

Committee:	Safety Committee	Agenda Item No.:	7
Date:	5 <sup>th</sup> October 2009	Category	*
Subject:	Stress at Work Management Policy and Guidance	Status	Open
Report by:	Health and Safety Officer		
Other Officers involved:	Head of Human Resources and Payroll		
Director	Chief Executive Officer		
Relevant Portfolio Holder	People and Performance		

## RELEVANT CORPORATE AIMS

**Strategic Organisational Development:** - continually improving our organisation. By reducing the risk of stress impacting adversely upon our employees, we reduce further the likelihood of sickness absence and also thereby reduce likelihood of enforcement action, legal action or compensation claim.

**Customer Focussed Services:** - providing excellent customer focussed services. By reducing the rate of sickness absence resulting from the adverse results of stress on employees.

## TARGETS

The Policy contributes specifically to sickness absence targets in the Corporate Plan.

## VALUE FOR MONEY

By complying with legislation and best practice, and proactively managing risks we will help to control the risk of financial loss, service interruption and help avoid the costs of prosecution, compensation claims and increased insurance premiums.

## **THE REPORT**

The key sources of work related stress which have been identified by the Health and Safety Executive are:

<b>Demands:</b>	Workload, work patterns and the work environment
<b>Control:</b>	How much say employees have how they do their work
<b>Support:</b>	Encouragement and support employees receive from the Council, line management and colleagues
<b>Relationships:</b>	Promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
<b>Role:</b>	Employees understanding of their role within the Council and conflict between those roles
<b>Change:</b>	How organisational change is managed and communicated within the Council

The new document replaces the previous Policy from 2006. Whilst this outlined some good practice and required stress assessments to be undertaken by managers, it did not provide them with the means to do so.

The Policy and Guidance now more clearly identifies responsibilities at various levels throughout the council and provides guidance for managers and employees on how they can reduce their own levels of stress and the levels of stress in those they manage. The Policy also provides risk assessment tools to help managers look at the way stress issues are managed in their own areas, and how improvements might be made.

Heads of Service group has agreed that a year would be a reasonable period to risk assesses all **posts** (not all post holders).

## **IMPLICATIONS**

**Financial** : Reducing the risk of incurring loss from subsequent compensation, legal prosecution and increased insurance costs.

**Legal** : Compliance with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

**Human Resources** : Reduction in incidence and severity of stress related illness, which is our primary cause of sickness related employee absence in this current year.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the policy is considered and referred to Council for adoption as the Council's new Stress at Work Management Policy.**

ATTACHMENT:

FILE REFERENCE:

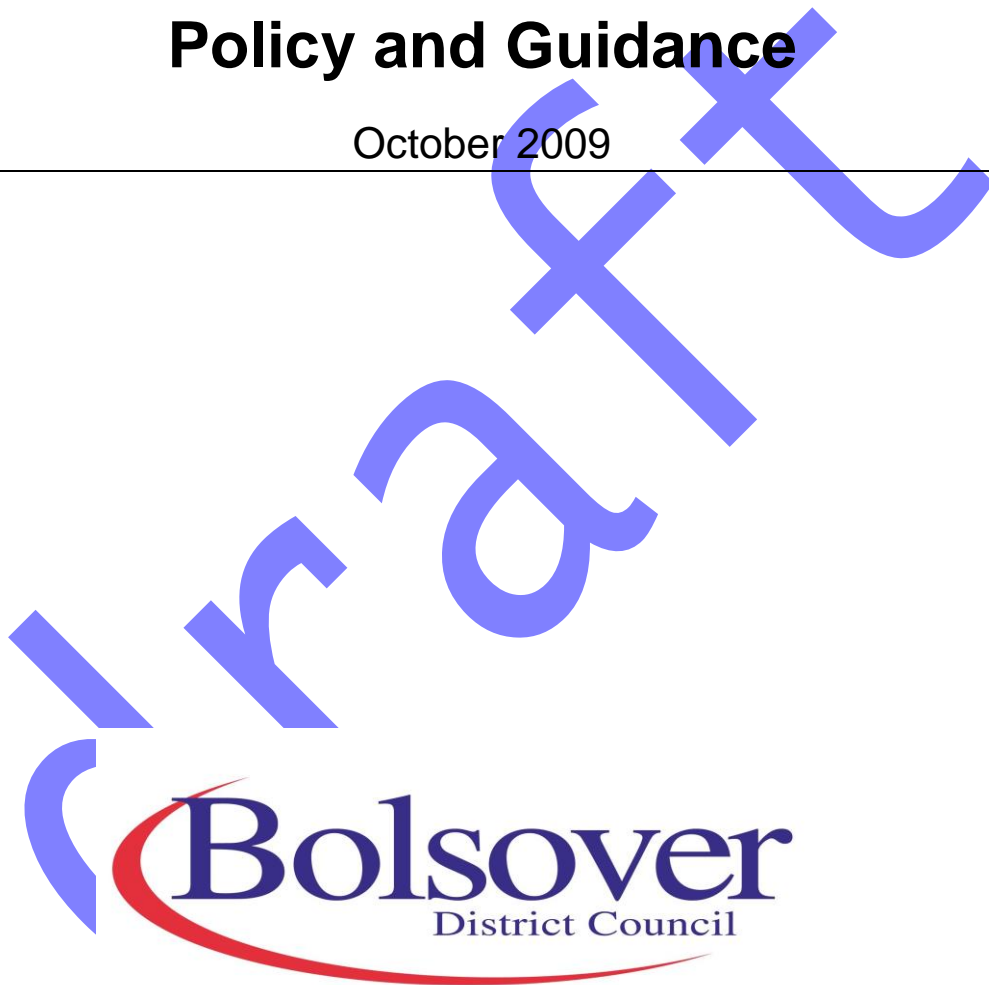
SOURCE DOCUMENT:

