experiences the condition and sometimes they don't

Ongoing the person experiences the mental health condition all the time, but controls it through some of the following

- Medication
- Talking therapies
- Self-help
- Practical support

Common types of support are:

Medication prescribed by a GP, psychiatrist or medical expert

Talking Therapies such as counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or psychotherapy

Self-help including learning mindfulness techniques, bibliotherapy, diet and exercise.

Additional support such as helping to resolve financial issues, advising on lifestyle choices or directing to support groups, advice and counselling.

Supporting our Musicians in Brass Bands

There are many ways we can support the musicians in our brass bands from developing a culture of positive wellbeing to identifying early warning signs of mental health related issues and talking to band members at an early stage about possible issues and crisis management.

Promoting Wellbeing in Bands

The approach of supporting mental health in brass bands is very similar to that of the workplace. There is traction for mental health policies to become common place in the workplace and if passed as law, it is possible this will filter through to volunteer organisations such as brass bands.

But it is important for us all to support good mental health in the environments we spend our time in and by tackling the issue of mental health from the starting point of promoting good wellbeing we may find that in itself begins to address some of the stigma and stereotypes associated with mental ill health.

In the workplace, much of this comes down to good general line management skills as indicated in 2009 by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Advice which can be transferred brass bands includes:

- Promoting a culture of participation, equality and fairness based on open communication and inclusion.
- Use frameworks such as Health & Safety Executive Management Standards for work-related stress to promote & protect mental wellbeing.
- Promoting leadership style that encourages participation, delegation, constructive feedback, mentoring and coaching.
- Ensuring that conductors and managers are able to motivate band members and provide them with the training and support they need to develop their performance and satisfaction.
- Increasing understanding of how management style and practices can help to promote the mental wellbeing of members and keep their stress to a minimum.

Some simple ways of supporting wellbeing in a brass band are:

- Develop a culture where everyone is treated with respect and dignity and issues such as bullying and harassment are not tolerated.
- Develop a culture where open and honest communication is encouraged and support and mutual respect are the 'norm'.
- Encourage an ethos where band members know it's OK to talk about mental health and that it's safe to disclose experiences in order to help reduce the stigma and stereotypes associated with it.
- Make sure the band as a whole and individuals within it have a manageable workload.
- Ensure musicians have the right level of skill and support for the job.
- Develop a culture of flexibility so musicians can balance the demands of home and work life with band.
- Audit your rehearsal environment for physical stressors such as flickering lights and eliminate them.
- Help musicians to build self-confidence and resilience.
- Create a group culture of confidence and resilience.

Identifying Warning Signs

There are four broad categories of people within our brass bands.

- People with a mental health diagnosis who are healthy and performing well because they are managing their condition through medication, counselling, support at work and so on.
- People with a diagnosis who are unwell.
- People with no diagnosis who are well.
- People with no diagnosis but who are unwell and may not even realise it, but whose performance is likely to be impaired.

In a workplace, the line manager should know their team better than anyone.

A brass band should have an equivalent to a line manager, be that the conductor, band manager, band secretary or mental health lead. These people know the band members better than anyone and are therefore ideally placed to spot the early warning signs that someone is mentally unwell.

There will be times when you notice that someone is behaving out of character or seems unhappy. Key things to look out for are changes in usual behaviour, such as poor performance, tiredness or increased sickness absence, smoking or drinking more, taking drugs, changes to eating habits or experiencing problems with colleagues. Someone who is normally punctual might start turning up late, or conversely might start turning up much earlier. Other signs might be tearfulness, headaches, loss of humour and mood changes.

If you do perceive a potential problem with an individual, try to establish whether certain situations, environments, relationships, team dynamics are contributing to their distress. If the problem persists for a more than a few days/rehearsals, find a way to talk to them about it. Be aware that the person may not recognise what's happening to them, pretend it's not happening or feel anxious about seeking help.

Recognising the band members' difficulties at an early stage makes it easier to help them and provide appropriate support. Investing time and effort in promoting the mental and physical wellbeing (the two are linked) of your band members will be repaid many times over in terms of enhanced morale, engagement, attendance, loyalty and productivity.

