

# STRESS MANAGEMENT



## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### POLICY ARRANGEMENTS AND PROCEDURES

This document is a statement of Policy of Haringey Council. It outlines the Council's intentions regarding stress in the workplace, in particular taking into account the requirements of **The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974**, **The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999** and the associated Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Guidance on Stress.

The Council aims to promote positive policies regarding health and safety concerns at work. Each employee, regardless of status, is responsible for strictly adhering to the Council's policies and procedures that are identified in documentation held at designated Council establishments.

In carrying out its responsibility, the Council will recognise that it will be necessary to bear in mind that there may be certain employees who may share characteristics which may render them more vulnerable than others and for whom special accounts may need to be taken when carrying out risk assessment and making safety provisions. This additional vulnerability may be because of their age, disability, gender including gender reassignment, or their ethnicity or because of their religion and belief or non belief or because of their sexuality.

The Policy and Procedures will be kept under constant review and amended when necessary.

**Note:** Council Services and Schools **MUST** develop service procedures to comply with this policy.

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## 1. Policy Statement

The Council provides a wide range of diverse services to the multicultural population of Haringey. All of these services are made possible through the work of the Council's employees, often working directly with Haringey residents. Consequently, the Council accepts that the fitness for work of its employees is a primary requirement for the efficient and effective delivery of our key priorities.

Accordingly, the Council has systems of staff management which support a sound and sustainable approach to work (Induction, Performance Appraisal, One to Ones, Team Meetings). The Council acknowledges the crucial role of its Managers and Supervisors in maintaining this objective. The Council will provide Managers and Supervisors with training and guidance to assist them to do this. Management training regarding the management of stress and recognising the symptoms of stress should be mandatory.

Employees also have a duty to take responsibility for their health and safety in the workplace. As part of this duty employees should inform their manager as soon as possible if they are suffering from work related stress which they consider is affecting their health. Alternatively, employees may wish to discuss issues with Occupational Health and/or their Trade Union Representative.

## 2. Introduction

It is recognised that stress can occur as a result of pressure at work or in an employee's private life or combination of both. This Policy Arrangement focuses on pressures that may arise from the organisational design and management of work and aims to prevent the risk of work related stress at source. It concentrates on primary and secondary interventions (risk assessment and training) rather than tertiary intervention (counselling).

The Council recognises that whilst a degree of pressure can be a positive force at work, excessive pressure can have a negative effect on health and on performance at work. The Council is committed to promoting good health at work and to provide support mechanisms for employees suffering from the effects of stress.

Council Services and Schools will identify sources of work-related stress through risk assessment with the objective of reducing harm from stress as far as is reasonably practicable.

This guidance, which is based on the Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) Management Standards Approach to stress, provides advice on identifying stress and how that stress can be reduced in the workplace. The early detection of stress will prevent the possibility of stress related illness.

Well-designed, organised and managed work helps to maintain and promote individual health and well-being. Although, where there has been insufficient attention to job design, work organisation and management the benefits and assets associated with '*good work*' could be lost. One common result is *work related stress*.

By the term 'work related stress' we mean the process that arises where work demands of various types and combinations exceed the person's capacity and capability to cope. Think of this as '*bad work*'. It is a significant cause of illness and disease and is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other indicators of organisational underperformance - including human error.

For some the way to deal with work related stress is to diagnose, treat and rehabilitate people who experience it. For others, it is economically and morally preferable to assess and repair the failed work system or organisation. This action reduces the risk of future failure and the likelihood of future work-related ill-health. This approach focuses attention on the antecedents of work related stress in the design and management of work – but recognises that interventions at the individual level have a part to play.

Recent statistics confirm that work related stress is widespread in the UK working population and is not confined to particular sectors or high risk jobs or industries. That is why a population-wide approach is necessary to tackle it.

### **3. Definition of Stress**

Many definitions exist on stress but there is no single agreed definition. The Council adopts the Health and Safety Executives (HSE) definition of work related stress:-

*“The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures and other types of demand placed upon them.”*

This definition makes a clear distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure (which can be stimulating and motivating) and work-related stress, which is the distressing reaction to pressures that an employee perceives they cannot cope with.

Work related stress is the second most commonly reported cause of work related ill health in Britain. It is of concern to employers and employees alike as it poses a risk to employee's health and can also be very detrimental to service provision.

