
School's Stress Management Policy

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<u>SECTION</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1. Introduction	3
2. Definition	3
3. Scope of the Policy	3
4. Consultation	4
5. Arrangements	4
6. Responsibility of:	5
▪ Managers	
▪ Human Resources	
▪ Risk and Resilience	
▪ Occupational Health Service	
▪ Employees	
7. Training	7
8. Evaluation and Review	8
9. Confidentiality	8
10. Personal Wellbeing Toolkit	8

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The School aims to provide all employees with a working environment which is safe and without risks to health, this includes the provision of suitable control measures in the case of any work activity that may create a risk of work related stress.
- 1.2 The Council acknowledges that employees may encounter stress in their work as well as in their personal lives and is committed to identifying, managing and reducing work related stressors.
- 1.3 The aim will always be, as far as is reasonably practical, to identify and resolve problems associated with stress in the workplace at the earliest stage in order to support the employee at work.

2. Definition

- 2.1 The Health & Safety Executive has defined stress as:

“the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them”

There is a clear distinction between pressure and transient stressful periods in a normal work routine, which can be a motivating factor, and adverse stress which can occur when this pressure becomes excessive and, if not controlled and reduced to a tolerable level, can be detrimental to mental and physical health and performance at work.

3. Scope of the Policy

- 3.1 The policy forms part of the Council’s corporate Health, Safety and Welfare arrangements. It applies to all school based staff in maintained schools. This policy will be recommended to all schools for adoption by each governing body (including faith schools). For those academies who have an SLA with the Council’s Risk and Resilience for health and safety, it is also recommended for adoption. For the practical application of the policy it should be read in conjunction with the Standard Operating Procedure for Stress Management.
- 3.2 This policy is intended to focus on the issues surrounding work related stress. However, it is recognised that there may be many situations where individuals suffer the effects of stressful situations which are due to factors external to work. In such cases where it becomes evident that external factors are causing stress related symptoms which are affecting an individual’s ability to carry out their job, it is appropriate for managers to use the mechanisms outlined below to support employees.
- 3.3 Any sickness absence which is attributable to stress related symptoms will be dealt with in accordance with the Council’s Managing Attendance Policy.

4. Consultation

4.1 This policy has been devised in consultation with the recognised trade unions.

5. Arrangements

5.1 The Borough Council, through the support of effective line management including the appraisal/PR&D process, formal regular supervision and one to one communication and informal monitoring will endeavour to:

- Seek to control issues giving rise to stress, including those caused by supervisors, work colleagues, members of the public, the environment, and work organisation, design and volume, so far as is reasonably practicable.
- Identify possible work related stressors via the process of Risk Assessment required under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Information on when and how to undertake risk assessments relating to work related stress is included in the Stress Management Standard Operating System.
- Endeavour to monitor potential stressors by means of the risk assessment process.
- Where the need is identified, provide training in stress awareness, personal resilience, communication, interpersonal skills, time management and problem solving.
- Treat employees who are suffering from stress related conditions in the same way as those with other health problems.
- Provide appropriate support for employees who indicate or exhibit that they are suffering from the effects of adverse stress. Where an employee is off sick due to stress related symptoms, which they believe are attributable to a situation at work, all parties involved should be encouraged to deal with the problem as quickly as possible in order to agree appropriate support measures which will facilitate an early return to work.
- Facilitate the provision of Occupational Health support including counselling for employees suffering from stress related condition where this is recommended by an Occupational Health adviser.
- In line with the Managing Attendance Policy, take all reasonable steps to ensure the adequate rehabilitation of employees returning to work following absence due to a stress related condition.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Managers