If someone is having frequent short bursts of absence, giving a variety of reasons such as stress, migraines and back pain, or indeed they give no reason at all, they may have an underlying mental health issue that you need to discuss with them.

It may be the case that playing in a brass band is not the cause of any mental ill health, but, as an organisation and as individuals we have a duty of care to ourselves and others to support better mental health in our bandrooms.

Behaviours and warning signs of mental ill health to be aware of:

Erratic or unacceptable behaviour	Irritability, aggression, tearfulness
Complaining about workload	Being withdrawn and not participating in conversations or social activities
Increased consumption of caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes and/or drugs	Inability to concentrate
Indecision	Difficulty remembering things
Loss of confidence	Unplanned absences
Arguments / conflicts with others	Increased errors
Taking on too much and volunteering for every new job/project	Being adamant they are right
Being louder or more exuberant than usual	Negative ways of behaving in rehearsals and social environments

Physical signs might include:

Constant tiredness	Sickness absence
Being rundown and frequent minor illnesses	Headaches
Difficulty sleeping	Weight loss or gain
Lack of care over appearance	Rashes/eczema

Presenteeism

Presenteeism is a term to describe someone ‘at work’ or in our case ‘at band’ who is attending but not working to their full capacity because of ill health. According to a 2010 report from *The Work Foundation* reasons for presenteeism include the following, along with the equivalent possible scenarios in brass bands:

Presenteeism in the Workplace	Presenteeism in Brass Bands
Pressure from managers and colleagues	Pressure from conductors and fellow band members
Stress	Stress & performance anxiety
Personal financial difficulties	Personal financial difficulties which mean difficulty in paying subs or travelling to rehearsals and concerts
A sense of responsibility for their work and to their team	A sense of responsibility and commitment to the band and fellow members

Presenteeism, whatever the reason for it, may be a sign of mental distress, which if left unchecked, could lead to even more damaging stress and mental health related issues.

Talking at an Early Stage

If a band member is experiencing mental health issues, ideally, they should feel confident enough and able to raise this with someone within the band they can trust. But, if they don’t bring up an issue and you have noticed a change in their behaviour that you think might indicate they are becoming unwell, you need to find a way of broaching it.

Be aware that a sudden dip in performance or punctuality are likely to be signs of a deeper underlying problem so it is inappropriate and unhelpful to take a hard-line approach. You clearly need to talk about the issue at an early stage, but ask questions in an open exploratory and non-judgemental way, for example: “I’ve noticed that you’ve been arriving late recently and wondered how you are?” That gives the person the opportunity to express their concerns in their own way.

If you listen and are empathetic, positive and supportive, a band member will feel more able to open up and be honest with you, which then makes it easier for you to offer the help they need. Frame the conversation in the context of exploring the issues and working out how you can help.

Sometimes your concerns may be such that you need to have a conversation outside the regular band rehearsals. Think carefully about how, when and where to have the conversation.

- Ask for a private chat outside of the normal rehearsals.
- Meet outside of the bandroom, ie: a coffee shop or somewhere more private (a pub is not always appropriate as alcohol could be playing a part in a person's mental ill health).
- Carefully and in a non-confrontational way back up your concerns over particular behaviours with examples, dates and times.
- Don't be disturbed so turn your phone off or to silent.
- Don't take "I'm fine" for an answer. Be prepared for them to be evasive and defensive. Use specific examples to underpin your concern and move the conversation forwards.
- Be mindful of your language.
- Reassure them that you are there to help. If they get upset, let them take their time.
- Listen to them without judgement or with a view to diagnose them. You are there to listen and signpost to appropriate support and help.
- Don't be tempted to rush into action. Tell them you need to reflect on what you've heard. Thank them for talking to you, reassure them that you will sort it out between you and fix another time to talk.

Listening Without Judgement

When listening to a member of your band who may be dealing with mental health issues, it is very important to listen without judgement, setting-aside your own thoughts and beliefs.

