Managing Stress Policy

Report by the Director for Digital & Resources

1.0   Summary

1.1   This report seeks approval of the Adur & Worthing Councils Managing Stress Policy.

1.2   The proposed new Adur and Worthing Councils Managing Stress Policy is attached as Appendix 1, and would replace the current Adur and Worthing Councils Stress Policy (Appendix 2).

2.0   Background

2.1   The current Stress Policy was agreed in January 2015.

2.2   The organisation is currently reviewing all the HR policies and this policy has been reviewed as part of Phase 2 of that policy review project.

2.3   Whilst there is no specific legislative requirement to have a policy that deals with stress, the Councils recognise their duty to take reasonable care to ensure health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised. The Councils take their duty of care towards staff seriously.

2.3   The policy applies to all staff at Adur and Worthing Councils.

3.0   Proposals

3.1   The aim of the policy review is to simplify the policies, to make them more user friendly and to back them up with a management toolkit, which will include guidelines, process flowcharts and templates for the managers.

3.2   The changes to the policy and the rationale for those changes are detailed in Appendix 3.

4.0   Legal

4.1   As mentioned above, although there is no legal duty to have a policy on managing stress, the Councils have various legal duties that are relevant in relation to stress at work. A main duty is to take reasonable care for the safety of Council staff. This includes the duty to ensure that health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands. This policy takes account of our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1998 and Equality Act 2010.

4.2   The Managing Stress Policy will not be classed as a contractual policy and therefore does not form part of the terms and conditions of employment.

5.0   Financial implications

5.1   There are no direct financial implications arising from the policy.

6.0   Recommendation

6.1   The Joint Staff Committee is recommended to approve the Managing Stress Policy, with an implementation date of 1st April 2019

Local Government Act 1972
Background Papers:

The Leave Policy within the Adur and Worthing Councils current Worklife Balance Policy is available at Stress Policy

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Schedule of Other Matters

1.0 Council Priority

1.1 The Councils priority is to promote metnal wellbeing and control mental health hazards, such as stress in the workplace.

2.0 Specific Action Plans

2.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

3.0 Sustainability Issues

3.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

4.0 Equality Issues

4.1 The Equality Impact Assessment for the policy is attached as Appendix 4.

5.0 Community Safety Issues (Section 17)

5.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

6.0 Human Rights Issues

6.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

7.0 Reputation

7.1 Failure to have an agreed consistent approach to managing stress could result in negative reputational damage to the Councils.

8.0 Consultations

8.1 Unison have been consulted with and have agreed the policy.

9.0 Risk Assessment

9.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

10.0 Health & Safety Issues

10.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

11.0 Procurement Strategy

11.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

12.0 Partnership Working

12.1 Matter considered and no issues identified.

Managing Stress

1.0   Overview

1.1   This policy applies to all staff at Adur and Worthing Councils and outlines the Councils approach to managing stress in the workplace.

1.2   The Councils recognise that, whilst a degree of pressure can be positive, a natural reaction to excessive pressure can result in stress impacting on health and performance at work. The Councils are committed to promoting good health and wellbeing at work, provide training and support to help managers recognise risks in the workplace and seek to put in place support mechanisms as far as reasonably practical to prevent or reduce stress.

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

The Council commits to:

- Ensure employee workload is in line with grade and job description
- Provide training to ensure employees can confidently fulfil their roles to the required standard
- Provide necessary tools / equipment to enable employees to fulfil their roles
- Hold one to ones in line with the Ways for Working charter to check in with employee wellbeing and ensure appropriate time is given to discuss workload and health
- Promote a culture of open communication, participation and encouragement. Through training, effective planning and allocation of workloads and ensuring feedback is provided on performance, we want staff to develop their skills and confidence and to feel able to raise any concerns they have about their work or working environment.
- Use staff development, staff support systems and policies reflecting current good practice to help staff understand and recognise the causes of stress and to address work-related stress and the impact of external stressors at work.

- Address violence, aggression and other forms of inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action.
- Ensure risk assessments include or specifically address workplace stress.
- Maintain an appraisal process to ensure the suitability of workloads, supported by a capability procedure.
- Facilitate requests for flexible working where reasonably practicable in accordance with our Flexible Working Policy.
- Follow comprehensive change management procedures.
- Provide support services such as occupational health or confidential counselling for staff affected by or absent by reason of stress.

1.4   All staff have the responsibility for adhering to this policy. Individual areas of responsibility are:

- **Chief Executive -** duty to promote and support Health and Wellbeing within the Councils
- **Corporate Leadership Team** – overall responsibility for publishing and promoting the adoption of this policy across the Councils and ensuring that stress management is managed appropriately in accordance with the agreed policy to ensure staff wellbeing.
- **HR team -** to review this policy and ensure it is effective, monitoring and reporting on stress and well being initiatives and advising managers on the interpretation and consistent application of the policy and on best practice.
- **Managers –** the day-to-day management of working arrangements, proactively and reactively addressing any signs of stress ensuring a duty of care in line with legal obligations and ensuring compliance with this policy.
- **Employees -** familiarising themselves with this policy and raising any personal concerns to management or mental health first aider if experiencing any signs of stress.

1.5   Managers and staff are encouraged to identify and deal with stress. However, there will be times when some employees require professional help. In this case, the Councils have a confidential employee assistance programme which provides trained counsellors to support and assist staff, as well as an occupational health service provision.

1.6   The Councils acknowledge that stress can be experienced by any member of staff and encourage staff to seek help. Seeking support and help is seen as a strength.

