

1. STRESS POLICY

- 1.1 We are committed to protecting your health, safety and well-being and that of all those who work for us. We will endeavour to maintain a working environment in which everyone treats one another with dignity and respect and is able to co-operate with and trust their colleagues.
- 1.2 We recognise that, whatever its source, stress is a health and safety issue in the workplace. We acknowledge the importance of a supportive environment and working culture and of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.
- 1.3 We are committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and to bring it to everyone's attention. However, this policy can only be effective if everyone co-operates to achieve its aims.

What is stress?

- 1.4 Stress is the adverse reaction experienced in response to excessive pressures or demands. Stress is not an illness but, sustained over a period of time, it can lead to mental and/or physical illness.
- 1.5 There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enable individuals to meet their full potential and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure becomes excessive it produces stress.
- 1.6 Pressures outside the workplace, whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown or financial worries, can result in stress. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.
- 1.7 We recognise that what triggers stress and the capacity to deal with stress varies from person to person. Individuals react to similar situations in different ways.

Legal obligations

- 1.8 We have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that your health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised.
- 1.9 This policy takes account of our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1998 and Equality Act 2010.

Scope and purpose of the policy

1.10 We are committed to identifying, tackling and preventing the causes of work-related stress and to providing appropriate support and consideration to staff suffering from stress, on a confidential basis where appropriate.

1.11 We are committed to:

- (a) Promoting a culture of open communication, participation and encouragement. Through training, effective planning and allocation of workloads and ensuring feedback is provided on performance, we want staff to develop their skills and confidence and to feel able to raise any concerns they have about their work or working environment.
- (b) Using staff development, staff support systems and policies reflecting current good practice to help staff understand and recognise the causes of stress and to address work-related stress and the impact of external stressors at work.
- (c) Providing a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation.
- (d) Addressing violence, aggression and other forms of inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action.
- (e) Ensuring risk assessments include or specifically address workplace stress.
- (f) Maintaining an appraisal process to ensure the suitability of workloads, supported by a capability procedure.
- (g) Facilitating requests for flexible working where reasonably practicable [in accordance with our flexible working policy].
- (h) Following comprehensive change management procedures.
- (i) Providing support [services, such as occupational health,] for staff affected by or absent by reason of stress.

Personnel responsible for implementation of the policy

1.12 Recognition of stress as a genuine problem requires management support and action. Those working at management and supervisory level have a specific responsibility to:

- (a) Participate in the culture of open communication and encouragement, ensure that staff they manage receive training, effectively plan and allocate workloads and provide feedback on performance.
- (b) Monitor workloads and reallocate work where necessary.
- (c) Ensure that staff they manage understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and others and act on behaviour that falls below those standards.

1.13 To facilitate this process, managers and supervisors [will be given training on best practice and] are encouraged to seek advice [from the [DEPARTMENT]] on how to recognise stress in the staff they manage.

1.14 However, all members of staff are responsible for the success of this policy and must ensure that they:

- (a) Familiarise themselves with the policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives.
- (b) Plan and organise their work to meet personal and organisational objectives.
- (c) Speak to their manager if they experience or are aware of a situation that may lead to a stress problem.
- (d) Co-operate with support, advice and guidance they may be offered by [their line manager **AND/OR** the Human Resources Department].

1.15 [POSITION] will have responsibility for informing all staff of this policy and their role in its implementation. [All new staff will be given a copy of the policy during their induction.] [Further copies are available from [[POSITION] **AND/OR** the Human Resources Department].]

Sources of support

1.16 We have measures in place to assist staff who may be suffering from stress:

- (a) [[Training **AND/OR** Workshops] on stress management. We run various [training courses **AND/OR** workshops] from time to time to assist staff and managers in recognising and coping with stress.]
- (b) [A confidential helpline manned by independent advisers with access to specialist counsellors. The helpline provides help with physical, mental and social issues and is available Monday to Friday, 10am to 10pm. The helpline number is [NUMBER].]
- (c) [Health and lifestyle screening. This is a voluntary screening service, which helps advise employees on their general health including stress. Details are available from [the Occupational Health Department **OR** [DEPARTMENT]].]
- (d) [Stress advice clinics. These are run by trained advisers and are designed to help provide support and information regarding stress and its management. Referral to a clinic is made through [the Occupational Health Department **OR** [DEPARTMENT]].]

1.17 Managers should work with [[DEPARTMENT] **AND/OR** the Occupational Health Department] to provide support to staff suffering from stress.

Resolving cases of stress at work

1.18 If you believe you are suffering from stress you should discuss this with your manager or supervisor in the first instance. If you feel unable to do so you should [contact [DEPARTMENT] **AND/OR** access the support services referred to in paragraph 1.16(b)].

1.19 Once an issue affecting your health comes to the attention of your manager, supervisor or [DEPARTMENT **OR** POSITION] steps will be taken to address that issue. Those steps may include any of the following:

- (a) A workload review, reallocation of work, monitoring of future workload or possible redeployment. Our Capability Procedure may be applied.
- (b) Where appropriate, investigation under our Disciplinary and/or Grievance Procedures.
- (c) Referral for [medical advice **AND/OR** a medical report] to be provided by [the Occupational Health Department **OR** our medical advisers **AND/OR** the GP (and any medical specialist) treating the member of staff concerned].
- (d) If you are on sickness absence, discussion of an appropriate return to work programme. Our Sickness Absence Policy may be applied.

1.20 [[The Occupational Health Department **AND/OR** Counselling services] will continue to be used appropriately to help staff overcome problems associated with work-related stress as well as other stress and the impact that has on their ability to do their duties.]

Absence due to stress

1.21 If you are absent due to stress you should follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained in [your contract **AND/OR** our Sickness Absence Policy].

1.22 [Our [Sickness Absence Policy **AND/OR** Capability Procedure] will apply.]

Confidentiality

1.23 Confidentiality is an important part of this policy. Every member of staff is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality that is required, whether they are suffering from stress, supporting a colleague who is suffering from stress or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a policy or procedure dealing with stress.

1.24 Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action.

1.25 However, there are occasions when matters reported by a member of staff suffering from stress may have to be put to third parties. For example, where duties need to be reallocated within a team or where, as the result of reported bullying or misconduct, a disciplinary investigation and/or proceedings take place. If this is the case, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.

Protection for those reporting stress or assisting with an investigation

1.26 Staff who report that they are suffering from stress, who support a colleague in making such a report or who participate in any investigation connected with this policy in good faith will be protected from any form of intimidation or victimisation.

- 1.27 Any member of staff who considers that they have been subjected to any such intimidation or victimisation should seek support from [their line manager **AND/OR** [DEPARTMENT]]. They may alternatively or additionally raise a complaint in accordance with our Grievance Procedure.
- 1.28 Any member of staff who is, after investigation, found to have acted in bad faith or to have provided false information will be subject to action under our Disciplinary Procedure.