The listener should use verbal and non-verbal skills to:

- Hear and understand exactly what's being said
- Allow the person to speak freely and comfortably without feeling judged

This requires three key attributes:

Acceptance respecting the person's feelings, experiences and values although they may be different from yours. Not judging or criticising because of your own beliefs and attitudes.

Genuineness showing that you accept the person and their values by what you say and do. You don't make a moral judgement.

Empathy the ability to place yourself in the other person's shoes and demonstrate to them that you hear and understand what they are saying and feeling.

Listening without judgement requires a combination of verbal and non-verbal skills.

Verbal	Non-Verbal
Listen without interrupting	Be attentive
Pay attention	Keep appropriate eye contact (don't stare or avoid their eyes)
Ask appropriate questions to make sure you are both clear about what is being said	Maintain an open body position
Listen to the words and tone of voice and observe body language	Sit down even if the other person is standing to make you seem less threatening
Check you understand what the person is saying by restating it	Try not to sit directly opposite the other person, which can seem confrontational
Summarise facts and feelings	
Use minimal prompts ('mmm' 'aah' or 'I see') to keep conversation moving	
Don't worry about pauses or silences as the person may be simply thinking or temporarily lost for words	
Avoid the temptation to fill the silences as you may break their train of thought or the rapport between you	

Engaging with Those Reluctant to Talk About Their Mental Health

Sometimes you have to work quite hard to get a person to open up about the problems they are experiencing. Reassure the band member that you will treat anything they tell you in confidence, except where there are issues that pose a health and safety risk to them, you or others.

Consider why they might be reluctant to talk.

- Are they worried about being judged?
- Is it safe to be open with you?
- Will you treat any disclosures sympathetically and positively?

If this person has seen others with similar problems that have arisen because of the band being ignored or discriminated against, their caution is understandable. If this is the case:

- Meet the person somewhere private, where they are comfortable but you are safe.
- Ask them if they want to bring a trusted friend, family member or colleague (do make confidentiality boundaries clear between all parties).
- Deal with any concerns of bullying or harassment.
- If it is too difficult for them to talk, reassure that your 'door is always open'.

Issues to Raise with Someone who is Experiencing Mental Ill Health

- Ask open questions about what is happening & how they are feeling. Ask what solutions they think might help but understand they may not be able to think clearly while experiencing distress.
- How long have they felt unwell? Is this ongoing or something that an immediate action could put right?
- Discuss whether and if so, how, the band has contributed to distress.
- Are there any concerns outside of band they would like to discuss or would be helpful for you to know? Don't put pressure on them to reveal external problems if they appear reluctant.
- Are they aware of possible external sources of support?
- Ask if there is anything you can do to help.
- Is there any aspect of their medical care that it would help you to know. (ie. medication or side-effects). Whilst you have no right to this information, they must understand you cannot make 'reasonable adjustments' if you don't understand what problem is.
- Do they have any ongoing mental ill health that it would help you to know about? If so, is it useful to discuss their established coping strategies and how the band can support them? Again, you have no right to this information but it could help in making reasonable adjustments.
- Establish exactly what they want their colleagues to know and who will communicate this. An inappropriate breach of confidentiality or misuse of the information they have told you might constitute discrimination.
- Agree what will happen next and who will take what action.
- Record all conversations accurately.

Some people who have mental ill health find it useful to draw up an ‘advance statement (sometimes known as a WRP ® or Wellness Recovery Action Plan ®) which explains how they wish to be treated if they become unwell at work. This could also be useful in the bandroom for those living with mental ill health.

The statement can include information on:

- Signs that they are becoming unwell
- Who should be contacted or given information (a close relative or GP)
- What sort of support is helpful / unhelpful
- Practical arrangements
- Treatment preferences

If a band member has an advance statement in place you must put it into practise as agreed if they become unwell during band time.

Problems can build up over time and while you may feel the pressure to take action immediately, it might be better to reflect and consider the options. Try to distinguish between what’s urgent and what’s important.