2.0   Defining Stress

2.1   The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines Stress as follows, "the adverse reaction people
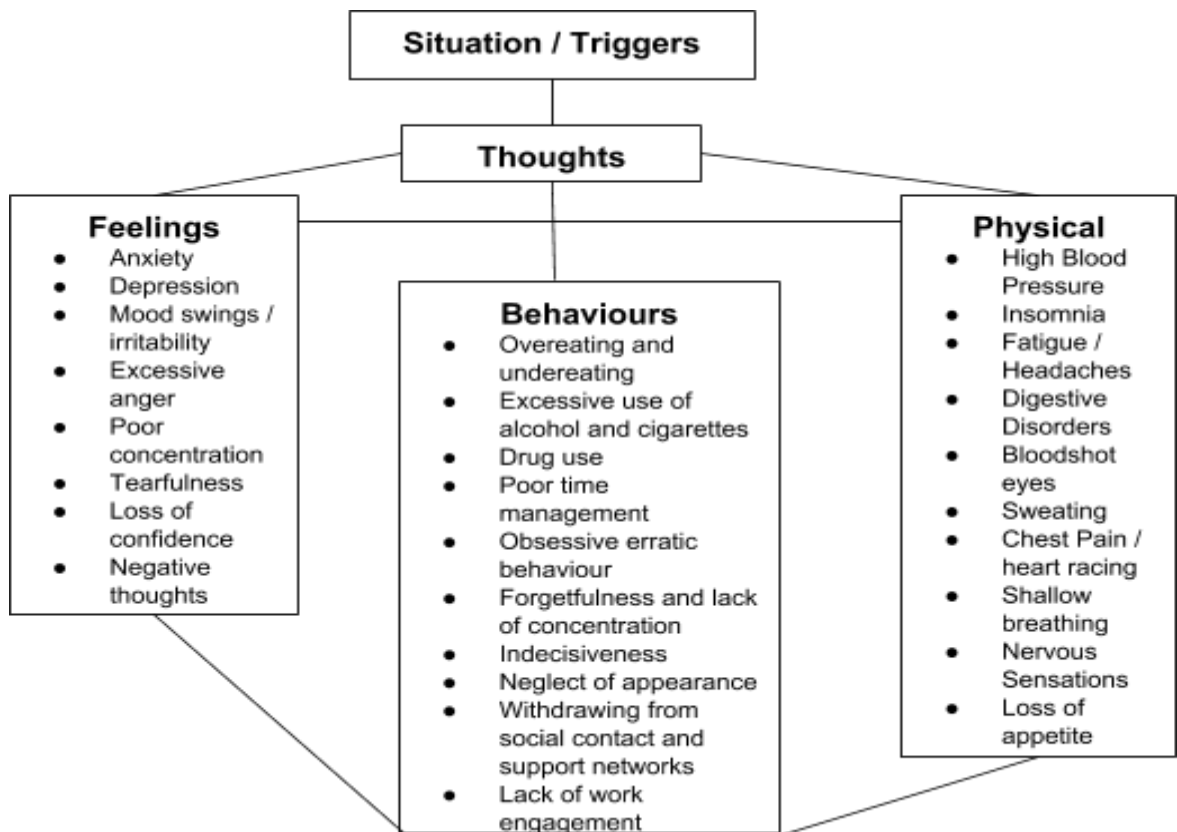have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) states that "people become stressed when they feel they don't have the resources they need (whether material, financial or emotional) to cope with these demands." This can occur where workloads are deemed too big or too little or where conflicting requests lead to uncertainty with the job role, amongst other factors.

2.2   Stress is not an illness it is a state. However, if stress becomes too excessive and prolonged, mental and physical illness may develop and any absence from work will need to be managed according to the sickness management policy. What causes stress for someone may not cause stress for another.

3.0   Spotting signs and symptoms of stress

3.1   Stress can manifest itself in many ways. These are referred to as stressors. Stress in a workplace can impact attendance, performance, staff retention and morale amongst other things. As a result stress can also result in increased incidents or accidents in the workplace.

3.2   There are symptoms and signs which everyone can look out for. The below diagram highlights some signs or symptoms of stress which are divided into thoughts, feelings, physical symptoms and behaviours all of which can be produced by thoughts about a situation/trigger. Where stress is caused by a combination of home and work stress this can be the most harmful.

3.3   Managers and staff should look out for signs and symptoms, which may be linked to excessive pressure. Through ensuring regular one to ones and involving staff, managers should work more effectively in reducing stress within their teams.

3.4   Upon becoming aware of a staff member suffering from stress, managers should ensure all reasonable steps are taken to help the member of staff (see section 4.3 for details of the support available to managers).

3.5   Additionally, where an increased workload or changes are foreseen such as team members leaving, managers should put in place measures to help prevent against stress and support their members of staff.

4.0   Preventative measures to reduce stress

4.1   The Councils are committed to ensuring as far as possible that stress is prevented and/or reduced in the workplace and are committed to developing a culture of supporting each other through the provision of the following support for staff:

- A health check upon commencing with the Council or into a new role (where applicable)
- A recognised occupational health service which can include access to medical reports for clinical and professional advice
- Regular one-to-ones between staff and their line manager including health and wellbeing check-ins
- Stress risk assessments to help manage stressors (see section 6.0)
- Reasonable adjustments were possible and applicable as under the Equality Act 2010
- A Flexible Working Policy
- Staff training and development opportunities
- The opportunity to receive coaching from an accredited coach (based in the workplace) to explore how to better deal with stress at work (more details available on the intranet)
- Recognised Trade Union for collective negotiation and representatives to support members along with a Unison welfare offer for members
- Mental health first aiders in the workplace

