



DIOCESE OF CHESTER

**ASTBURY ST MARY'S
CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**STRESS MANAGEMENT
POLICY**

ADOPTED CHESHIRE EAST POLICY SUMMER 2016

HEALTH AND SAFETY



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REVISION TABLE

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2	05/09/11	Minor changes to text

1 INTRODUCTION

Cheshire East Council is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of employees and will seek to identify and reduce workplace stressors.

2 DEFINITIONS

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

Stress is not considered to be a disease or diagnosable illness. It is a response to being under pressure which is perceived to be excessive, and it affects behaviour, emotions, thinking and actions. Stress affects everybody differently.

It must be recognised that too much stress can lead to physical and mental fatigue, with a consequential reduction in an employee’s immunity that can result in illness.

3 POLICY

Cheshire East Council will:

- Identify workplace stressors and include these in general risk assessments. Where appropriate, specific stress risk assessments will be undertaken to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. All risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.
- Consult with Trade Union Safety Representatives on all proposed actions relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- Provide training for all Managers and Supervisory staff in good management practices.
- Provide confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.
- Provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the recommendations of any stress risk assessment conducted in line with the Council’s stress management strategy.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers

- To conduct and implement recommendations of risk assessments within their jurisdiction.

- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking.
- Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Attend training in good management practice and health and safety, as appropriate.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

Occupational Health

- Train and support managers in carrying out stress risk assessments and implementing the required actions.
- Support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise their management on a planned return to work.
- Refer to workplace counsellors or specialist agencies as required.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.
- Inform the employer and the health and safety committee of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

Human Resources

- Give guidance to managers on the content and implementation of the stress policy.
- Help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Advise managers and individuals on training requirements.
- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to occupational workplace counsellors where appropriate.

Employees

- Raise issues of concern with Line Manager, *Human Resources*, Occupational Health or Safety Representative as appropriate.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.
- To work positively with management; to co-operate with their Managers, Human Resources and Occupational Health to seek out solutions to work related issues of concern.

5 STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT

The factors that place employees at risk of developing stress should be assessed in the same way as any other hazard found in the workplace and can be included as part of general task/job risk assessments. Managers are only required to assess those hazards which are found in work. They are not obliged to make searching enquiries of employees as to the causes of any non-work stress.

Where work-place stressors are identified, these should be avoided where possible, but where this is not possible, the risk should be reduced as far as is reasonably practicable.

Jobs are not expected to be stress risk assessed, because no job should itself be inherently stressful. However each job/task general risk assessment should cover suitable controls if there are inherent hazards likely to cause additional stress i.e. working with violent or aggressive people.

The interaction of a person with their job, and how the individual perceives this interaction, can result in stress. A job may be stressful for one person, but not another, so the key is matching the individual to the job.

Where stress manifests itself amongst a group of employees' managers may wish to assess for stress, the common tasks undertaken by a group of employees using the Departmental Stress Risk Assessment. Whilst the Individual Stress Risk Assessment will be used in the case of an individual employee showing undue signs of stress, whilst at work.

There are five steps, which may be used in a formal stress risk assessment, and these are as follows:-

- Identify if there is a problem.
- Identify who may be harmed and how.
- Evaluate the risk.
- Record findings.
- Review and revise.

An Individual Stress Risk Assessment may be conducted as stand alone assessment following a referral from occupational health or incorporated into an existing procedure e.g.: return to work interview, supervision interview, staff appraisal etc.

To assist the Managers to undertake Stress Risk Assessments proforma's have been developed and can be found at Appendix 4 - Departmental Stress Risk Assessment and Appendix 5 - Individual Stress Risk Assessment. The risk assessment forms are based on the HSE six stressors and the Manager should answer yes, no or unsure for each question. The Manager in consultation with the employee(s) should then identify what action will be taken, by whom and by when, in order to resolve the issues identified.

6 TRAINING

Human Resources and the Corporate Health and Safety Team/Occupational Health will arrange training for Managers on recognising the signs and symptoms of stress within their teams, and how to carry out a stress risk assessment, where necessary.

Stress Awareness Sessions / Managing Personal Stress Sessions should also be held as appropriate for employees, which covers how to identify and manage personal/work stress.

Additionally Cheshire East Council may commission specialist training via Occupational Health where required.