You may also consider whether the band member has been affected by an issue that may affect others in the band, such as behaviour or attitude of a conductor or fellow musician. If this is the case you need to take appropriate action and address any issues that emerge in order to maintain a good and positive culture in the bandroom.

Things to Consider when a Band Member Appears to be or Says That They are Stressed

The term 'stress' is not always helpful as it means different things to different people. We all feel under pressure some of the time but not everybody suffers the adverse reaction of stress, or the same level of stress. We all react differently: the same amount of pressure can make one person perform at a higher level and another person to underperform. What's motivating for one can be unhelpful for another.

Also, someone's ability to perform under pressure may vary according to what's happening out of the bandroom. Most people can cope with short bursts of stress, but prolonged stress is linked to mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.

We have a moral duty of care to make sure being in a brass band does not make musicians ill. Investing now in ensuring your band members are confident, resilient and able to support themselves and each other pays off not just in attendance and financial terms (ie. deputy player fees) but also team morale, productivity, musical standard and loyalty.

What to do if a Band Member Becomes Tearful and Upset

Emotions are a natural part of life and it is likely at some point one of your band members will become upset. This can happen for many reasons and can be connected to something in or out of the bandroom.

When this situation arises, do the following:

- Stay calm.
- Reassure them it is OK to be upset and that you are listening.
- Ask if they would like you to contact anyone or for someone to be with them.
- Make sure you give them an appropriate space where they can express emotion freely and compose themselves in privacy.
- Alternatively, you could suggest you both leave the bandroom or venue for a short time. If they choose to go on their own it's advisable to accompany them, or have someone else accompany them, if they are still very distressed.
- Respect their wishes. Once they have recovered sufficiently, they may wish to carry on with the rehearsal or performance, or they may wish to take a break or even go home.
- Reassure them that you value them and support them, because they might feel embarrassed at breaking down.
- Don't ignore someone who's upset, even if you're worried about how they will react to your intervention. Doing nothing may make the situation worse.

New Band Members and their Wellbeing

The existing stigma and myths around mental health mean that some people often assume that someone experiencing mental health issues cannot cope either at work or in scenarios such as playing in a brass band. However, neither a diagnosis or severity of someone's symptoms predict their ability to succeed in a position and the vast majority of people who have or are experiencing mental ill health can be very successful.

When compatibility is present and the right person has been appointed to a position in a brass band, often there is no difference between the performance of those with mental health issues and those with mental good health.

As a band manager, secretary or conductor recruiting a new member, you have no right to ask about pre-existing mental or physical health conditions to ascertain whether a person is suitable for a position and if a potential new member chooses to disclose their mental ill health to you after you've offered them a position, this should not make any difference to their ability to perform. But, if they do tell you, this allows for any reasonable adjustments to the environment before they take up their position.

If you are unsure of how to treat someone with a specific diagnosis, seek advice. Please note that you should not ask the member themselves for any information about treatment, history of the illness or any other information not relevant to their position in the brass band. Also, do not assume that a person with mental ill health will be more vulnerable to stress within the bandroom than any other member.

Often, a new member will not tell you about their mental ill health as some people are too frightened of discrimination. It is therefore vital you create an environment where potential new members feel able to communicate their individual needs and abilities, otherwise the band could miss out on valuable talent and similarly talented individuals won't be able to fulfil their potential.

Managing the Rest of the Band

Be aware of the effect one band member's mental ill health could have on the rest of the band. They may respond to:

- The person's particular symptoms or behaviour while unwell.
- Any reasonable adjustments that are made.
- Absences of the person in rehearsals and performances.

In this instance it would be advisable to:

- Be as honest and open with the team as confidentiality issues allow
- Identify conditions that may have an adverse effect on the wellbeing of the team and change them where necessary.
- Create an environment where people can express their concerns openly. This helps prevent gossip about and resentment towards the band member who is suffering with mental ill health.
- Treat all band members fairly in order to sustain their engagement.