4.2   In addition the Councils offer and promote several wellbeing initiatives which seek to help prevent against stress and include a range of activities and support facilities to help staff work to a good work life balance, including:
- Adur and Worthing Wellbeing initiatives - **http://awintranet/my-job-and-me/health-and-wellbeing/**
- Benefits of working for Adur and Worthing Councils **- http://awintranet/our-organisation/services/human-resources/benefits/**

4.3   Additionally, there is support available for managers with staff wellbeing concerns, including:
- Human Resources Business Partners who can give policy advice
- Health Surveillance Assessments to ensure fitness to work in specific roles e.g. waste management
- Available guidance to Managers in handling any situations relating to stress, anxiety or depression in their teams

- Management training and development and a management tool kit available on the intranet
- Sickness management policy
- An Induction process to support new staff
- NEBOSH award aimed at managers which focuses on H&S risk assessments

4.4   Managing stress is the responsibility of all of our staff. This includes the responsibility of employees to speak to their manager at the point where stress is impacting on them or a colleague and being realistic about what can be achieved in the working day. This may involve seeking help with prioritising if needed and supporting colleagues.

5.0   Organisational change and staff wellbeing

5.1   The Councils recognise that organisational change and restructures can be difficult. Staff are encouraged to participate in any consultation to share their views, and managers have a duty to ensure they communicate regularly to all affected staff during this process. More information can be found in the Managing People Change Policy available on the intranet.

6.0   Stress risk assessments and resolving stress

6.1   The best way for reducing the impact of stress is talking about it as soon as the impact of stress is being felt. Individuals are encouraged to talk to their manager to indicate that they are experiencing undue stress so that a timely assessment and action plan can be developed. (If individuals feel unable to talk to their line manager, a colleague, alternative Manager or mental health first aider.)

6.2   Stress risk assessments will be conducted by line managers for all workplace related stress absences and should also be considered for personal related stress. Details of how to undertake these can be found in the guidelines available on the intranet. Managers can get support from their HR Business Partner if needed.

6.3   The stress action plan is the dual responsibility of the member of staff and manager. In working together, actions from the stress risk assessment should be allocated to both parties In working towards a solution.

6.4   Addressing the cause of stress and considering actions to reduce this are the key focus of the risk assessment. Collaboration is key and managers should reserve judgement over the reasons or rationale for how the stress has manifested itself.

6.5   Where a stress risk assessment is needed and it may not be appropriate for the manager to conduct the assessment another manager or Health and Safety Officer will conduct the risk assessment.

6.6   If a member of staff is not able to switch off from work and it is impacting their health, the Manager may restrict usage of email accounts as a duty of care measure to ensure the staff member takes time off both physically and mentally from the job role.

6.7 It may be appropriate for the following steps to be taken to address the issue:

   a) A workload review, reallocation of work, monitoring of future workload or possible redeployment. Our Performance Support policy may be applied.
   b) Where appropriate, investigation under our Disciplinary or Grievance Procedures.
   c) Referral for medical advice and/or a report from Occupational Health.
   d) If you are on sickness absence, discussion of an appropriate return to work programme. Our Sickness Management Policy may be applied.
   e) If you are absent due to stress you should follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained in our Sickness Management Policy.
   f) In the case of prolonged or repeated absence the procedure set out in our Sickness Management Policy and/or Performance Support will apply.

7.0 Stress Assessments

7.1 The Councils may carry out stress risk assessments in relation to work related stress in order to assess the health of the organisation.

8.0 Personal Stress

8.1 It is not always possible to stop pressures from personal lives affecting work. There maybe occasions when stress from personal lives manifest in the workplace.

8.2 Managers could have a supportive role where staff are finding work difficult. This may involve

allowing time out of work, providing temporary flexibility to working hours, referring to the employee assistance programme or occupational health for support.

8.3 Where work is being impacted by personal stress the Manager may decide it is appropriate to undertake a stress risk assessment.

8.4 The Stress Risk Assessment is available on the intranet and in the place of work.

9.0 Other relevant policies

9.1 Members of staff may wish to refer to the following policies that offer guidance and may reduce stress:
   - Ways of Working Policy
   - Flexible working (seeking to support work life balance)
   - Leave policy
   - Sickness Management
   - Drug, Alcohol & Smoking policy
   - Health and Safety policy
   - Email and internet usage
   - Grievance policy

- Volunteering policy
- Performance Support
- Disciplinary policy

10.0 Monitoring and Review

10.1   This policy will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by the Human Resources team. This policy does not form part of any individual's contract of employment.

Date agreed by Joint Staff Committee:
Date policy formally adopted:
Date for review: 3 years from formal adoption of policy (date)

Adur District Council
Worthing Borough Council

Stress Policy

Lesley Dexter Senior Corporate Safety Officer

Reviewed & Amended: January 2015

Contact: Human Resources Team

The Councils recognise that, whilst a degree of stress can be a positive force at work, excessive pressures can have a negative effect on health and on performance at work. The Councils are committed to promoting good health at work; they are therefore concerned to recognise any negative effects that stress may have on individual members of staff, and to provide suitable support mechanisms for members of staff suffering from the negative effects of stress.

Through the risk assessment process, the Councils will continue to identify hazards and assess all mental and physical risks to health and safety with the objective of reducing them, as far as is reasonably practicable.

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.

Summary

The Councils will:

- ensure, as far as possible, that excessive stress is eliminated from the work environment
- provide suitable support mechanisms for members of staff suffering   from the negative effects of stress
- provide training and guidance for all staff as appropriate
- to monitor sickness absence caused by stress

1.   Legislation

1.1   Whilst there is no specific requirement in legislation to control psychosocial hazards such as stress in the workplace, Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council have a general duty of care towards employees under the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974. The general duty of care is fully expressed in s.2(1) and s.53 defines "personal injury" as any disease or any impairment of a person's physical or mental condition. This implies that the control of working conditions likely to result in mental stress is included in the employer's duty of care.

1.2   This position is reinforced by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR); these require every employer to make an assessment of the risks to health and safety of their employees arising from activities associated with hazards. Some work characteristics may, in some circumstances, constitute psychosocial hazards, which represent a risk to the mental health of employees. Regulation 5 states that the employer should provide appropriate health surveillance cover. It can be argued that health surveillance for an

employee with an accepted work-related illness would, on return to employment, require support and risk assessment of work demands.

1.3 The occupational health principles to be applied are set out in the Approved Code of Practice to the MHSWR and include adapting work to the individual, especially as regards the design of workplaces, the choice of work equipment and the choice of working and production methods.

The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 set general standards for the workplace. Compliance with the standards will help reduce risks created by the general working conditions and improve the workplace environment. Under the Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992, annex B of the guidance note refers to fatigue and stress as health hazards.

2. Arrangements for Securing the Health and Safety of Workers

2.1 The Councils acknowledge that stress in the workplace can be caused by any combination of a number of quite diverse factors, such as:

(a) **Demands**
The Council will:
provide employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work;
ensure skills and abilities are matched to the job demands and provide a process where concerns about their work environment are addressed.

(b) **Control**
The Council will:
encourage employees to develop their skills;
encourage employees to have a say over when breaks can be taken;
consult employees over their work patterns, as far as possible.

(c) **Support**
The council will:
have policies and procedures in place, as far as possible, to adequately support employees;
have systems in place, as far as possible, to enable and encourage managers to support their staff
have systems in place, as far as possible, to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;

(d) **Relationships**
The council will:
have agreed policies and procedures in place to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour;
have systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
have systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

(d) **Role**

The council will:
provide information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;
ensure that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear;
ensure that as far as possible, systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

(e) **Change**
The council will:
provide employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for any proposed changes;
ensure that employees are aware of timetables for changes;
ensure that employees have access to relevant support during changes.

2.2 The Councils also recognise that there may be problems outside the workplace that will cause an individual member of staff to suffer from the negative effects of stress, and that these may affect an individual's health and performance within work. In this situation undue negative stress may occur as a result of work-related and non work-related factors.

2.3 The Councils recognises that stress may trigger other forms of sickness absence.

(a) ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that excessive stress is eliminated from the work environment, and that where appropriate risk assessments are completed and acted upon in the case of workplace stressors

(b) provide suitable support mechanisms for members of staff suffering from the negative effects of stress

(c) encourage a working environment where members of staff who feel they are suffering from the negative effects of stress can approach their managers in confidence, in order that necessary support mechanisms (refer to paragraph i), can be put in place.

(d) encourage a culture where stress is not seen as a sign of weakness or incompetence

(e) ensure adequate rehabilitation of employees returning to work after periods of absence

(f) provide suitable training and guidance for line managers to enable them to recognise symptoms of negative stress in their staff and themselves

(g) provide suitable training and guidance to line managers to enable them to undertake risk assessments in relation to stress in the workplace, and to arrange for implementation of effective control measures where appropriate

(h) provide information and training for staff in general on the effects of stress at work, effective communication, handling difficult situations, time management and employee relations

(i) undertake general health promotion activities within the workplace.
Where members of staff are suffering from excessive stress, the Councils will provide the necessary mechanisms to promote a return to

full health as quickly as possible. Members of staff are encouraged to refer themselves to any one of the following:

- Line Manager
- Senior Manager
- Human Resources
- Occupational Health Service
- Employee Counselling Service
- Employee Assistance Programme

It will be the responsibility of all managers to undertake regular support and supervision meetings with their staff to help in identifying and dealing with stress.

All referrals will be dealt with in complete confidence. Members of staff will be offered any relevant counselling, help with stress reduction techniques and a full appraisal of their work situation.

3. Record Keeping

The Councils will ensure that adequate records are kept to demonstrate that they have taken all reasonably practicable steps in respect of stress prevention. This may include records of line managers' meetings with individual employees, use of counselling facilities, stress-related absence and other human resources records as appropriate.
This data will be reviewed to identify possible organisational stressors.

3.1. Risk assessment with particular reference to the environment, work organisation, procedures or processes carried out under regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and detailing actions taken as a result of the assessment, with particular reference to those measures taken to identify and reduce stress.

3.2. Records of training that may include stress awareness, health promotion, management skills and techniques such as time management and communication, etc.

The need for confidentiality should always be taken into consideration.

4. Safe systems of work

The identification and control of possible organisational stress is a multi-faceted task. It can often relate to the way the organisation values and manages people, particularly during times of change. Additionally, unlike many other issues at work, there is an inevitable "cross-over" between home life and the workplace. Stress manifested at work may be caused, wholly or partly, by something happening in the home life, and vice versa. Appreciation of the inevitability of this complex situation is crucial.

In essence there should be a climate in which people have the confidence to seek assistance and discuss their work-related problems. The following procedures will be adopted.

4.1. Develop and promote the requirement to inform, and ensure there is participation in decision-making, and recognition and support for the difficulties encountered in the workplace.

Therefore the culture, the management style and the expectations the Councils have of the employees are worthy of consideration when addressing possible work-related stressors. In practice there are numerous policies, procedures and opportunities that can be identified and promoted as being relevant to the control or reduction of work-related stress, e.g. the human resource policies and systems such as appraisals, training and development; the procedures and systems to identify and manage role ambiguity and boundary conflicts; recognising that isolation by position or the nature of the work are as relevant to stress levels as work load; time pressures and jobs in which there is a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of others.

4.2. Revisit or develop policies regarding discrimination, aggression, bullying and harassment that can cause high levels of work-related stress. Creating a climate that provides employees with the confidence to report such incidents must then support this, and once reported to ensure there is a system for fast and adequate management of the situation.

