



MIDDLESEX
LEARNING
PARTNERSHIP

STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Approved by: HR & Pay Committee

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Contents

1. Scope
2. Policy statement
3. What is stress?
4. HSE Management Standards
5. Signs and symptoms of stress
6. Roles and responsibilities
7. Identifying the source of stress
8. Possible causes of workplace stress
9. Strategies for managers to manage stress in the workplace
10. Strategies for employees to manage stress in the workplace

Update Information

This policy will be subject to ongoing review and may be amended prior to the scheduled date of the next review in order to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, or best practice.

1. Scope

This policy applies to all employees employed by schools and academies.

The recognised trade unions have been consulted.

2. Policy statement

The Trust places a high value on the health of its employees and is committed to take all reasonable measures to prevent stress in the workplace by assessing the causes and introducing measures to reduce stress at work. These guidelines will help in ensuring that staff who work for the school are effective in carrying out their duties.

Although guidelines in this policy deal mainly with the symptoms of stress from work related pressures, it also acknowledges that some employees may experience stress from situations at home or outside work which could affect their work performance. It is important that issues of concern are shared with managers so that appropriate support can be given.

3. What is stress?

Health and Safety Executive's (HSE's) formal definition of work-related stress is 'The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed on them at work'.

Whilst the effects of stress are *usually* short lived and cause no lasting harm, where pressure is intense or prolonged the effects of stress can be more damaging and lead to mental and physical ill health.

4. HSE Management Standards

The HSE Management Standards cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. In other words, the six Management Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work. These are:

Demands – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment

Control – how much say the person has in the way they do their work

Support – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues

Relationships – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

Role – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles

Change – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

5. Signs and symptoms of stress

There are many different ways that stress will show in an individual. Signs and symptoms can be behavioural, emotional or physical or a combination of these. Some examples to look out for might be:

Behavioural	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes in eating habits• Increased smoking, drinking or drug taking 'to cope'• Mood swings affecting your behaviour• Changes in sleep patterns• Twitch, nervous behaviour• Changes in attendance such as arriving later or taking more time off
Emotional/mental	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negative or depressive feeling• Disappointment with yourself• Increased emotional reaction – more tearful or sensitive or aggressive• Loss of motivation, commitment and confidence• Mood swings Confusion, indecision• Lack of concentration• Poor memory
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tiredness or lack of energy• High blood pressure• Pains or tightness in the chest

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 Trust's responsibilities:

- Ensure the school complies with the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Act and the associated regulations
- Ensure that a continuing commitment is given to the reduction of work-related stress consider the impact on staff of any major change or restructuring
- Provide an effective means of communicating and supporting staff and managers when a major change or restructuring is to take place and to ensure an implementation plan is produced
- Integrate good practice in reducing stress at work into other policies and procedures e.g. sickness absence policy provide additional professional support in the form of an employee assistance programme (EAP).

6.2 Manager's responsibilities:

- Managers have an important role in identifying and reducing stress in the workplace, whether the stress is work induced or not
- Managers will monitor stress problems through sickness absence records, staff turnover statistics, exit interviews, number of complaints received, missed deadlines, work backlogs and a deterioration in work performance, increase in staff disputes, grievances and poor morale, changes in individual behaviour, attitudes and appearance
- Managers will seek advice from Schools HR and the occupational health when a stress case arises.

6.3 Employee's responsibilities:

It is the employee's responsibility and legal duty to:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work ([Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974](#)).
- Discuss their own stress related issues with their manager, the counselling service of the school's EAP provider (if applicable) or other appropriate person to enable early support or intervention, i.e. their GP
- Recognise their own training and development needs and take responsibility for their own well-being and development in their job
- Co-operate with managers to avoid or reduce work related stress, including supporting their colleagues
- Ensure they do not put other employees under undue pressure as a result of their own actions or negligence
- Inform their manager when they feel under undue pressure, which might affect their work performance whether the cause is work related or outside work.

7. Identifying the sources of stress

Managers will consider the following:

- Consider stress as an occupational hazard and include it in the stress risk assessment
- Use a variety of methods to identify pressure/stress including sickness returns, complaints, performance, incidents/accident reports, etc.
- When aware that an employee is suffering from the effects of stress, take action to address the situation, including supporting the individual, agreeing individual work programmes and referring the person to occupational health, or EAP services
- Where the cause of the stress is outside the control of the school, make the employee aware of both the internal and external support available and monitor the situation sensitively
- Be aware of the potential for stress after a violent/abusive incident, threat or witnessing of traumatic events. In these situations consider what help should be offered and a referral to occupational health or EAP counselling service might be appropriate.