Managing Relationships

Managing relationships may sometimes be tricky as not all humans are destined to get on with everybody. This is why compatibility is key in the bandroom. However, it is vital to manage relationships not just when dealing with people with mental ill health, but when dealing with everyone in order to maintain mental good health and wellbeing.

Key relationships to focus on are those between peers and also between the musicians and those in more prominent positions such as conductors or management personnel. This is why it is often helpful to have an individual appointed as a Mental Health Lead who has the responsibility for managing these relationships.

Supporting Absence

There may be times when one of your band members who is dealing with mental health issues may have a period of agreed absence from the band. This may be one of the reasonable adjustments you can make for a musician with mental ill health; a period of absence for recovery without the musician having the added pressure of fearing being ‘sacked’ for their time away.

However, often band managers, secretaries and conductors worry that contacting someone who is off sick will be seen as harassment, but the reverse is usually true; a lack of contact or involvement can often make a musician feel less able to return. In the workplace, most people who have experienced distress agree that appropriate contact is not only beneficial, but essential.

Early, regular and sensitive contact with musicians during sickness absences can therefore be a key factor in helping them to return early. In general, it is best to treat someone who is absent due to mental ill health in much the same way as you would treat someone who is absent due to physical health – in an honest, matter-of-fact fashion. Respect their wishes in terms of contact, but be aware that their wishes may change quickly as their mental health improves.

Tips on supporting someone off sick include:

- Keep in touch. If no communication, misunderstandings and barriers can soon arise. Still invite them to social events to show they are still one of the team.
- When they start their absence agree a time to contact them and at the end of each exchange agree on a follow-up contact time.
- Explore different means of contact such as phone, text, email or face-to-face meetings.
- Ask who they would prefer as their main point of contact.
- If someone is too unwell to be contacted directly, find out whether someone else, a family member or friend, can keep in touch on their behalf.

If someone does not want to be contacted, don't accept this at face value and sever all contact with them because all evidence shows that this hinders recovery and could greatly reduce a successful return to your band. People may request no contact because they feel anxious, embarrassed or ashamed about the way they feel and are behaving. Sensitivity, sympathy and treating the person normally can help to overcome that.

Sometimes a person may request no contact because they see you, as the band manager, secretary or conductor, as part of the reason for their illness. If this is the case, you need to offer other options for contact or ways to support them.

Returning to the Bandroom

Most people who experience an episode of distress or mental ill health recover completely and can return to the band successfully, if supported by the structures and systems you have in place in your brass band. Effective planning will help this to happen.

Things to consider when helping someone to return to the are:

- Developing a return-to-band plan (maybe one rehearsal per week).
- Discuss if you need to make any reasonable adjustments.
- Discuss whether you could realistically change or accommodate any of the factors which may have contributed to their absence.

Examples of reasonable adjustments could include:

- A phased return to the band. ie. one rehearsal per week instead of two.
- Only playing in concerts not contests.
- A quiet place to retreat to if feeling stressed or anxious.
- A quiet place to retreat to prior to contest performances.

Supporting Yourself

When focussing on the mental health of others it is important to care for yourself as a priority. After providing support or mental health first aid to a person in distress, you may feel emotionally and physically drained, sad, frustrated or even angry. You may also need to deal with your own feelings and reactions you set aside during the encounter.

Some of the challenges you may face personally when supporting others are:

- Stress, worry and anxiety
- Less or no time for yourself
- Isolation and loneliness
- Lack of sleep
- Depression
- Frustration, anger and guilt
- Low self-esteem

Therefore, it is important you share your feelings, be realistic about what you can offer and ask for help when you need it.

It can be helpful to find someone to talk to about what has happened. If you do this, though, you need to remember to respect people's right to privacy. If you talk to someone, don't share the name of the person you helped, or any personal details that might make them identifiable to the person you choose to share with. The only exception to this is if you believe the individual concerned is at risk to themselves or others.

Make sure you have helpful coping strategies in place for yourself and never take on the role of supporting another person's mental health at the detriment of your own.

Resources & Further Help

Here are some contacts which can help in supporting yourself and the mental health of your musicians in brass bands and free printable poster resources for your band room.