# **BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Stress at Work Management**

### **Policy and Guidance**

October 2009



**This Policy addresses the following Corporate Aims**



## **Bolsover District Council Equalities Statement**

Bolsover District Council is committed to equalities as an employer and in all the services provided to all sections of the community.

- The Council believes that no person should be treated unfairly and is committed to eliminate all forms of discrimination in compliance with the Equality Strategy.
- The Council also has due regard to eliminate racial discrimination and to proactively promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups when performing its functions.

This document is available in large print and other formats from any of the Council offices or by contacting the Chief Executives Directorate on 01246 242323. Please bear in mind we will need a few days to arrange this facility.

If you need help to read this document please do not hesitate to contact us.

Our Equality and Improvement Officer can be contacted via [Email](#) or by telephoning 01246 242407.

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## CONTROL SHEET

Details of Document	Comments / Confirmation
Title	Stress at Work Management Policy and Guidance
Document type – i.e. draft or final version	draft
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Author of Policy	Health and Safety Officer
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## 1. Introduction

The Health and Safety Executive defines stress at work as:

**'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them'.**

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

The point at which workplace pressures become excessive will, of course, vary with individual levels of tolerance and with levels of pressure in other areas of life at particular times.

However it important to emphasise that the way work is organised and managed and day to day job demands can increase the level of stress which individuals work under.

Stress may affect people in a variety of ways, and in serious cases can contribute to a physical or mental illness. Stress is a significant risk as it the top cause of sickness absence across the Council.

## 2. SCOPE

This document sets out the policy for and gives guidance on the management of stress within the council. The policy will apply to all employees of the council, including volunteers, trainees, and those on placement.

**There is no specific law on controlling stress at work, but broad health and safety law applies:**

**The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974:** employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees;

**The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999:** employers have a duty to assess the health and safety risks to which their employees are exposed at work. Such an assessment should include an analysis of the risks to employees' health caused by stress at work.

**The Disability Discrimination Act 1995:** employers have a duty not to discriminate against employees on account of their disability as defined under the Act. This involves making reasonable adjustments to the workplace or to the way the work is done, Ill health arising from, or exacerbated by, stress at work may constitute a disability under the Act.

The Council therefore has a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that health is not put at risk through excessive and sustained levels of stress arising from the way work is organised, or from the day-to-day demands placed on their workforce.

All employees have an individual responsibility to minimise the risk of any kind of harm to themselves and their colleagues and to co-operate with the Council in its efforts to manage work-related stress.

## **2.1 Confidentiality**

All issues raised by employees during discussions between managers, advisors and employees, will be treated as confidential by all parties.

## **3. PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY**

The purpose of the Policy is to minimise the risk from stress to any employee of Bolsover District Council and to provide guidelines for the safe management of stress

The policy seeks to address the following corporate aims:

**Customer Focused Services** – Providing excellent customer focused services – by helping control employee absence.

**Strategic Organisational Development** – Continually improving our organisation – by ensuring that we comply with current health and safety legislation and best practice and reducing the costs inherent in absence, poor employee retention and recruitment.

## **4. POLICY STATEMENT**

Bolsover District Council is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for its employees and recognises the importance of fostering psychological as well as physical well-being.

Specifically the Council is committed to the promotion of health, to the prevention of work-related stress and to the provision of support to any employee who may suffer stress.

The Council aims to minimise the risk of stress through a risk management process involving the identification, assessment and implementation of control measures to workplace stressors. The Council will:



**a) Act to prevent stress - Take stress prevention measures such as:**

- Fostering a co-operative and supportive environment
- Ensuring good communication within teams
- Ensuring adequate preparation for existing and new roles and responsibilities through appraisal, risk assessment and training
- To increase general awareness of stress and methods control excessive workplace stressors.
- To consult with union safety representatives on proposed action.