7 REFERENCES

In compiling this policy, the following documents have been referred to:

- HSE Guidance Note – HSG65
- HSE Guidance Note – HSE INDG163 – Five Steps To A Risk Assessments
- HSE Guidance Note – HSG 218 - Tackling Work Related Stress
- HSE Information Leaflet. - Working Together To Reduce Stress At Work – A Guide For Employees
- HSE Information Leaflet – Tackling Stress: The Management Standards Approach
- HSE Information Leaflet - Real Solutions Real People

8 EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This document shall be monitored, and reviewed biennially (or more frequently as necessary) to evaluate its effectiveness. The review will ensure that the documents comply with statutory requirements and corporate policy. After this review, the document's issue and next review dates will be amended.

APPENDIX ONE – SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Possible Signs and Symptoms of Stress.			
PHYSICAL	MENTAL	BEHAVIOURAL	EMOTIONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headaches/Migraines/ Dizziness/Blurred Vision • Tearfulness • Gastrointestinal e.g. Constipation, Diarrhoea, Indigestion, Nausea. • Unexplained weight gain or loss • Back Pain – aching neck and shoulders • Chest pain – palpitations, breathlessness • Edginess/inability to relax • Depressed immune system e.g. frequent infections, allergies, and recurrence of previous infections. • Skin rashes • Tiredness • Alteration of the menstrual pattern in women. • Raised heart rate • Increased sweating • Fainting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in concentrating. • Poor memory. • Persistent negative thoughts. • Excessive worry. • Making mistakes. • Inability to make decisions and hasty decisions. • Diminished or exaggerated fantasy life. • Lack of attention to detail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsociable and anti-social behaviour. • More accident-prone. • Erratic behaviour and driving. • Covering up mistakes by lying. • Poor appearance. • Reduced reaction times. • Eating disorders. • Excessive smoking/ drinking. Use of drugs. • Reduced work productivity. • Taking work home/ working longer hours. • Difficulty in sleeping/ Change in sleep pattern. • Inability to deal with normal everyday tasks. • Too busy to relax. • Weepiness. • Loss of interest in sex. • Withdrawal from supportive relationships. • Impaired speech • Nervous laughter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low mood state. • Irritable. • Mood swings. • Lack of motivation and enthusiasm. • Reduced self-esteem. • Feelings of futility, cynicism, suspicion and alienation. • Loss of confidence. • Anxiety. • Worrying more. • Feeling of helplessness. • Lack of concentration. • Withdrawal into daydreams. • Feeling tense. • Depression or general unhappiness.

APPENDIX TWO – CAUSES OF STRESS

Possible Causes of Stress.	
WORK RELATED	NON-WORK RELATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsibility.• Work Load• Conflict/Relationships with Colleagues.• Career Development.• Job Threat/Security.• Organisational Culture.• Organisational Structure.• Organisational Change.• Job Change/Redeployment.• Morale.• Autonomy over work.• Participation.• Harassment and Bullying.• Violence/Verbal Abuse• Ambiguity of job role.• Shift Work.• Poor Working Environment.• Excessive Working Hours.• Lone Working.• Discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Stability.• Caring Responsibilities.• Death of Close Relative/Partner/Friend.• Relationship Breakdown.• Moving House.• Family Problems.• Alcohol or Substance Misuse.• Domestic Violence.

APPENDIX THREE – FIVE STEPS TO A RISK ASSESSMENT

STEP 1 – IDENTIFY THE HAZARDS.

According to the Health and Safety Executive's commissioned research, major causes of stress can be categorised into six key areas –

- Demands
- Control
- Support
- Relationships
- Role
- Change

The rationale being that if these are not managed effectively in an organization, then staff are at risk of suffering from work-related stress.

It is therefore important that all employees are familiar with and understand these stressors.

Most of the arrangements that will assist Managers to identify, control and manage workplace stressors, should already be in place these should include:

- Induction programmes
- Informal discussions between managers and staff.
- Regular team meeting – such as team briefing sessions.
- Staff appraisal and/or supervision sessions.
- Performance measures e.g. an employee performing below expectations.
- Training and development.
- General Risk Assessments.
- Sickness absence monitoring.
- Return to work interviews.
- Exit interviews and staff turn-over rates.

Managers may find from using the above methods that they can determine if there is a problem before or as it becomes apparent.

STEP TWO – IDENTIFY WHO MAY BE HARMED AND HOW.

No employee is immune from work-related stress (pressure) and no job is stress-free (pressure-free), however some individuals may be more vulnerable at certain times when they are facing other stressors, which may or may not be work-related.