Some relaxation websites

www.Pixelthoughts.com

www.weavesilk.com

www.rainymood.com

www.Bangor.ac.uk/minfullness/audio

www.xhalr.com

www.simplynoise.com

www.Explore.org/livecams

www.donothingfor2minutes.com

Crisis Support and Helplines

If you, or someone you know, is in mental health crisis and needs medical attention quickly:

- Call 999 to contact emergency services
- Go to your nearest A&E

If it is not a medical emergency but you still need urgent help:

- Call 111 for professional health advice
- Make an appointment with your GP

The following organisations help people affected by mental health issues, (some have help lines some don't): -

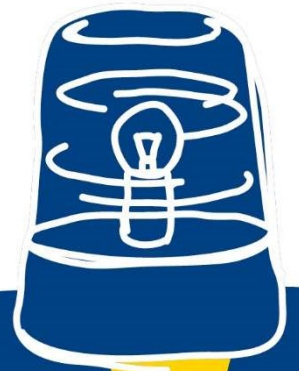
<p><u>The Samaritans</u> Phone - 116123 www.samaritans.org</p>	<p><u>Support in Mind Scotland</u> Phone - 03003231545 (Info line only) www.supportyourmind.co.uk</p>
<p><u>Cruse Beveavement Care (Scotland)</u> Phone – 08088026161 www.crusescotland.org.uk</p>	<p><u>Breathing Space</u> Phone – 0800838587 www.breathingspace.scot</p>
<p><u>Music Support</u> Phone – 08000306789 www.musicsupport.org</p>	<p><u>NSPCC</u> Phone – 08088005000 10am-4pm) www.nspcc.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Scottish Association for Mental Health</u> Phone – 03448000550 (info line only) www.samh.org.uk</p>	<p><u>Anxiety UK</u> Phone – 03444775774 Text – 07537416905 www.anxietyuk.org.uk</p>
<p><u>SSAFA (The Armed Forces Charity)</u> Phone – 08002606767 www.ssafa.org.uk</p>	<p><u>Relationships Scotland</u> Phone – 03451192020 (Info only Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm) www.relationships-scotland.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Childline</u> Phone – 08001111 www.childline.org.uk</p>	<p><u>Alcoholics Anonymous</u> Phone – 08009177650 www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk</p>
<p><u>Behind Your Mind</u> Phone - 07843429407 (info line only and office hours) www.behindyourmind.co.uk</p>	<p><u>Stepchange (Debt)</u> Phone – 08001381111 (Mon-Fri 8am-8pm Sat 8am-4pm) www.stepchange.org/how-we-help/debt-advice-scotland.aspx</p>
<p><u>LGBT Health and Wellbeing</u> Phone – 03001232523 (Tue/Wed 12pm-9pm Thur/Sun 1pm-6pm) www.lgbthealth.org.uk</p>	<p><u>Give Us A Shout</u> Text – 85258 www.giveusashout.org</p>
<p><u>SANE</u> Phone – 0300304700 (4pm-10pm) www.sane.org.uk</p>	<p><u>SAHELIYA (Glasgow and Edinburgh minority group women and girls)</u> Phone – (G) 01415526540 (E)01315569302 info lines only www.saheliya.co.uk</p>

Look out for your team-mates

- **What's changed?** perhaps someone's not been themselves recently?
- **Check it out:** ask them how it's going, and be open to listening.
- **Team talks:** include wellbeing in catch-ups.
- **You don't have to be an expert:** you can still start the conversation.
- **Be informed:** check out mental health resources available from Mind's Blue Light Programme