**b) Detect and address stress**

- Enabling employees to report excessive workloads, interpersonal pressures and symptoms of stress without fear of discrimination
- Recognising early signs of stress in employees and taking action to provide appropriate intervention
- To take reasonable action to combat and prevent workplace stressors identified through risk assessment or those raised by employees.
- To manage problems that occur and provide a confidential referral service.

**c) Provide the following support**

- To assist employees in managing stress in others and themselves
- Supporting employees in recovering from stress-related illnesses and managing the return to work after any period of sick leave so that stress does not recur.
- Training for both management and employees on stress awareness, the risk assessment process and the application of control measures
- Confidential consultation with the aim of assessing, medically managing or referring for specialist assistance, as appropriate
- Advising on the need for any individual work adjustments
- Counselling and/or welfare advice for employees experiencing stress.

**d) Monitor effectiveness**

- To review risk assessments in accordance with best practice so as to monitor risk management to prevent stress.
- To monitor, investigate and evaluate stress indicators, such as excessive sickness absence or high personnel turnover.
- Review feedback from employees who have suffered from stress.

## 5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All managers will publicise, support and take responsibility for this policy and guidance, and will create an atmosphere in which employees can freely and openly discuss their concerns regarding stress issues.

### 5.1 The Chief Executive Officer

Is responsible for ensuring that there are effective measures in operation to protect employees from the risks associated with stress at work.

### 5.2 Directors

Are accountable to the Chief Executive Officer for the operations and activities carried out within their areas of responsibility: They will ensure:

- Compliance with the Stress Policy within their area of responsibility.
- Employees in their area are aware of, accept and carry out their responsibilities under the Stress Policy.
- Employees have appropriate access to information.
- Adequate resources are made available to manage stress issues.
- Appropriate support is given to employees who are suffering from significant work related stress.
- Managing stress risk relating to change management issues.

### 5.3 Heads of Service

Are responsible to their Director for ensuring and that the measures that are in place are used to control risks from work related stress. Additionally they will:

- Fully implement the Stress Policy in a decisive, sympathetic and fully supportive way.
- Provide employees with adequate instruction, training and supervision.
- Ensure appropriate **job based** risk assessments are carried out and their findings implemented. Some of this may be delegated to appropriately trained managers.
- Attend appropriate training.
- Offer immediate appropriate support and / or counselling to those affected by stress.
- Ensure that where employees express concern about stress issues and risks in their work, Head of Service should discuss the problems without prejudice and address the risks in accordance with this Policy.
- Keep employees informed of action taken.
- Review assessments and procedures in the light of stress related absence, new information but otherwise at least every two years.
- Agree with Human Resources and employees the return to work programme for the employee.

## 5.4 Managers and Team Leaders

Are responsible to their Head of Service for ensuring that the measures that are in place to control the risks from stress are operating effectively: Additionally they will:

- Carry out risk assessments as required by the Head of Service.
- Ensure all stress related absence/illness is reported to the Head of Service.
- Ensure effective methods are used to keep an appropriate level of contact with employees who are absent from work due to stress.
- Bring any stress at work issues of which they are aware to the attention of the Head of Service and other employees as appropriate.
- Ensure employees are trained and competent to perform their roles.
- Monitor workload, working hours, annual leave and sickness absence to ensure that employees are not overloaded.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated.
- Offer support to any employee who is experiencing stress outside the workplace.
- As part of the monitoring process, conduct return to work interviews with employees when they resume work after any period of sick leave.
- Refer the employee to the Occupational Health Service via Human Resources should they or their doctor attribute a period of sickness absence to work-related stress.

Line managers should be alert to the risk of work-related stress in their employees and to signs of adverse reactions in individuals.

## 5.5 All Employees

All employees have a responsibility to minimise the risk to themselves and their colleagues and to co-operate with the Council in its efforts to manage work-related stress: employees will:

- Comply with the procedures put in place to control the risks from stress at work and follow the guidance given by the Council.
- Undergo training as requested.
- Co-operate and assist with the undertaking of risk assessments.
- Co-operate with their managers to reduce hazards that may affect their physical and/or mental well-being, including following guidance given.
- Where an individual believes they are at significant risk of work-related stress, then they should inform their manager in confidence so that appropriate steps can be taken to reduce the risk. If they are unable to do this they should approach their Head of Service or Human Resources.
- Be aware of and recognise their own training and development needs.
- Taking allotted breaks, meal breaks and ensuring that leave and flexitime is taken as appropriate.
- Seeking appropriate assistance or medical help as appropriate.

## **5.6 The Health and Safety Officer will:**

- Monitor the implementation of the Policy within departments.
- Provide additional information, guidance and professional support, as required.
- Assist in carrying out and reviewing risk assessments.
- Advise on the provision of training.
- Make employees aware of the Council's procedures at induction training.
- Review the corporate policy and procedures at least every two years.
- Provide assistance in managing individual cases of stress and advice on stress prevention.
- Undertake individual assessments on a one to one basis where a need has been identified.
- Monitor and report on stress levels within the Council

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# GUIDANCE ON STRESS AT WORK POLICY

## 6. INFORMATION FOR MANAGERS / SUPERVISORS

### 6.1 What is Stress?

The Health and Safety Executive have defined stress as:-

***'The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them.'***

Being 'stressed' is the negative reaction a person has to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them which is not matched by their ability to cope.