4.3. Identify and implement training programmes to ensure staff are competent in all aspects of their job, particularly people management and communication skills. The more traditional approach to health and safety is also an element of controlling stress. Therefore ensure the completion of risk assessments and preparation of appropriate safe systems of work to control risk factors intrinsic to the job, such as the physical working conditions, workstation design, computer-based tasks, or exposure to chemical and/or biological hazards.

4.4. Ensure effective consultation regarding the identified risks and hidden factors such as the need for working irregular hours and the requirement to take work home on a regular basis to meet routine work loads.

4.5. Maintain a clear and universal approach to managing attendance at work and to rehabilitating employees back into full and gainful employment.

Appendix 1

Guidance and Procedure Documents

1. Guidelines for Managers – Management of Stress in the Workplace .

2. Stress Risk Assessment Flow Chart

3. Individual Stress Risk Assessment and Action Sheet

Guidelines for Managers

Management of Stress in the Workplace

Lesley Dexter Senior Corporate Safety Officer

Reviewed & Amended: January 2015

Contact: Human Resources Team

<u>Introduction</u>

It is recognised that for a variety of reasons in any work situation, individuals may suffer on occasions from varying levels of stress.

Life at work and/or at home places demands and pressures on everyone. Some jobs and/or domestic circumstances may be potentially more stressful than others. A certain amount of pressure is both desirable and healthy, and will help individuals to remain motivated and perform at their best. However, if these pressures are too great or last too long people can experience the physical and mental reactions commonly known as stress.

The Council, as an employer, has a duty of care towards its employees. There is a greater duty of care to an employee with a pre-existing illness and therefore managers need to be aware of periods of ill health and the impact these may have on our employees' ability to undertake work activities on return to the workplace. For further information please see the Council's policy on Managing Sickness Absence and the necessity of carrying out return to work interviews.

Aims of Guidelines

1.   To acknowledge that the problem of stress can occur at any level in the organisation, not just to senior staff.

2.   To provide guidance to Managers and Supervisors on awareness of and possible actions on stress in the workplace. (Throughout these guidelines the term Manager is used, but refers to any supervisor or line manager)

3.   To help towards identifying and therefore minimising work related stress factors for staff.

4.   To ensure that appropriate action is taken by Managers in consultation with the Human Resources Manager, and the Council's Occupational Health Advisers where appropriate, to address situations in which staff are exposed to excessive stress at work.

Awareness

Employees have different tolerance levels and react in different ways to pressure and problems. For those suffering from stress, their jobs may or may not be the cause but either way their job performance will suffer.

There are a wide range of factors within and outside of the workplace which it is now commonly agreed by health experts can contribute to stress.

These include:

(a)   Demands
(b)   Control
(c)   Support
(d)   Relationships

(e)   Role
(f)   Change.

The council is tackling these six areas in the following ways:

(a)   **Demands**
        The Council will:
        provide employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work;
        ensure skills and abilities are matched to the job demands and provide a process where concerns about their work environment are addressed.

(b)   **Control**
        The Council will:
        encourage employees to develop their skills;
        encourage employees to have a say over when breaks can be taken;
        consult employees over their work patterns, as far as possible.

(f)   **Support**
        The council will:
        have policies and procedures in place, as far as possible, to adequately support employees;
        have systems in place, as far as possible, to enable and encourage managers to support their staff
        have systems in place, as far as possible, to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;

(d)   **Relationships**
        The council will:
        have agreed policies and procedures in place to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour;
        have systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
        have systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

(g)   **Role**
        The council will:
        provide information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;
        ensure that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear;
        ensure that as far as possible, systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

(h)   **Change**
        The council will:
        provide employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for any proposed changes;
        ensure that employees are aware of timetables for changes;
        ensure that employees have access to relevant support during changes.

It is also important to be aware of staff suffering apparently minor ailments who continually 'soldier on' worrying that work will not get done if they take time off, or conversely staff members taking sick leave prior to some particular work task.

Problems which may result are:

Poor Health
Helplessness due to the inability to resolve the issues
Accidents
Loss of Productivity/making mistakes
Lack of Motivation
Increased Absence
Poor working relationships in section

Action for Managers relating to:-

(i) New Staff

Managers should ensure that

- The member of staff is fit for the job through normal health screening procedures, prior to appointment

- Full and proper induction takes place in line with the Council's Induction policy

- Arrangements are made for appropriate on or off the job training to ensure the member of staff has confidence in their ability to carry out their job tasks and responsibilities in line with their job description.

- The probation procedure and the appraisal processes are followed.

- Regular and effective two way communication is initiated in line with the Council's Communication Strategy.

- Staff are offered the opportunity to attend a half day training session covering the recognition and management of individual stress: any additional training to be identified via the appraisal process.

(ii) Existing Staff

Managers should ensure that

- Working arrangements (e.g. workloads, overtime) are reviewed periodically.

- Members of staff are encouraged to be involved in and attend Team Meetings.

- Annual and interim appraisals are carried out and monitored by Heads of Service.

- Training needs are identified via the business planning and appraisal process, and having been agreed and prioritised are met.

- Staff are offered the opportunity to attend a half-day in house course covering the recognition and management of individual stress with any additional training to be identified either via the appraisal process or as circumstances demand.

- Staff are monitored on an ongoing basis as part of the normal working relationship.

(iii) General

Managers Must:

- Ensure that they have attended a one day in-house training course to heighten their awareness of their role and responsibility with regard to recognising stress in their staff and where possible reducing this and follow the guidelines given.