There has been a tendency for society to stigmatise those suffering from stress. The Council does not accept stress as a sign of weakness and encourages early interventions to prevent future ill health. Both the Council and its employees can benefit by tackling work-related stress. Managing work related pressure could prevent employees experiencing stress and suffering subsequent physical or psychological ill health. Employees who are well and at work are likely to be more productive and effective in providing Council services.

### **4. Stress – The Symptoms**

Identifying the indications that someone may be suffering from stress is often very difficult; changes can occur over a long period of time and may need to involve advice from Haringey Council's Corporate Health & Safety Team, Occupational Health and/or Human Resources.

The most common signs of stress include:-

- Reduced performance;
- Change in behaviour patterns;
- Inability to meet deadlines;
- Loss of motivation;
- Poor concentration;
- Tiredness or irritability;
- Excessive drinking or smoking;
- Physical decline and increased sickness absence;
- Excessive mood changes or out of character behaviour; and
- Poor working relationships.

### **5. Management Standards**

The core of the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) approach for dealing with work related stress is the Management Standards approach.

The Management Standards represent a set of conditions that, if present, reflect a high level of health, well-being and organisational performance. This approach is designed to help those people who have key roles in promoting organisational and individual health and well-being and preventing illness and diseases resulting from stress.

The Management Standards approach gives managers the help they need to achieve these aims. It demonstrates good practice through risk assessment, allows measurement of the current situation using surveys and other techniques, and promotes active discussion with employees to help decide upon the practical improvements that can be made.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have identified six main groups in the Management Standards that can cause stress. These are:-

1. **Demands:** This will include factors such as workload, patterns of work and also the workplace itself;
2. **Control:** How much influence employees have on their working methods;
3. **Support:** How all appropriate levels of the Council supports, resources and motivates its staff;
4. **Relationships:** Providing positive working methods and conditions to support staff well-being, avoid conflict and address any unacceptable behaviour;
5. **Roles:** Ensuring that all employees are aware of their roles within services and clearly understand their objectives; and
6. **Change:** Ensuring that all relevant organisational changes are effectively communicated and managed.

For a more in-depth description please see: Health & Safety Executive (HSE) The Management Standards.

## **6. Risk Assessment**

All managers and Head teachers are responsible for carrying out risk assessments on all the activities that they are responsible for, these assessments **MUST** include an assessment of stress in the workplace. It is important to remember when assessing risk that everyone reacts to stress in different ways and some people are more susceptible to the effects of stress than others. It is better to identify if stress is a possible problem in the workplace and take action to reduce the risk than it is to wait for someone to be made ill and then try to reduce the impact. **Stress is not part of the job!**

The risk assessment process is explained in Haringey Council Risk Assessment Policy & Guidance which includes the Corporate Risk Assessment form which should be used, but briefly the stages are:-

1. Identify the hazard;
2. Decide who may be harmed and how;
3. Evaluate the risk;
4. Record the significant findings; and
5. Review the assessment at an appropriate interval.

To find out if your risk assessment approach is suitable and sufficient check it against the questions below. If you can answer 'yes' to all the questions then your approach is likely to be considered a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for work-related stress.

- Do you include all the steps in the risk assessment process?
- Do you focus on prevention and organisational level solutions?
- Do you include provision for dealing with other issues, e.g. individual issues?
- Do you ensure commitment from all parties (senior management, employees and their representatives)?
- Do you have arrangements to identify those aspects of the work, work organisation or environment that are known to be risk factors for work-related stress?
- Does your approach highlight the extent and nature of the gap, if any, between the current situation, and what is seen as good practice, e.g. 'the states to be achieved' in the Management Standards, for each of the identified stress risk areas?

- Do you involve the workforce by asking their views regarding good and bad features of workplace conditions? By seeking their suggestions, advice and comments on potential solutions to problems (e.g. improvements to working conditions, changes in the way work is organised etc)? By ensuring that people are empowered to contribute and feel that their views are listened to and acted on? By communicating outcomes (e.g. action plans)?
- Do you see to develop and adopt solutions that are 'reasonably practicable'?
- Do you provide documentation to show what you have done at each stage of the process and that you are implementing the recommended actions?

Risk assessments should be reviewed at least annually and if there is a significant change, either to work patterns or if someone has time off for a stress related illness.

As part of the Stress Management Assessment Programme the Corporate Health & Safety Team can be called upon to carry out work-related stress risk assessments for staff in a particular service/school/group/section and provide a complete analysis which details any particular stressors within that group and also provide any follow up assistance required by the service or school. For further information on this process please contact [Haringey Council Corporate Health & Safety Team](#).

## 7. Identifying if Stress is a problem

There are a number of methods that can be used to help in identifying if stress is a problem. They will also help to identify the causes of stress (the stressors).

- **Informal talks to staff:** carried out in the normal course of the days work, during team meetings etc.
- **Performance appraisal:** Gives the opportunity to explore in a formal way any under performance or whether they are having difficulty coping.
- **Managing absence:** Gives the opportunity to discover if there is any reason behind excessive absence.
- **Sickness/absence data:** Can help to identify organisation wide problems, particularly if sickness is higher in one particular area.
- **Stress Management Programme:** This is a risk assessment for groups of staff carried out by the Corporate Health & Safety Team. See 6. Risk Assessment above.

## 8. Absence and Rehabilitation

Where an employee is absent due to stress or any other condition, then the manager must comply with the Council's Policy on Control and Management of Absence. This will involve the manager discussing the problem with the employee at the return to work interview with a view to identifying the cause and taking appropriate action to support and assist the employee. Action may include arranging prompt referral of the employee to Occupational Health.

Managers must consider the most appropriate arrangements for those employees who are returning from a long-term absence through discussions with the employee, Human Resources and advice from Occupational Health. Appropriate support and assistance can be provided to make the return to work as easy as possible. Options available are:-

- Phased return to work;
- Return to work on a part time or job share basis;
- Re-design of the job;
- Distribution of some tasks to other employees; and
- Where available an alternative job.

Prior to their return it is essential the employee is advised of any change in their role when they return to work. Any necessary training or other support should be arranged prior to their first day back and the employee advised accordingly. When an employee has been away from work for a long period they may feel isolated and out of touch with current events. Bringing the employee back into work for a short period prior to their official return date can help alleviate any concerns. Attendance at a staff meeting or an informal meeting with colleagues could be considered. Once the employee has returned to work the manager must monitor the employees' progress.

Part of the monitoring should be a meeting with the employee at the end of the first day back, the end of the first week and end of the first month. This enables the employee to raise any concerns they may have and allow the manager to take prompt action where necessary. Details of meetings should be suitably recorded e.g. a diary entry or note in a personnel file, to demonstrate the action taken to assist the employee back to work.

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) have produced a good return to work document which relates to the six management standards for work related stress [Health & Safety Executive \(HSE\) Stress – Return to Work Questionnaire](#). This should be used in conjunction with the other Haringey Council absence procedures listed above.

## **9. Reducing Stress – Action for Managers/Supervisors**

The 'Stress management competency indicator tool' document is designed to allow Managers to assess whether the behaviours identified as effective for preventing and reducing stress at work are part of your management repertoire or not. The aim is to help managers to reflect upon their own behaviour and management style See: [Health & Safety Executive \(HSE\) Stress – Managers Competency Indicator Tool](#).

## **10. Reducing Stress – Action for Employees**

Employees have a duty to themselves and others with regard to health and safety. If stress is caused by or exacerbated by work and affects their ability to perform their job they should seek support by speaking to their line manager. Talking to Occupational Health, their Trade Union Representative and/or GP can also be a good source of support. If a fellow employee is suffering from stress they should be encouraged to seek assistance.

Managing work related stress relies on employees to participate in the process by contributing to the information gathering process and highlighting potential risk factors.

Employees can help manage their stress by being aware of the affects of stress and how positive interventions such as a healthy lifestyle can improve the situation. The following guidance document also gives advice on reducing stress for employees. See [Health & Safety Executive \(HSE\) – Reducing Stress at Work Guide for Employees](#).

## **11. Non Workplace Stress**

Obviously not all stress is work related. Staff may have personal, health, domestic or other problems which may affect their wellbeing and work performance and make them more vulnerable to workplace stress.

External agencies such as General Practitioners, Relate, Victim Support, HAGA, WAMP, etc can also be suggested and [Haringey Council Occupational Health Team](#) can usually assist with this type of referral.

## **12. Further information and Review**

Should you require any further information on any aspect of this policy please contact the Corporate Health & Safety Team, Occupational Health, Human Resources or your Trade Union Representative.

The Corporate Health and Safety Team will review this Policy Arrangement at regular intervals from the date of issue. Where necessary amendments will be made to the document and submitted to the Corporate Health and Safety Committee and Trade Unions for consideration.