Stress is both a physiological and psychological reaction which occurs when people perceive an imbalance between the combined levels of demand placed upon them, both at home and/or at work, and their capacity to meet those demands.

Some stress can be positive and motivating in the short term, helping to achieve success; prolonged stress however, can lead to ill health.

As a manager the objective should be to prevent excessive stress within the workplace;

- Risk assess to identify the potential work related causes and improve or eliminate these where possible.
- Deal with problems as they arise, to promote openness and a 'blame free' culture.
- Provide rehabilitation and support of employees suffering from stress.

### 6.2 Impact of Stress on the Council can include

- Reduced employee performance and productivity
- Poor decision making
- Increase in mistakes which may lead to increased customer complaints
- Poor commitment to work
- Increased sickness absence
- High turnover
- Poor work relations

For example, losing one colleague for an extended period with a stress-related illness can have a dramatic impact on the workload and morale of the rest of the team.

### **6.3 Indicators of stress at work can include;**

#### **Work performance deterioration**

- Reduction in output or productivity
- Uncharacteristic mistakes or errors of judgement
- Poor concentration or decision making
- Deterioration in planning and control of work
- Increased absence

#### **Change in attitude and behaviour**

- Loss of motivation or commitment
- Working longer hours with diminished returns
- Erratic or poor time keeping
- Rapid changes in emotional mood
- Increased use of alcohol and/or cigarettes

#### **Alteration in relationships at work**

- Tension and conflict between colleagues
- Poor relationships with clients
- Disciplinary problems

## **7. HOW TO MANAGE STRESS**

Employers are required to assess the risks to health under 'The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999' and it is widely accepted that prolonged periods of stress, including work-related stress, have an adverse effect on health.

The Council requires that work related stress is managed within the workplace.

Firstly the manager must pro-actively assess the risks arising from work which may cause stress and take steps to eliminate or reduce these risks where possible.

As mentioned previously, stress is interrelated between work and home and each individual will react differently to circumstances. Therefore, even with risks reduced to a minimum, managers should be aware of the common signs of stress in individuals and deal with problems as they arise.

In addition to being aware of the common signs of stress, managers should seek to create an atmosphere which encourages good communication between colleagues, (including themselves) thus helping to ensure employees feel they will receive support and understanding in resolving any issues or concerns they may raise.

## **8. CARRYING OUT THE RISK ASSESSMENT**

This guidance note should be read in conjunction with Section 1.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require assessment of the risks relating to stress within the workplace as follows.

- Identify the Hazard
- Evaluate the risk
- Persons at risk
- Identify control Measures and Possible solutions
- Recording of assessment details
- Further guidance and advice

### **8.1 Identify the Hazard:**

Identify all the common organisational stressors (hazards) relating to the work activities; evaluate the overall risk (low / medium / high); describe all existing control measures and identify any further measures required.

Specific hazards may need to be assessed on a separate risk assessment form and cross-referenced with this document where appropriate.

Some common organisational stressors to consider may include:

- Heavy targets and workloads
- Insufficient resources
- Long working hours
- Significant change
- Conflicting priorities
- Uncertainty or insecurity
- Poor communication
- Lack of involvement
- Poor delegation
- Management style and conflict

A variety of methods can be used to identify these including informal talks, focus groups, sickness/absence records, questionnaires and workplace inspections.

### **8.2 Evaluate the risk**

- Assess the likely impact of the identified causes on employees.
- Remember that different times of the year may result in different risks, depending on priorities and workload.
- Try to speak to employees to ascertain the problem.
- If speaking to an individual who is known to suffer from stress, this will require a careful planned approach and should be done sympathetically.

### 8.3 Identifying Persons at Risk:

Any employee may be affected by work-related stress. Some individuals may be more vulnerable than others, dependant on their job and domestic pressures. **The focus however should not be merely on the individual but on the work and organisation as a whole.** Individuals suffering from stress often display a range of outward signs that may be noticed by colleagues and other managers.

These signs may include:

- Tiredness and irritability
- Reduced quality of work indecisiveness and poor judgement
- Loss of sense of humour
- Physical illness such as headache, nausea, aches and pains
- Poor sleep pattern or excessively 'jumpy'
- Increased sick leave
- Poor time keeping
- Employees taking work home or staying late excessively

It is important that these individuals are made aware of the outcome of the risk assessment and informed of actions and control to minimise the risk.

### 8.4 Identifying Causes of Stress

There is rarely a single cause of stress and the causes may be interrelated, particularly the home / work interface. Causes of stress are referred to as stressors. Although not an exhaustive list, below are some suggested examples of stressors. It is important to remember it is the individuals' reaction / perception to a stressor that counts not the managers / assessors reaction to the stressor

### 8.5 **Work-Related Stressors** - Based on the Health and Safety Executive's *Stress Standards*

Demands

Includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.