Exposure to the stressors identified in step one may create a risk when the pressure from one or more stressor exceeds the individual's ability to cope. Other factors may lead to increased vulnerability, such as wider organisational change or restructuring, or personal issues such as bereavement, relationship breakdown, health issues etc.

STEP THREE – EVALUATE THE RISK.

Each of the potential key areas or stressors identified in step one should now be evaluated by determining:

- Whether there are preventative measures already in place to control the risk.
- Whether these are sufficient to control the risk to an acceptable level.
- If the risks are still too high, what more can be done to reduce the risks to an acceptable level.

As outlined in step one, some of the issues that may require consideration are as follows:

- Demands: Workload (too much or too little), work patterns, and the work environment and including guidance on what should be happening.
- Control: Lack of control over the job, including responsibility, ability to delegate and development of decision making.
- Support: From line management and colleagues – a sense of belonging within the Council as a whole, employees new to the role and issues relating to individual strengths, team-working and work-life balance.
- Relationships: Conflict within teams and across departments, bullying and harassment, systems for responding to any individual concerns. Does the council promotes positive behaviors and ensures fairness?
- Role: Employees understand what is expected of them and how their role fits in with other colleagues. Realistic goals, targets and clear objectives in line with the authorities' aims and objectives.
- Change: Change and how it is managed and communicated through the Council.

STEP FOUR – RECORD YOUR FINDINGS.

Work with employees to decide on improvement targets and actions. Develop action plans in consultation with employees and their representatives. The record may be on paper or stored electronically, but must be retrievable and available for inspection. It must be remembered though that confidentiality of individual details must be respected. Risk assessment templates are available (Appendix 4 and Appendix 5).

STEP FIVE – REVIEW AND REVISE.

Risk assessments must be reviewed when circumstances change or if there is other evidence that the assessment is no longer valid. It will depend upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the controls in place, and should be reactive to any changes in relation to the factors involved, such as changes in the duties attached to the post, a different post holder or other changes that may have an impact.

Although the risk assessment process takes a collective, proactive approach, individual differences and problems will exist. Managers therefore need to develop rapport with staff through regular meetings and informal chats. They need to be familiar with where to go for help and what to do to help an individual if the need arises. Employees also need to be encouraged to raise concerns and need to be informed of where they can go for help.

APPENDIX FOUR – DEPARTMENTAL STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Name of assessor:	Position of assessor:
Department:	Job title:
Date of assessment:	Review date:

Key Area / Stressor		Sample Occupational Hazards (Generic List of Stressors)	Agree	Disagree	Un-sure	Required action / comments	By Who	By When	Done ✓
Support -	1	Is sickness absence monitored for signs of stress related illness?							
	2	Is annual leave monitored to ensure that staff take their entitlement?							
	3	Are staff discouraged from working excessive hours?							
	4	Are reports of stress taken seriously and action taken?							
	5	Are there good communication channels set up so that staff are kept well informed?							
	6	Is there a feedback process in place for staff comments and/or complaints?							
	7	Do informal discussion between Managers and Staff take place?							
	8	Are staff aware of the services of Occupational Health Unit?							
	9	Is there a process for analysing skills and competence?							
	10	Do staff undertake stress awareness training?							
Demands	11	Does the recruitment process correctly match skills, and ability to the job?							
	12	Is the allocation of work and duties monitored?							
	13	Is induction and job change training given?							

	14	Are working hours agreed on recruitment?							
	15	Do staff understand the reasons for temporary increases in work?							
	16	Is there a monitoring system for working environment factors? (noise, vibration, ventilation, humidity etc.)							
	17	Are there adequate resources to do the required work?							
	18	Is sufficient, suitable equipment available for all jobs?							
Control -	19	Is a job design process, including evaluation, followed for new jobs?							
	20	Are the Working Time Regulations complied with and work patterns controlled?							
	21	Where possible do staff get an opportunity to plan their own work?							
	22	Are staff involved in the Generic Risk Assessment process to highlight any stressors involved in the task?							
	23	Is there an element of flexibility in duty allocation and hours of work?							
	24	Is there a leadership feedback process?							
	25	Do management and staff get together regularly to make decisions on how work problems should be tackled?							
Change -	26	Are staff consulted and involved in changes that may affect them?							
	27	Is 'change' risk assessed in terms of the impact on health and safety?							
Relations hips -	28	Are staff aware of the policy on bullying / harassment?							
	29	Are staff aware of the drug / alcohol							

		policy?							
	30	Is the equal opportunities policy complied with?							
	31	Is the attendance procedure used correctly?							
Role -	32	Do all staff have clear job descriptions?							
	33	Is the staff appraisal process followed correctly?							
	34	Is there a process for analysing skills and competence?							
	35	Is the correct training available for all jobs?							
	36	Has the process for training and career development been explained to staff?							
	37	Is there a process for transfers and/or promotions?							