- Increase their awareness of workloads and pressures and an appreciation of how staff are coping; discuss problems as soon as they are apparent. Work targets/key tasks should enable staff to stretch themselves but also be reasonable.

- Where appropriate undertake a risk assessment of activities in jobs under their control. This should identify factors in the job, particularly which are believed to be associated with stress. Any assessment should where possible be followed by actions to remove or reduce stress. Emphasis should be on practical prevention, taking into account the day to day organisation and planning at work.

- Give staff clearly defined tasks and responsibilities and should regularly review Job Descriptions as part of the appraisal process.

- Be aware of and recognise signs of stress.

- It will be the responsibility of all Managers to undertake regular support & supervision meetings with their staff to help identify and deal with stress.

- Undertake sickness absence monitoring, including return to work interviews.

- Encourage the taking of periodic short breaks from monotonous work by doing alternative tasks. This is particularly important for those who spend a large proportion of their day on keyboard work. This aspect should be covered as part of DSE assessments.

- Use team meetings to develop support between colleagues and talk about stress, if appropriate.

- Listen, be sympathetic and receptive and be pro active about problems.

- Don't ignore calls for help; if a problem is identified take steps to deal with it.

- Make use of your Human Resources and Occupational Health support.

- Consider providing additional support, even on a temporary basis, but don't make promises you can't deliver.

- Be aware of working time limits under the Working Time Regulations.

- Keep in touch during stress-related absence by visiting staff at home and encouraging staff to visit the work place.

……….. lead by example.

Individuals Obligations

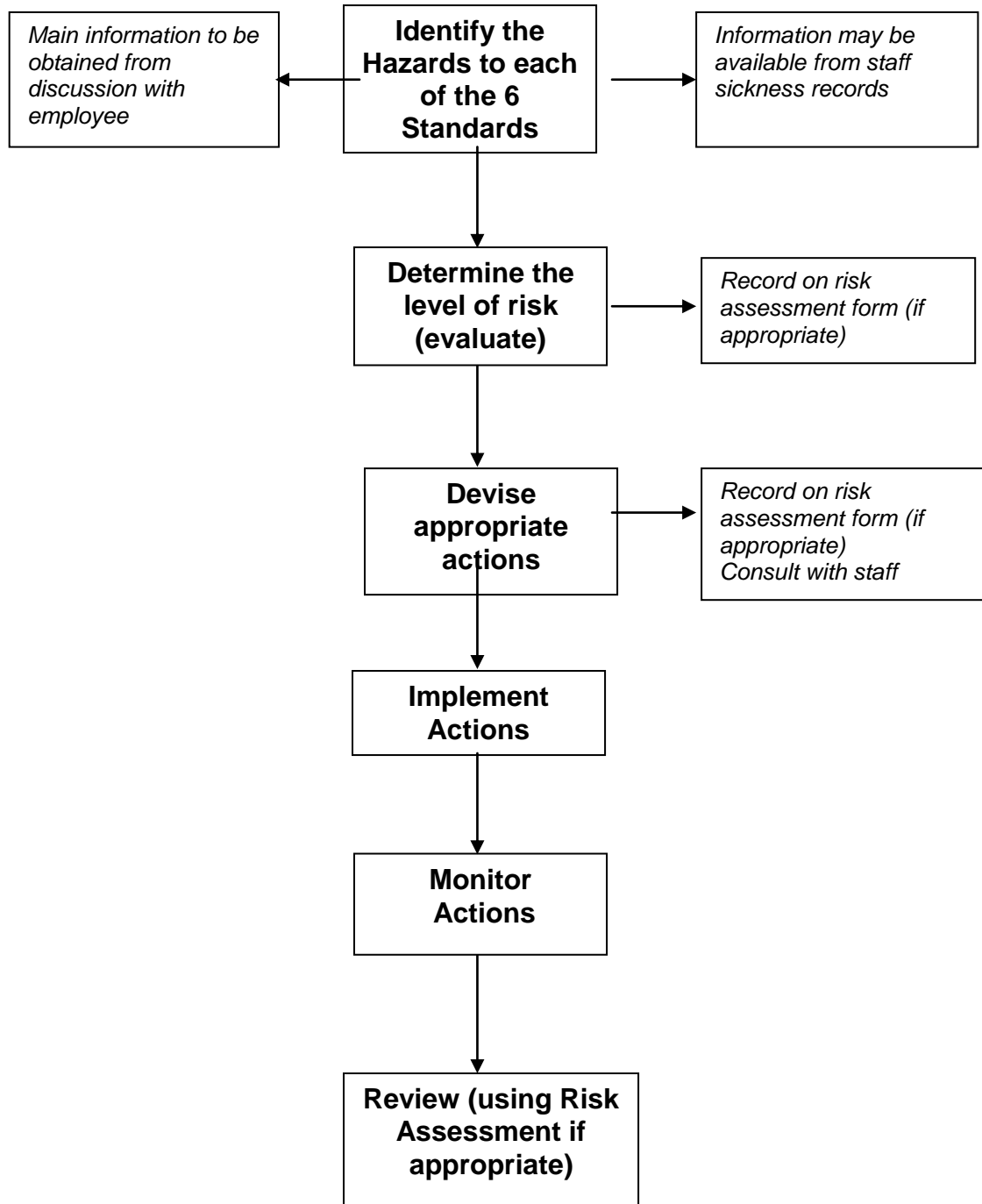Managers should be aware and, where necessary, inform individuals that

- They have both a legal and moral duty to look after their own health and safety and that of their colleagues.

- They have a duty not to put themselves or others at risk through their performance or actions.

- They have a legal duty to co-operate with management in respect of safe systems at work.

- They should discuss any work related issues or concerns with their manager as soon as possible.

Risk Assessments

In order to comply with health and safety legislation employers need to carry out risk assessments where appropriate and to put in place appropriate protective and preventative measures to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health and safety of their employees at work. Risk assessments need to identify activities which are believed to be associated with stress or any group of staff especially at risk. As part of this process staff should receive proper instruction and training and be kept fully informed of health and safety issues which might affect them, and of the steps which they should take to guard against health risks. Further advice on risk assessment procedure is obtainable from Corporate and Public Safety.

January 2015

Stress Risk Assessment
Flow Chart

Main information to be obtained from discussion with employee	←	**Identify the Hazards to each of the 6 Standards**	→	*Information may be available from staff sickness records*

↓

Determine the level of risk (evaluate)	→	*Record on risk assessment form (if appropriate)*

↓

Devise appropriate actions	→	*Record on risk assessment form (if appropriate) Consult with staff*

↓

Implement Actions

↓

Monitor Actions

↓

Review (using Risk Assessment if appropriate)

INDIVIDUAL STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT and ACTION SHEET

Name…………………………………   Job Title of Employee …………………………Section / Department …..................

Length of time in Role……………   Name & Title of Supervisor / Line Manager ……………..…………………………………..

The following table should be completed by the Supervisor / Line Manager together with the employee for Individual Stress Risk Assessments.
The questions are based on the HSE Management Standards and look at the key areas of work that, if properly managed, can help to reduce work related stress.
The scale is 1 to 5. Where 1 = totally **agree** with question and 5 = strongly **disagree** with question

	Question	1	2	3	4	5	Possible Action(s)	Agreed Action(s)
1	**Role :** Are you are clear what is expected within your role.						• Agree duties and responsibilities expected ensuring excessive and unreasonable demands are not made. • Clarify goals and objectives for the individual and department – ensuring no ambiguity. • Provide regular clear feedback on performance.	
	Do you understand your duties and responsibilities.							
	Do you know how to go about getting your job done.							
	Do you know the goals and objectives for the department							
	Question 1. Additional information or comments:							
2	**Control:** Do you have a say in how you do and plan your work						• Where practicable, enable staff to exert autonomy within role. • Encourage delegation and empowerment of others. • Encourage training to support delegation (to individual and team).	
	Can you set your own work speed							
	Can you decide when to take a break							
	Question 2. Additional information or comments:							
	Question	1	2	3	4	5	Possible Action(s)	Agreed Action(s)

3	**Work Pressures – High:** Are your deadlines within roles are achievable							• Offer support in prioritising tasks and cut out unnecessary work and bureaucracy. • Try to give warning of urgent jobs • Assist in the scheduling of work to ensure adequate and appropriate resources. • Ensure job demands are matched in terms of quantity, complexity and intensity to individuals skills and abilities. • Support staff when undertaking new and unfamiliar tasks. Meet regularly to review workload • Avoid encouraging staff to work long hours, take work home or build excessive flexi. • Encourage staff to take annual leave allowance.	
	You are not required to work long hours.								
	Are your time pressures are realistic.								
	Are you are subject to work demands from different groups that are within your capabilities.								
	Question 3. Additional information or comments:								
4	**Work Pressures – Low:** Your work is not boring, monotonous or unchallenging							• Where reasonably practicable, rotate boring and repetitive jobs. • Where possible increase the variety of tasks e.g. through projects, support to colleagues, etc.	
	Question 4. Additional information or comments:								
5	**Relationships at Work:** You are not subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour.							• Where reasonably practicable, rotate boring and repetitive jobs. • Where possible increase the variety of tasks e.g. through projects, support to colleagues, etc. • Promote an atmosphere of mutual respect. • Ensure all staff area aware that inappropriate behaviour at work will not be tolerated. • Refer to the dignity at Work Policy	
	Are relationships at work good								
	There is no friction or anger between colleagues.								

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		1	2	3	4	5		
	You are not subject to bullying.						and attend training to support this policy. • Seek the support of HR if an allegation of harassment or bullying is made.	
	Question 5. Additional information or comments:							

	Question	1	2	3	4	5	Possible Action(s)	Agreed Action(s)
6	**Support:** If work gets difficult are colleagues/manager available to help and support.						• Explain how to raise concerns and call on your support. • Ensure you have attended a Stress Management Workshop Encourage enhance team working / support. • Hold regular team meetings • Be approachable and receptive to feedback.	
	Are you given supportive feedback on the work you do.							
	Question 6. Additional information or comments:							
7	**Change:** Are you consulted / updated about changes at work that affect you.						Ensure clear and appropriate communication on proposed changes. • Ensure individuals understand the reasons for change and the likely timescales. • Ensure adequate consultation wherever possible and provide opportunities for comment and input. • Give support to individuals during the change process.	
	Are you clear about how the change will affect you in practice							
	Is there adequate consultation about issues / changes							
	Question 7. Additional information or comments:							

	Question	1	2	3	4	5	Possible Action(s)	Agreed Action(s)
8	**Training:** You do not require additional training to undertake your role						• Provide training as required. • Ensure Staff Development and Appraisal is implemented. • Ensure and changes to role are supported with relevant training.	
	Question 8. Additional information or comments:							
9	**Physical Demands and Work Environment** Your role does not involve excessive physical demands such as heavy lifting; standing for long periods or time; repetitive movements that are causing concern.						• Undertake a H&S Risk Assessment. • Where appropriate refer to Occupational Health for advice. • Encourage suggestions on how to improve work environment – and give these due consideration. • Manage risks with the support of the Occupational Health – Health Surveillance programme (e.g. ear defenders).	
	Is there adequate consultation about workplace issues / changes							
	Is your work environment adequate / comfortable.							
	Is your work environment free from hazards such as cigarette smoke and unacceptable levels of noise.							
	Question 9. Additional information or comments:							
Total scores for each column							**26 – 50 Low risk**	Monitor situation and review in 12 months.
Total overall score							**51 – 75 Medium risk**	Action plan and review in 6 months.
Minimum score is 26. Maximum score is 125							**75 – 125 High risk**	Immediate action required. Review in 3 months.