- Unrealistic deadlines and expectations, often as a result of super achievement by the most talented
- Technology overload
- Unmanageable workloads
- Under recruitment of personnel for work already timetabled
- Mismatches of skills, abilities and job demands
- Work-life balance issues
- Over demanding and inflexible work schedules
- Unsocial hours



- Excessive travel time
- Work interfering with home/personal life
- Working with difficult / violent clients

## **Control**

How much say the individual employee has in the way they do their work.

- Lack of control over pace of work, breaks and work patterns.
- Lack of involvement in decision making
- Account not taken of employees ideas/suggestions about the job
- Lack of influence over performance targets
- Lack of time
- Lack of encouragement to develop new skills and take on new challenges

## **Support**

Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and work colleagues

- No provision of support for employees from managers or colleagues
- No information provided on support available
- Employees unable to access the resources needed for their job
- No regular and constructive feedback

## **Work Relationships**

Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Poor work relationships can be a result of:

- Aggressive, negative, fault finding management style.
- Isolation at work.
- Aversive behaviour, e.g. bullying and harassment
- Lack of leadership from management
- Unfair workload or unequal effort
- Others take credit for personal achievements
- Poor relationships with colleagues
- No systems to report and deal with unacceptable behaviour.

## **Role**

Whether people understand their role in the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the employee does not have conflicting roles

- Incompatibility of roles the organisation asks you to fill
- Lack of clear information on employees roles
- Systems in place to resolve employees uncertainties or concerns

## Change

### How organisational change is managed and communicated in the organisation

- Job insecurity
- Lack of job permanence e.g. temporary/fixed term contracts
- Future job change
- Fear of skill redundancy
- Changes seen as 'Change for change sake'

### Domestic stressors can include;

- Marital breakdown
- Children leaving/returning home
- Family illness/ dependency
- Financial problems
- Poor housing
- Moving house
- Ill-health

**Obviously as an employer our intervention here is, and should, be limited to supportive role, as we cannot influence events over which we have no control.**

## 8.6 Identify Control Measures - Possible Solutions

This is a selection of control measures that should be considered when stressors have been identified. - Control measures are split into the six categories, corresponding to those above in Section 8.5 and identified in the Health and Safety Executives 'Stress Management Standards',

### Demands

- Evaluate that sufficient resources are available to complete work allocated, if not re-evaluate priorities
- Ensure the demands on employees are achievable
- If work load is a problem, look at trying to reduce it. Ensure targets are challenging but realistic, listen to the individual; consider flexible working
- Support employees by assisting with prioritisation of work and the establishment of realistic deadlines
- Strike a balance between ensuring that employees are interested and busy but not under-loaded, overloaded or confused about the job
- Help people prioritise workloads, provide time management training if required;
- Provide adequate employee training and ensure that their skills and abilities match the demands of the job

- Encourage employees to raise problems in early stages if they cannot cope
- Encourage delegation if it is possible;
- Ensure that proper risk assessments are carried out to control physical hazards
- Ensure that employee's concerns about their work environment are considered and addressed
- Ensure that any risk from physical violence, verbal abuse and bullying is identified, controlled or dealt with
- Encourage team cohesion and commitment
- Make sure holidays and flexi time are taken, not accumulated or lost;

### **Control**

- Endeavour to provide more control to employees by enabling them to plan their own work, make decisions about how this should be completed and how problems should be tackled
- Enrich jobs by ensuring that employees are able to use their skills to get tasks completed and understand how their work fits in to the wider aims of the Department or Service Area.
- Only monitor employees output if this is essential
- Ensure regular meetings with employees take place.
- Provide a supportive environment

### **Support**

- Provide support and encouragement, even when things go wrong
- Listen to employees and agree actions for tackling problems
- Review employees' performance so that they know how they are doing. Encourage feedback from your employees to identify any problem they may be having
- Ensure that employees are fully involved
- Encourage employees to share their concerns about work-related stress at an early stage
- Encourage employees to discuss their problems with you, make yourself approachable;
- Take a sympathetic approach to any personal problems the employee may have;
- Ensure that adequate training and information have been provided
- Ensure that individuals do not feel that they are being discriminated against on the grounds of race, sex, disability and other irrelevant reasons
- Encourage achievement of effective work-life balance.

### **Relationships**

- Work in partnership to ensure that bullying and harassment do not emerge as an issue
- Ensure that procedures already established via Human Resources are fully utilised

- Ensure that the policy on stress, bullying and harassment are properly communicated to employees and these policies have full management support
- Ensure that all employees are aware of the consequences of breaching the policies

### **Role**

- Ensure that roles are defined and understood to prevent conflict and ambiguity
- Make sure employees have a clearly defined role and understand exactly what their role and responsibilities are
- Encourage employees to talk at an early stage if they are not clear about priorities or the nature of the task to be undertaken
- Talk to employees regularly to ensure they are clear about their current job, what it entails and what the expectations of them are
- Ensure that all new employees and re-deployed employees receive adequate induction

### **Change**

- Explain clearly why any changes are necessary, explain timetables for actions and outline the initial steps to be taken.
- Communicate new developments as quickly as possible to avoid the spread of rumours and misinformation.
- Ensure full opportunity to comment and ask questions before, during and after change.
- Involve employees in discussions about how jobs might be developed, changed and how means of solving problems can be generated.
- Ensure that risk assessments are reviewed if changes such as decreases in personnel are liable to increase the probability of hazards arising.

Much of the above can be accommodated in the regular employee appraisals which managers must undertake with their personnel.

### **8.7 Recording of Assessment Details:**

- Assessor records the significant findings of your risk assessment and set a review date;
- Ensure support is offered;
- Refer to the Human Resources for guidance where required;
- Refer to the HSE website for guidance. (link given at end of document)

It is important that managers maintain records of risk assessments for inspection, legal purposes for a period of 6 years.

## **8.8 Individual Stress Assessment:**

Where an individual indicates a stress-related issue, they should be encouraged to discuss this with their manager in order for action to be taken.

The stress-related issue may or may not be work related, but either will have an effect on how they function at work, and it is therefore important to offer help and support.

Work-related issues should be discussed and ways to reduce the stressors identified and agreed. It is important to monitor the effectiveness of any actions implemented and to review the situation on a regular basis.

Individual stress and return to work assessments will be undertaken confidentially by Human Resources.

## **9. SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE**

Managers can seek guidance on managing stress within the workplace from Human Resources.

Where an employee has a stress-related issue, referral to Occupational Health and / or counselling will be considered by Human Resources.

Where an employee returns to work, an individual assessment and return to work plan will be agreed with the Employee, Head of Service and Human Resources.

## **10. STRESS ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE NOTES:**

### **Stress - Managers Checklist**

This core checklist is provided as a basic framework to help managers complete a checklist for stress related issues which they are required to consider. It may not address all specific circumstances, but should help to assess areas for help and support.

This assessment checklist is primarily for managers to identify and consider sources of stress within their own area of work and should assist in completing a stress risk assessment.

It may be possible to group some jobs which are very similar together in one assessment.

It is important to realise that all jobs at all levels have the potential to cause stress. Depending on how the work is managed, organised and controlled, the working relationships, management of change, role clarity. For example it is possible for any employee to be in a position where they are subject to bullying, or where they are inadequately trained, equipped and resourced.

The checklist is split into six main areas:-

- **Demands** - being able to cope with the demands of the job.
- **Control** - having an adequate say over how work is done.
- **Support** - having adequate support in terms of encouragement, sponsorship, and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- **Relationships** - includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- **Roles** - understanding roles and responsibilities.
- **Change** - being involved in any organisational change.

Each question requires a Yes or No answer.

Where you identify a "NO" answer below this may indicate an aspect which may need some attention.

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<b>POST TITLE</b>	
<b>DEMANDS</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>
Do you organise jobs with realistic demands in mind?	
Are demands matched to employee skills and abilities?	
Is the physical work environment comfortable?	
Is repetitive and monotonous work kept to a minimum?	
Do employees have sufficient resources - time, equipment, expertise?	
Are employees safe from exposure to the threat of physical violence or verbal abuse from the public?	
<b>CONTROL</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>
Do employees have a reasonable say about the way they do their work?	
Do employees have reasonable control over their pace of work?	
Are employees encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work?	
Are there mechanisms for employees to be able to air concerns about their work environment and/or activities?	
Do employees have reasonable control over their work pattern?	
<b>SUPPORT</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>
Are employees able to provide support to their colleagues?	
Do employees know how to access managerial support?	
Are employees encouraged to seek support at an early stage?	
Are employees supported when undertaking new tasks?	
Are systems in place to help employees cope with work or home related issues (flexibility during emergencies, family leave, etc)?	
If you have answered NO to any of the questions above, some possible solutions to consider are available in Section 3.6	

<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>
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Are procedures in place to resolve workplace conflict?	
Are employees able to report their concerns?	
Is there a policy for dealing with unacceptable behaviour at work?	
Are teams organised and selected with working relationships in mind?	
Are openness, honesty and respect encouraged within teams?	
Are people aware of the penalties associated with unacceptable behaviour?	
<b>ROLES</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>
Is consideration given to any conflicting demands placed on employees?	
Is the induction procedure comprehensive?	
Are job descriptions clear and accurate?	
Do employees have a clear plan of work?	
Do people understand how their job fits into the wider organisational aims?	
<b>CHANGE</b>	<b>YES/NO</b>
Do you ensure that employees understand the reasons for change?	
Is employee information/consultation part of the change programme?	
Do you ensure that employees understand the likely impact of change on their job?	
Are special arrangements made to support employees through the change process?	
Is the change process communicated to employees?	
If you have answered NO to any of the questions above, some possible solutions to consider are available in Section 3.6. of the Guidance	