Factors ticked as 'disagree' or 'unsure' must now have an action to address them.

Signed:

Date:

APPENDIX FIVE – INDIVIDUAL STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Name of assessor:	Position of assessor:
Name of employee at risk:	Job title:
Date of assessment:	Review date:

Key Area / Stressor		Sample Occupational Hazards (Generic List of Stressors)	Agree	Disagree	Un-sure	Required action / comments	By Who	By When	Done ✓
Demands –	1	Different groups at work demand things from me, which are hard to combine							
	2	I have unachievable deadlines							
	3	I have to work very intensively							
	4	I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do							
	5	I am unable to take sufficient breaks							
	6	I am pressured to work long hours							
	7	I have to work very fast							
	8	I have unrealistic time pressures							
	9	I don't feel challenged by the work I do							
	10	My skills and abilities are not matched to my role							
	11	I am not encouraged to use my initiative							
	12	I don't have sufficient resources for							

		the workload							
	13	I work in a hazardous physical environment							
	14	The allocation of work is not monitored by my Manager							
	15	I have not received induction and job specific training							
	16	My working hours were not agreed on recruitment							
	17	I do not understand the reasons for temporary increases in work							
	18	There are problems with my working environment (noise, vibration, ventilation, humidity etc)							
Control –	19	I don't have control over the pace of my work							
	20	I cannot choose what I do at work							
	21	I cannot choose how I do my work							
	22	I cannot choose when I take a break							
	23	I don't have control over the way I work							
	24	I cannot delegate tasks							
Change –	25	When changes are made at work I am unclear as to how they will work out in practice							
	26	I have not been consulted about changes, which will affect my work							
	27	I don't have sufficient opportunity to question Managers about changes at work							

	28	I don't know how to raise my concerns about change							
	29	I am not aware of the timetable for changes, which are taking place							
Support –	30	If my work gets difficult I don't know who to ask for help							
	31	I don't receive constructive feedback on the work that I do							
	32	I don't feel I can rely on my Line Manager to help me with a work problem							
	33	I don't receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues							
	34	I don't feel able to talk to my Manager about something that has upset me at work							
	35	My colleagues are not willing to listen to my work related problems							
	36	I don't feel able to talk to my Manager, if I have a problem at work							
	37	I don't feel able to talk to my colleagues if I have a problem at work							
	38	I don't feel supported through emotionally demanding work							
	39	I feel isolated / lonely at work							
	40	I don't feel appropriately trained for my role							
	41	My individual work preferences are not supported							
Relationships	42	I am subject to bullying							
	43	I am subject to unacceptable behaviours at work e.g. abusive							

		languages, threats of violence							
	44	I am subject to harassment attributed to gender, race, colour, religion, ethnic origin or disability							
	45	I don't know how to report bullying and harassment							
	46	Relationships at work are strained							
	47	There is friction / anger between colleagues in the team							
	48	I don't feel able to resolve conflict situations when they arise							
	49	My relationships at work are inhibited by working alone							
Role –	50	I am unclear what is expected of me at work							
	51	I am unsure how to go about getting my job done							
	52	I am unclear what my duties and responsibilities are							
	53	I am unsure about the goals and objectives for my department							
	54	I don't understand how my work fits into the overall aims of the Council							
	55	I have not had an appraisal / review in the last 12 months							
	56	I do not have a job description							
Additional factors particularly relevant to the individual's situation	57	Ill health is affecting my capacity to work							
	58	I am (or have previously) suffered from stress related illness							
	59	I do not take my annual leave entitlement							

60	If you report that you are suffering from stress, is action taken?							
61	I represent a minority (ethnic, gender, sexual orientation)							
62	Current life events are affecting my ability to function							
63	I have a lack of social support outside of work							
64	I am not aware of the feedback process in place for your comments and / or complaints							
65	I am not aware of the process for transfer or promotion							
66	I am not aware of the services of the Occupational Health Unit							

Factors ticked as 'agree' or 'unsure' must now have an action to address them.

Signed:

Date: