

CHRE

Stress at Work Policy

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Table of Contents

1	<u>INTRODUCTION.....</u>	<u>3</u>
1.1	WHAT IS STRESS?.....	3
1.2	POLICY	3
1.3	POLICY AIMS.....	4
2	<u>RECOGNITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....</u>	<u>5</u>
2.1	EXAMPLES OF WORKPLACE STRESS.....	5
2.2	WHAT MANAGERS CAN DO	5
2.3	WHAT STAFF CAN DO.....	7
2.4	SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS	7
2.5	USEFUL CONTACTS	9



1 Introduction

Any of us could experience stress at some point in our lives, resulting from personal, domestic or work situations.

The Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE) (the organisation) are committed to dealing with stress through good management practice, providing an atmosphere where staff are encouraged to talk openly about stress without feeling guilty or inadequate.

This policy sets out what managers and staff can do to achieve these aims.

1.1 What is stress?

Stress may come from home and personal situations as well as work. It is important to identify the causes of stress and deal with them quickly and positively.

The Health and Safety Executive defines work-related stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive or other types of demand placed upon them'

A reasonable amount of pressure can be good. It can help you feel alert and motivated. Short-term pressure is not usually a problem and causes no lasting harm.

However, in some cases, particularly where pressures are intense and continue for some time, the effects of stress can be more damaging, leading to longer-term psychological problems and physical ill health.

Section 2 gives details of the likely signs and symptoms of too much stress.

1.2 Policy

The health and safety policy involves a commitment to providing a working and living environment which is healthy and safe for all of its employees. CHRE is committed to a healthy workforce by placing value on both physical and mental health.

The Management Team acknowledge that stress problems have many causes and are committed to identifying sources of stress. Management will identify workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.

Management will brief staff on action relating to the prevention of workplace stress and will encourage suggestions as to how stress can be alleviated.

Where required managers will receive training in respect of good management practices.



1.3 Policy Aims

The aim of this policy is:

- to encourage staff well being and discourage the stigma attached to stress
- raise awareness of ill health associated with stress, its causes and associated factors
- change aspects of the workplace which have been identified (through risk assessment) as increasing the stress risk
- educate staff in techniques for coping with pressure and stress
- provide staff with help if they have mental or physical health problems associated with stress
- through information and education, encourage everyone to recognise problems
- encourage staff to get help at an early stage
- offer easy access to counselling and other professional help

2 Recognition and Responsibilities

2.1 Examples of workplace stress

Some examples of workplace stress are:

- factors intrinsic in the job; for example poor working conditions, hours of work, new technology work overload or underload, conflicting demands; pace of work that is controlled by external factors
- an individual's role in the organisation; for example role ambiguity, role conflict, and the degree of responsibility
- career development; for example over promotion, under promotion, a lack of job security
- relationships at work; for example, superiors, colleagues and subordinates
- poor communication and, where relevant, lack of involvement in decision-making

2.2 What managers can do

Managers have an important role to play in identifying sources of workplace stress and in creating a secure and supportive environment where staff feel comfortable about discussing of problems. Managers should take the following steps

- Develop a good management culture
 - hold regular team meetings
 - encourage teamwork
 - be available to employees so that they can discuss problems
 - encourage employees to support each other
 - be sympathetic to employees who are suffering from stress and treat all cases individually
- Demands being at the right level
 - take stress seriously and have an open and understanding attitude to what employees say about the pressure of work
 - providing clear job descriptions outlining lines of responsibility, accountability, and reporting
 - individual supervision and clear objectives with review
 - set clear standards and targets with realistic deadlines
 - that work is shared out fairly