mind.org.uk/bluelight

#mybluelight



<h2>Relating</h2> <p>The people around you offer a valuable pool of support so it's important to put time into strengthening those connections.</p> <p>Give it a go:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet up with someone you haven't seen in a while • Turn off distractions to chat with friends or family about your day 	<h2>Exercising</h2> <p>Regular activity will provide an endorphin boost and increase confidence.</p> <p>Give it a go:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find an activity that suits you and your schedule • Swap the car on short journeys and cycle or walk to work 	<h2>Awareness</h2> <p>Taking time to switch off autopilot and 'be in the moment' is a great tool to combat stress.</p> <p>Give it a go:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay attention to your senses – what can you see, hear or feel around you? • Choose a regular point in the day to reflect 
<h2>Giving</h2> <p>Holding out a helping hand makes other people happy and will make you feel happier too.</p> <p>Give it a go:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share your skills or offer support • Ask friends, family or colleagues how they are and listen without judgement 	<h1>10 KEYS TO HAPPIER LIVING</h1> <p>ACTION FOR HAPPINESS</p> <p>Find out more about the 10 Keys to Happier Living at actionforhappiness.org</p>  <p>MHFA England</p> <p>Visit mhfaengland.org to learn about Mental Health First Aid and how you can support a friend, family member, colleague or student with their mental health</p>	<h2>Trying out</h2> <p>Learning new things is stimulating and can help to lift your mood.</p> <p>Give it a go:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take on a new role at work or school • Try out a new hobby, club or activity that interests you 
<h2>Direction</h2> <p>Working towards positive, realistic goals can provide motivation and structure.</p> <p>Give it a go:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a goal that is meaningful to you, not what someone else expects of you • Remember to celebrate progress along the way 		<h2>Meaning</h2> <p>People who have meaning in their lives experience less stress, anxiety and depression.</p> <p>Give it a go:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the activities, people and beliefs that bring you the strongest sense of purpose • Volunteer for a cause, be part of a team, notice how your actions make a difference for others 
<h2>Resilience</h2> <p>Although we can't always choose what happens to us, we can often choose our own response to what happens.</p> <p>Give it a go:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find an outlet such as talking to friends or writing it down • Take action to improve your resilience skills 	<h2>Emotions</h2> <p>Positive emotions can build up a buffer against stress and even lead to lasting changes in the brain to help maintain wellbeing.</p> <p>Give it a go:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time to notice what you're grateful for and focus on the good aspects of any situation • Set aside time to have fun 	<h2>Acceptance</h2> <p>No one is perfect. Longing to be someone different gets in the way of making the most of our own happiness.</p> <p>Give it a go:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be kind to yourself when things go wrong • Shift the focus away from what you don't have and can't do, to what you have and can do

Accept yourself

One of the most important steps in maintaining mental wellbeing is to learn to accept yourself. If you value yourself, you are more likely to have positive relationships with other people and find it easier to cope with difficult times in your life.

Here are some tips to help you increase your self-esteem.

Try **not** to compare yourself to other people.



Acknowledge your **positive qualities** and things you are good at.

Use self-help books and websites to help you **change your beliefs**.



Learn to **identify and challenge** unhelpful thinking patterns.

Be assertive – don't allow people to treat you with a lack of respect.

Engage in hobbies that you enjoy.



Spend time with supportive people.



Be realistic – you don't have to be perfect all the time.



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Creating a Wellbeing in Brass Bands Action Plan

With the knowledge and insight you have now obtained, the important thing going forwards is to implement this knowledge in a way that we can educate and develop a culture of awareness, openness and positive wellbeing in our bandrooms, whilst also being able to deal with issues and support musicians in crisis.

We have discussed ways this can be done through promoting positive wellbeing, supporting your musicians and yourself, and you can also consider implementing a positive mental health policy into your band.

Whilst this is not law, by implementing such a policy you are not only creating a better and healthier environment in your band, you are staying ahead of the game should any such legislations in health and safety and mental health in community and voluntary organisations be passed.

It should also be noted that where a conductor or any musicians are paid, the band could be considered an ‘employer’ and therefore following the same mental health provisions which are aimed at the workplace could be a wise manoeuvre.

A Positive Wellbeing and Mental Health Policy simply contains a statement and aims and includes lead contacts for mental health support and covers warning signs, confidentiality, working with parents and peers and training.

You can see a draft policy overleaf.