8. Possible causes of workplace stress

If you feel any of the causes below might apply to you, please discuss them with your manager:

Physical environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient space• Lack of privacy• Noisy environment• Too hot/cold• Equipment not suitable/poorly maintained Poor lighting/ventilation
The organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Insufficient staff for size of workload/ unfilled posts• Unclear expectations or objectives.• Lack of prioritising• Inconsistency in style & approach• Crisis management• No time to adjust to changes No control over the workload• Rigid working procedures

Personal & social relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient opportunities for social contact at work • Sexual harassment • Racial harassment • Staff conflict/bullying • Divided loyalties (personal vs. work)
Role in the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role ambiguity/conflict • Too much/too little responsibility • Under/over promotion • No participation in decision-making • Lack of managerial support/feedback • Lack of job security
Individual concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty in coping with change • Not confident in dealing with personal problems Not assertive • Difficulty in delegating • Poor at managing time • Lack of knowledge about managing stress.

9. Strategies for managers to manage stress in the workplace

9.1 Develop a supportive culture

- Create a climate of openness so that employees can discuss feelings of stress and support each other. Take any complaint of stress seriously
- Encourage staff to use outside help (their own GP, EAP counselling, Trade Union, family, friends)
- Identify ways to improve the working environment
- Communicate regularly through staff and team meetings
- Consider how you give positive feedback to employees
- Use team-building activities to promote a co-operative and supportive team
- Take complaints of bullying and harassment seriously and investigate fully in line with school's [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#).

9.2 Management style

- Analyse management style and its effects on a team
- Address staff performance issues openly and directly in a supportive and un-blaming way – do not avoid performance issues as that can in itself can lead to stress and poor service to customers
- Encourage a team problem solving approach to work issues
- Equip yourself with appropriate skills and knowledge to prevent stress and deal with it appropriately when it occurs in yourself and your staff.

9.3 Organisation of work

- Ensure employees have realistic work programmes and deadlines.
- Set clear priorities in consultation with staff regularly review workloads and work programmes

- Consult employees on proposals to change work practices.
- Appraise employees regularly and agree development plans for individuals and departments
- Ensure effective communication between management team, departmental teams and staff especially during periods of organisational change.

9.4 Recruitment and Selection

- Ensure the full range of tasks and demands of the job are set out in the job description and person specification
- The person specification should indicate the requirement to be able to work under pressure if necessary and evidence should be sought through the application form and interview
- Employment references (including details of sickness and absence records) should be sought to ascertain the candidates' ability to handle pressurised situations
- Pre-employment health questionnaires will be scrutinised by occupational health to identify stress related health problems and any concerns would be discussed with potential staff on a confidential basis
- In jobs identified to have high pressure, care must be taken to demonstrate what support will be given to the employees.

9.5 Induction and promotion

- All new employees must receive induction into their new job.
- Existing employees can be at particular risk when they are promoted/acting into a temporary role or given significant new tasks. A review of that person's work programme and developmental needs must take place.

9.6 Absence management

- If an absence is related to stress the manager will follow the Managing Attendance Policy. If the cause of the absence is confirmed to be work related and the manager is satisfied that the cause is not due to poor performance of the individual, the job/role should be reviewed and action taken to reduce the level of pressure. Advice can also be sought from occupational health to support the employee
- The manager will also consider what arrangements can be made to their duties/workplace to minimise the risk of any such illness recurring
- The manager will monitor how the arrangements work in practice. Are they being implemented on a daily basis? Are they satisfactory? Do alternative approaches need to be considered?

9.7 Development and training

- Ensure that staff are coached, trained and developed to carry out new and existing job responsibilities
- Ensure all staff achieve the required core competencies
- Ensure equality of access to training
- Review how training and development needs are met within your department/area of responsibility.

10. Strategies for employees to manage stress in the workplace

10.1 Monitor yourself and express your feelings:

- Learn to identify and acknowledge your feelings, both to yourself and others
- Tell your manager if you feel you are stressed
- Learn to recognise warning signals, monitor patterns

- Set time aside to reflect upon current stresses and balance your life
- Talk to colleagues, family and friends about how you feel.

10.2 Identify and develop appropriate support:

- Identify a particular person for mutual support
- Ask for help and be ready to accept it when you need it
- Give others positive feedback and tell them you value them.

10.3 Develop useful behavioural skills:

- Be assertive and take responsibility for your own behaviour and actions
- Learn to recognise negative thought patterns and replace them with constructive ones.

10.4 Manage your time:

- Be realistic; set yourself short and long term goals
- Prioritise, plan and monitor your use of time
- Learn to say no to unreasonable demands and deadlines
- Avoid an imbalance between work and private life
- Try not to make too many major changes in your life at once.

10.5 Take exercise and relax:

- Choose some enjoyable exercise
- Learn to relax and practice regular relaxation techniques
- Take regular breaks/do something varied throughout the day
- Ensure you get the amount of sleep you need.

10.6 Develop healthy eating patterns:

- Reduce the buzz of stimulants e.g. alcohol, caffeine, tobacco
- Eat a healthy and well-balanced diet.