- support a culture where long working hours and taking work home are not seen as the norm
- regularly review excess hours worked by staff, monitoring absence and staff turnover, and carrying out exit interviews
- Support and training
 - make sure there are good induction programmes for new staff; staff who change roles or functions; and staff who are returning from work from a long period of absence
 - make sure staff have appropriate training to carry out their duties and consider the implications for staff of any changes to working practices, work locations, new policies and procedures
- Relationships
 - identify and deal with all behaviour and poor performance and sickness absence issues
 - make sure that all complaints of discrimination, harassment and bullying are fully and quickly investigated and dealt with
- Risk assessments
 - identify mental and physical dangers which may exist in the workplace
 - assess individual employees or groups of employees who are particularly vulnerable to workplace stress
 - identify things that cause or contribute to workplace stress
 - make sure control measures are effective
- Stress-related sickness absence
 - deal sensitively with employees who are absent from work with stress-related illness
 - get advice from an Occupational Health Adviser
 - consider whether the employee can return to work gradually
 - offer counselling services
 - monitor the employee's condition when they return and discuss their progress
 - refer to the Capability Procedure and Absence Management Policy for more guidance on any formal action

2.3 What staff can do

Staff can take reasonable care of their own health and safety, and that of others who may be affected by what they do, or don't do, at work. The following may help:

- Be aware
 - recognise early signs of stress and get help – try to identify the causes
 - recognise that stress is not a weakness
 - discuss the issues with the manager or with the counselling service or a GP
 - identify appropriate training and development needs and take responsibility for wellbeing in the job
 - deal with tensions before they become too serious
 - avoid stressful situations where possible and deal with problems assertively
 - acknowledge personal feelings and share them with others as appropriate
 - support colleagues who are experiencing any negative effects of stress
- Lifestyle
 - make time to enjoy leisure activities and interests
 - learn to relax through reading, music or any other hobby
 - take lunch breaks
- Exercise
 - exercise regularly and keep to a healthy, balanced diet
 - avoid the harmful effects of alcohol, drugs and tobacco
- Workload
 - thinking time each day can help manage and prioritise work effectively
 - be realistic – don't set standards that are too high
 - keep the work area free of clutter and piles of paper
 - reflect on work practices and learn from experience
 - ask for help if necessary
 - be actively involved in the risk assessment process

2.4 Signs and symptoms of stress

Signs and symptoms of stress may vary from one person to another. It can be difficult to tell if someone is under stress as many people hide their symptoms or learn to cope with them. This in itself can cause stress. However, physical, emotional, behavioural and organisational symptoms may include the following.

Many of these signs and symptoms apply to a variety of other illnesses. Get advice from a doctor to rule out any other medical condition.

- Physical
 - headaches
 - insomnia
 - indigestion
 - rise in blood pressure
 - raised heart rate
 - aggravation of a heart condition
 - ulcers
 - skin conditions
 - irritable bowel syndrome
 - weight loss or weight gain
 - muscular tension
 - fatigue
 - chest pain
 - dizziness
 - blurred vision
 - increased sweating

- Mental and emotional
 - tiredness
 - anxiety
 - anger
 - frustration
 - low self-esteem
 - mood swings
 - irritability
 - depression
 - memory loss
 - lack of motivation and creativity
 - poor concentration

- Behavioural
 - increased use of alcohol, drugs and cigarettes
 - loss of appetite or comfort eating
 - prone to silly mistakes and accidents
 - poor relationships with others at home and at work
 - lack of interest or boredom
 - reduced morale or commitment to work
 - poor work performance
 - poor attendance

- poor judgement
- social isolation
- Organisational
 - Reduced productivity
 - Reduced quality and customer care
 - High turnover of staff
 - Increase in formal action under the Disciplinary Procedure, Capability Procedure or Absence Management Policy

2.5 Useful contacts

A confidential counselling service has been established for staff affected by stress caused by either their work or by external factors that may affect their personal life. The counselling service is confidential and can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days week. The contact details are as follows:-

For Counselling, Advice, Information 0800 116 387

For Legal Information 0800 226 388

From outside the UK +44 845 330 5132

Text phone users dial 18001 followed by the full Helpline number

In addition, an occupational health service is available to advise managers and staff in respect of sickness absence caused through stress.

Document Control

Version Control

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Associated Documentation

Version	Description of Documentation
1.0	Capability Procedure
1.0	Absence Management Policy

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