Positive Mental Health Policy

[Band Name _____]

Last Updated _____

Policy Statement

Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (World Health Organization)

In our bandroom, we aim to promote positive mental health for every member of our brass band. We pursue this aim using supportive and recognised methods.

In addition to promoting positive mental health, we aim to recognise and respond to mental ill health. Musicians are three times more likely to be suffering from a mental health issue. By developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures we can promote a safe and stable environment for our musicians affected both directly and indirectly by mental ill health.

The Policy Aims to:

- Promote positive mental health in all musicians and band members
- Increase understanding and awareness of common mental health issues
- Alert management and band members to early warning signs of mental ill health
- Provide support to band members working with young people with mental health issues
- Provide support to band members suffering mental ill health and their peers and parents or carers
- Promote positive relationships between peers and superiors

Lead Contacts

Whilst everyone has a responsibility to promote the positive mental and physical health of band members, the following individuals are key leaders:

- [name _____] - designated child protection / safeguarding officer
- [name]_____ - mental health lead
- [name _____] - mental health first aider

Any band member who is concerned about the mental health or wellbeing of a fellow musician should speak to the mental health lead in the first instance. If there is a fear that the band member is in danger of immediate harm then the mental health first aider should be alerted.

Signposting

Band members should be made aware of sources of support online, within the local community and nationally.

Relevant sources of support should be displayed in communal areas such as noticeboards to increase the chance of band members seeking help if required. These sources of support could include:

- What help is available
- Who it is aimed at
- How to access it
- Why to access it
- What is likely to happen next

Warning Signs

Band members may become aware of warning signs which indicate a fellow musician is experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. These warning signs should always be taken seriously and anyone observing any of these warning signs should communicate their concerns with [name] the mental health lead.

Possible warning signs include:

- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Increased isolation from friends or family, becoming socially withdrawn
- Changes in activity and mood
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause
- An increase in lateness or absenteeism

Confidentiality

We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a band member on, then we should discuss with them:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

We should never share information about a band member without first telling them.

It is always advisable to share disclosures with a colleague, usually the mental health lead, [name]. This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the band member, and ensures continuity of care in our absence. It provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the band member and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

Parents must always be informed if the band member is a child and these band members may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the child should be given 24 hours to share this information before the mental health lead contacts parents. We should always give the child the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the child protection office [name] must be informed immediately.

Working with Parents

Where it is deemed appropriate to inform parents, we need to be sensitive in our approach. Before disclosing to parents, we should consider the following questions:

- Can the meeting happen face to face? This is preferable.
- Where should the meeting happen? In the bandroom, at their home or somewhere neutral?
- Who should be present? Consider parents, the child, other band members.
- What are the aims of the meeting?

It can be shocking and upsetting for parents to learn of their child's issues and many may respond with anger, fear or upset during the first conversation. We should be accepting of this (within reason) and give the parent time to reflect.

We should always highlight further sources of information as they will often find it hard to take much in whilst coming to terms with the news that you're sharing. Sharing sources of further support aimed specifically at parents can also be helpful too, e.g. parent helplines and forums.

Supporting Parents

Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the band about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular information evenings

Supporting Peers

When a band member is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends and colleagues. Friends and colleagues often want to support but do not know how. The following should be considered to help friends and colleagues:

- What it is helpful for friends and colleagues to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing or saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend or colleague may need help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend and colleague's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

Training

As a minimum, all key band management will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues to enable them to keep band members safe.

Training opportunities for band members who require more in-depth knowledge, will be offered such as, but not limited to, those provided by Scotland's Mental Health First Aid (www.smhfa.com)

Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host training sessions for all band members to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in [_____].

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis in line with any changes to national policy and law.

This policy will always be immediately updated to reflect personnel changes.

Your Wellbeing Champion is



NAME - _____

CONTACT DETAILS - _____

Your Wellbeing Champion / Mental Health Lead is a point of contact if you, or someone you are concerned about, are experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. They are not therapists or psychiatrists but they can give you initial support and signpost you to appropriate help if required.