**Appendix – 2 Stress Assessment Action Plan –  
to be completed after the sheets in Appendix 1 have been completed**

<b>Stress Issue</b>	<b>Action to resolve issue</b>	<b>Manager Responsible</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Date Comp</b>
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draft

Signed (manager)

Date

Print name

### **Appendix 3 - SUMMARY OF ACTIONS - What Managers Can Do:**

Examples of ways in which you can do this by exhibiting good practice in your dealings with employees include;

Promoting effective management practices including those covering induction and probationary processes, mentoring, review and appraisal, informal group and individual consultation, an 'open-door' policy on the part of line managers, good communication throughout the Council;

Encouraging awareness of stress and its negative impact on employee health and satisfaction, performance and productivity;

Ensuring that all employees have role descriptions that clearly set out their duties, responsibilities, reporting lines and accountabilities and are regularly reviewed;

Ensuring that employees have access to employee development or training provision to develop skills, backed up by regular appraisals;

Giving positive feedback when employees have done well, constructive criticism when things have not gone so well and actively listening to their responses;

Letting employees use their skills and experience through practical work schedules, increasing their control at work, involving them in decision-making;

Setting work targets and standards that are realistic but include an element of challenge;

Being aware of, and managing, change processes impacting on employees, including providing regular updates during organisational change;

Addressing work related conflict, knowing when to refer problems to Human Resources;

Guarding against and not tolerating bullying, harassment, or other behaviours that can affect health

Helping employees balance work and personal/family commitments; accommodating the needs of those with disabilities;

Training and supporting managers in carrying out risk assessments;

Developing action plans to control problems identified by the risk assessment process.

## Appendix 4 - GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYEES - Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is stress?

Stress is a condition that may be experienced when a person feels excessive pressures or other demands are placed upon them, beyond their ability to respond.

It is not an illness, but can lead to health problems if prolonged or particularly intense.

A certain amount of stress is normal and necessary both at work and outside it, and can be an important motivational factor. However, prolonged exposure to higher levels of stress may result in unhealthy physical, mental and behavioural symptoms.

### 2. Isn't it good to have *some* stress?

Yes. In the short term, some sense of pressure actually helps us to perform and get things done. The surge of adrenaline can be stimulating. However, these periods of intense activity need to be balanced with periods of relaxation where we can feel refreshed.

It is when pressures are continuous without respite or feel overwhelming, that stress can occur and can have physical and psychological effects.

### 3. What are the causes of stress?

While stress is readily acknowledged to be a common feature of modern life, its causes, symptoms and effects are a very complex matter.

Stress is usually caused by a combination of factors, which together can feel overwhelming. These could be personal concerns such as family or relationship problems, financial or housing difficulties, or ill-health.

At work it can be caused by overwork, feeling undervalued, having little or no control over your working day, an unclear job role, or relationship difficulties with colleagues or managers, which may involve bullying or harassment.

Factors such as noise, lack of space, traffic and heat can also contribute to feelings of stress.

A combination of stress-inducing factors at work and at home is often responsible for bringing individuals to the point where they feel they can no longer cope with their life.

Some common work related stressors to consider include:

- Heavy targets and workloads
- Insufficient resources

- Long working hours
- Rapid change
- Conflicting priorities
- Uncertainty or insecurity
- Poor communication
- Lack of involvement
- Poor delegation
- Management style and conflict

More detail is given in the management guidance notes

#### 4. How would I know if I have it?

All of us are affected at one time or another by stress. People respond in many different ways to stress so it is helpful to be aware of your own particular warning signs. Early signs will be changes that you or others notice in your usual health, behaviour or moods.

Physical signs might be feeling constantly very tired and unwell with a lowered resistance to minor illness and infections; headaches and other aches and pains resulting from tense muscles; heart palpitations; stomach and digestive problems; sleep disturbance. Underlying medical conditions such as asthma or eczema can be exacerbated.

Emotional signs are any changes in mood. This might be increased irritability or outbursts of anger, or tearfulness and depression. Some people feel very anxious, with accompanying symptoms of dizziness and palpitations and attacks of panic. Ability to concentrate can be affected and a general loss of interest in food, sex and life in general. A response to this may be an increased use of alcohol, smoking or recreational drugs.

At work, indications of someone being stressed and under pressure could be absenteeism and/or poor timekeeping. There may be a loss of creativity, increased level of mistakes, poor judgement and difficulty in planning or making decisions.

#### 5. Who's at risk? Are some people more likely to suffer than others?

We are all potentially at risk of being 'stressed' since it can be caused by a range of commonplace situations but are more vulnerable when several areas of our life are problematic at the same time and if we lack practical and emotional support.

