

## MANAGING STRESS

### POLICY STATEMENT

|                 |                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|
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#### Introduction

**The Council is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees.**

**It recognises that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.**

This policy will apply to all employees in the Council.

Managers are responsible for its implementation, and the Council is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

#### Definition of stress

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as:

*“the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”*

This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress, which can be detrimental to health.

#### Policy

- The Council will identify all workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress.  
  
These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.
- The Council will consult with Trade Union Safety Representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- The Council will provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices.
- The Council will provide confidential counselling for employees affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.
- The Council will provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the Council's agreed stress management strategy.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Directors**

Directors are responsible within the Council for ensuring the development of a positive and understanding style of management that supports employees who feel under pressure in the workplace.

### **Managers**

Managers are expected to recognise the fact that from time to time, employees may have experiences in their personal lives that may make them vulnerable to pressures at work or have a temporary influence on their work performance.

They will also:

- Conduct and implement recommendations of risk assessments within their jurisdiction.
- Ensure good communication between management and employees, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure employees are appropriately trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure employees are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that employees are not overworking.
- Monitor holidays to ensure that employees are taking their full entitlement.
- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to an employee who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.
- Managers should conduct joint inspections of the workplace with Health & Safety Representatives at least every 3 months to ensure that environmental stressors are properly controlled.

### **Human Resources**

- Provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress.
- Train and support managers in implementing stress risk assessments.
- Support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their management on a planned return to work.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.

- Inform the employer and the individual Service Health and Safety Committees of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.
- Give guidance to managers on the stress policy.
- Assist in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to Occupational Health; Welfare Officer and external counselling, where appropriate.

### **Employees**

Employees have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety. They should therefore co-operate with management in stress reduction measures including attending any training provided and highlighting potential work related stress issues, including those where personal stress may affect their work.

Employees should:

- Raise issues of concern with their line manager, Human Resources or Health & Safety Representative.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

### **Function of Health & Safety Representatives**

- Health & Safety Representatives must be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress.
- Health & Safety Representatives must be able to consult with members on the issue of stress including conducting any workplace surveys.
- Health & Safety Representatives must be meaningfully involved in the risk assessment process.
- Health & Safety Representatives should be allowed access to collective and anonymous data from Human Resources.
- Health & Safety Representatives should be provided with paid time away from normal duties to attend appropriate Trade Union training relating to workplace stress.
- Health & Safety Representatives should conduct joint inspections of the workplace with managers at least every 3 months to ensure that environmental stressors are properly controlled.

### **Role of the Health & Safety Committees**

- The Service Health & Safety Committees will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented.
- The Corporate Health & Safety Committee will oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.

**John Schultz**

**Chief Executive**