The Possible Action(s) column details some suggestions for consideration / action. This list is not exhaustive.
Completed assessment to be sent to HR for retention on Personal File

A copy of this completed Stress Risk Assessment should be kept by both parties completing it.

Signed. …………………………………Employee. Signed …………………………………………….. Manager   Date   …/ … / 20..

Policy changes & rationale

Managing Stress Policy

What's changed?	Old policy	New policy	Why?
Simplification of policy	17 pages long and very wordy	6 pages long with a friendlier tone and a toolkit being developed that managers and employees can refer to as needed	The current policy is difficult to understand and use. By separating policy and procedure, all staff can understand the policy and seek practical help from the toolkit, which will be completed before the policy goes 'live'.
A greater focus on preventative measures	Not in much detail about preventative measures	Details the wellbeing responsibilities of managers, employees and the organisation.	This is to ensure that appropriate measures to prevent stress are in place and that everyone knows their responsibility to prevent/manage stress.
Removal of stress factors	Detail of the factors which contribute to stress or remove stress (section 2)	This will be included in the stress risk assessment, which will be part of the toolkit available for this policy	To simplify the policy and make it clearer for everyone to understand. The stress factors are more useful when completing a stress risk assessment and highlighting which factors are impacting on an individual's health
Removal of 'record keeping' section	Details of the records kept to demonstrate stress prevention	Not overtly mentioned in the policy - instead records of supportive measures taken (i.e. one-to-one forms, training records) will be kept as per GDPR regulations	The new policy puts a greater emphasis on managers and their staff having informal conversations to tackle undue stress. If an individual is off work due to sickness, this will trigger the sickness management policy, which has a greater focus on record keeping.

Removal of 'safe systems of work' section	This section focuses on the actions needed corporately to reduce stress	A greater focus on reducing stress at an individual level	The actions identified in the current policy (reviewing bullying and discrimination policy, promoting training etc.) have been addressed and it is felt that a focus on an individual level will have more impact in reducing stress levels.
Personal Stress	Limited reflection on stress related to personal circumstances	Reference to personal stress	Stress can be caused due to a number of reasons - the new policy seeks to support those with personal stress whilst acknowledging that it's the individual's responsibility to deal with their personal stress.

Equality Impact Assessment – Managing Stress Policy

Name of project/policy/strategy (hereafter referred to as "initiative"):

Managing Stress Policy

Provide a brief summary (bullet points) of the aims of the initiative and main activities:
- The Councils acknowledge that stress can be experienced by staff and encourage staff to seek help. Seeking support is seen as a strength.
- The focus of this policy is to encourage managers and staff to identify and deal with stress themselves, whilst accepting that there will be times when staff require professional help.

Project Manager: Karyn Picker/Jenny Guy Date: March 2019

Stage 1: 'Screening'
This stage establishes whether a proposed initiative will have an impact on equality groups, (age, disability, gender, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation), or whether it is "equality neutral" (i.e. have no effect either positive or negative). So for example in the case of gender impact, consider whether men and women are affected differently.

Q.1. Who will benefit from this initiative? Is there likely to be a positive impact on specific equality groups (whether or not they are intended beneficiaries), and if so, how? <u>Or</u> is it clear at this stage that it will be equality "neutral"? i.e. will have no particular effect on any group.

The policy allows the Councils to support any staff experiencing stress; be it work related or otherwise and supporting managers with managing any staff affected by stress in a fair and consistent way.

Managers will benefit from this policy as it provides greater clarity around how to work with staff to support and manage any who are affected.

Staff – clarity about what support is available to them and underlines the commitment made by the Councils to support those affected by stress.

Equality considerations:

Age – equality implications due to age have been considered and none have been found

Disability – On recommendation from occupational health, the organisation will always consider reasonable adjustments for those with a disability to ensure they are not at a disadvantage. The Equality Act does not preclude a manager from managing stress or related absences of an individual with a disability.

Gender Reassignment – Section 16 of the Equality Act 2010 provides that it is unlawful for an employer to treat a transsexual employee less favourably in relation to gender reassignment

Marriage and civil partnership - equality implications due to marriage and civil partnership have been considered and none have been found.

Pregnancy & Maternity – equality implications due to Pregnancy and Maternity have been considered and none have been found.

Race/ethnicity - equality implications due to race/ethnicity have been considered and none have been found.

Religion & belief - equality implications due to faith/belief have been considered and none have been found.

Sexual orientation – equality implications due to sexuality have been considered and none have been found.

Sex – equality implications due to sex have been considered and none have been found.

Q.2. Is there likely to be an adverse impact on one or more equality group as a result of this initiative? If so, who may be affected and why? <u>Or</u> is it clear at this stage that it will be equality "neutral"?

Consultation has taken place with Unison and no significant concerns have been raised about equality issues.

Q.3. Is the impact of the initiative - whether positive or negative - significant enough to warrant a more detailed assessment (Stage 2 - see guidance)? If not, will there be monitoring and review to assess the impact over a period of time? Briefly (bullet points) give reasons for your answer and any steps you are taking to address particular issues, including any consultation with staff or external groups/agencies.

Due to the response in Q2, it is felt that a more detailed assessment is not required at this time. The policy will be reviewed in 12 months' time and at this point, the equality impact assessment will also be reviewed to ensure that the impact on those covered by the Equality Act remains "neutral".