However, people have very different mental responses to the body's natural reaction to stressful situations. For some it is a stimulus, helping them to achieve more, in others an adverse reaction, causing a sense of not being able to cope and creating demotivation.

It is important to differentiate between temporary stress that you know will go away when a situation is resolved and long-term chronic stress. Most people cope with short periods of stress, often relieved by relaxing, taking a walk, chatting through issues with friends or having a good night's sleep.

Chronic (long-term, continuous) stress is much harder to deal with and can be psychologically emotionally damaging both for an individual and for friends and family.

## 6. What can I do about it?

Usually stress has developed over a period of time without someone being aware of what is happening. The first step is to recognise that stress might be responsible for how you are feeling and to acknowledge this. Then you need to try to identify the aspects of your life that are causing it. Sometimes you may not be able to change or avoid them, but at other times lifestyle changes can make all the difference. This can feel difficult to do at this point when a healthy lifestyle has got out of balance. It is helpful to write down what you are feeling, when it happens, who else is involved, in the different parts of your life. Talk to people who can help you make the changes you'll need to reduce the burdens you feel are on you both at work and at home.

At work, stress can develop when an employee feels under pressure from several sources: workload, interpersonal difficulties with colleagues, unclear role and responsibilities etc. As a first step, talk to your immediate supervisor or manager about any work issues. They may not be aware of how you are experiencing these difficulties and should work with you to resolve the issues.

If you would have difficulty raising these matters with your manager, other sources of support within the Council include Human Resources and trade union representatives. The council also has access to occupational health and counselling services.

Think as well about how you are looking after yourself. It is essential to have periods of rest, relaxation and fun in our lives as well as work. We need a healthy balanced diet to look after our physical energies and exercise of some kind, especially if our work is sedentary.

Drink plenty of water and keep alcohol and caffeine consumption to sensible limits. Try to get a balance of work and some rest in a day, each week, and in a longer period of time. i.e. take lunch and tea/coffee breaks, have some social activities in the week, and longer periods away from work to take a break.

## 7. Do I need to go to see my GP?

If stress is causing physical symptoms, severe distress or making it difficult for you to function as normal, it is worth seeing your GP and / or Occupational Health sooner rather than later.

It is important to remember that although stress is a usual part of life, extreme or prolonged stress can lead to other illnesses that may need treatment. Stress has been linked to the development of high blood pressure and heart disease, as well as insomnia and depression, for example. In the case of physical symptoms, the doctor may also want to do some tests to exclude certain conditions.

## 8. What if I feel I can't cope any more?

If you get to this point it is always important to stop and rest rather than feel you must struggle on, itself a common response to stress. It is helpful to talk to someone about how you are feeling and get some help. Talk to your immediate supervisor/manager. Make an appointment with your GP and / or Occupational Health and contact Human Resources for appropriate support and advice.

## 9. Who can help me at work?

There are a number of different services within the Council that can help you. If possible, talk to your manager so that they can identify, discuss and resolve with you the factors in your job which may be adversely affecting your health. Our counsellors and our Occupational Health provider can offer confidential advice and support, which is accessible via Human Resources.

## 10. Why do I feel it's all my fault?

People often feel like this and blame themselves for not being able to cope. We all have times in our lives when what we face can seem overwhelming. Stress is not a weakness and you do not have to suffer. Workplaces are constantly changing and often new developments affect the workload and pace we have to react to. How this is managed is crucial to the effect on individuals.

## 11. How do I recognise stress in another person?

Changes in their behaviour and mood may be signs. They may be ill and away from work more frequently. Productivity, concentration and decision-making may be affected.

## 12. What can I do to prevent stress becoming a problem for me?

It is probably inevitable that we will all have periods when we will feel under pressure but we need to make sure these periods are not sustained. Keep a balance between work and the rest of your life; eat a healthy diet; make time for relaxing and enjoyable activities.

If the pressures of work feel too great you must talk to your manager. If you feel unable to discuss concerns with your manager, advice and support may be sought from Human Resources our Occupational Health Service or your union representative, as appropriate.

## 13. What responsibilities do employees have in stress identification and elimination?

You have a responsibility for maintaining their own health and well being. By co-operating with supervision and appraisal processes and training, your competence and ability to cope with work situations should be increased.

Similarly, your participation in the risk assessment process should help to create healthier working environments and practices.

Employees are responsible for raising the need for support with an appropriate person, such as their manager, colleague, union representative, when they feel they are not coping. Employees suffering from the effects of stress should expect their manager and colleagues to fully support them to help prevent sickness absence or assist in a return to work strategy.

When stress is identified as the underlying problem, employees must heed the advice given by their medical advisers and our occupational health provider. He/she should take an active part in the development of coping strategies and action plans and then

make every effort to keep to them. The likelihood of success will be significantly increased if they have ownership for the plans.

14. Where can I get more information?

**Work-related stress [HSE]**

**Stress at work booklet [ACAS]**

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