- (a) Are responsible for undertaking stress risk assessments. It is intended over time that these should cover each type of post within each area through a priority-based rolling programme, and should be reviewed at appropriate intervals. However, in circumstances where either a member of staff notifies his or her manager that he or she believes that they are suffering from stress or where a manager believes that a staff member may be suffering from stress, then a more detailed and personalised examination of any stress factors involved will need to be undertaken. Advice, if needed, may be sought from Human Resources or Occupational Health services.
- (b) Are responsible for trying to ensure that good communication exists between all levels of employee in their area, especially during periods of organisational or procedural change.
- (c) Are responsible for using the PR&D process and other formal and informal supervision sessions as a means of monitoring workload and spotting potential risks and training needs, making sure that all staff are adequately supported.
- (d) Are responsible for monitoring the working hours, absence levels, overtime and workload of all team members, ensuring that excesses are monitored and managed and that holiday entitlements are taken. A directed time calendar is a useful tool to use to ensure all staff are clear about their working time and responsibilities.
- (e) Should offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stressful situations outside work e.g. bereavement or separation, where such a situation comes to their attention.
- (f) Are responsible for making constructive use of return to work interviews, as required under the Managing Attendance Policy, for exploring reasons and potential causes of absence, and for encouraging an open dialogue about employees' concerns.
- (g) Have a duty to recognise the limits of their skills in counselling employees and the potential conflict of interest with their position. Where an employee exhibits symptoms of stress, a manager should discuss this with the employee and, if appropriate, suggest that the person seeks help. This may involve discussing the issue with Human Resources to determine whether an appointment for the employee with the Occupational Health Service is appropriate.
- (h) Have responsibilities to ensure an understanding of the inherent pressures and expectations of posts within their remit and the requisite skills required to meet them.

6.2 Human Resources

- (a) Are responsible for providing guidance to managers on the application of the stress policy and other associated policies in connection with the health and well-being of employees.
- (b) May be required to advise and support managers on the re-integration of employees back into the work place following a period of absence due to a stress related illness. This may involve assisting with identifying suitable, available, temporary or permanent options to ensure compliance with contractual and legal obligations and the duty of care. It may also include advice on the provision of a transitional period or phased return to work following absence.
- (c) Will assist with referrals to the Occupational Health Service where appropriate.
- (d) Are responsible for providing advice/guidance/support to managers in the management of absence in accordance with the School's Managing Attendance Policy.
- (e) Are responsible for working with other areas of the Council and the Council's Occupational Health Provider to promote health and well-being including initiatives in connection with the reduction of stress and mental health well-being.

6.3 Risk and Resilience

- (a) Are responsible for providing advice and guidance to Managers and head teachers on the application of the Standard Operating Procedure for Stress Management and any other Standard Operating Procedure or Guidance Notes produced by the Risk and Resilience Team in connection with the health and safety of employees. Advising the Council, its employees and stakeholders on forthcoming changes and developments to Health and Safety Legislation, Approved Code of Practices or HSE guidance.
- (b) To provide advice and guidance to managers regarding the WBC stress risk assessment process, assisting managers to identify potential stressors, assess risks, identify and implement suitable control measure to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.
- (c) To advise Managers/head teachers on the process for referring an employee to the Occupational Health provider, ensuring that the appropriate forms are completed by the manager and that associated stress risk assessments accompany the referral.

6.4 Council's Occupational Health Provider

- (a) Will provide specialist advice on stress related problems and coping strategies, including counselling where appropriate, and advise on re-integration into work following absence related to stress.
- (b) Will actively encourage employees who are experiencing stress related problems to seek professional help and to take responsibility for their own recovery.
- (c) Will refer/ signpost employees to other appropriate providers for specialist help when necessary.
- (d) Will provide stress related risk assessment advice when requested.
- (e) Will work with the Council on health and well-being promotion initiatives.

6.5 Employees

- (a) All employees have a personal responsibility to be aware of their own levels of stress and to take action to prevent deterioration in their health including raising issues of concern with their line manager/head teacher (or other appropriate manager where they do not feel comfortable speaking to their own line manager).
- (b) Where an employee perceives that there is a problem at work which has resulted in them being absent due to stress related symptoms it is expected that the employee will engage with the relevant procedures and any support offered to facilitate a return to work. In such circumstances the employee may wish to seek the advice and support of their Trade Union representative.
- (c) Where employees are concerned that colleagues are showing signs of suffering from stress it is appropriate to offer support and/or refer them to their Manager.
- (d) Employees should recognise their own training and development needs, bringing these to the attention of their line manager/head teacher.
- (e) Employees should seek professional help/support as early as possible and engage with measures of support offered by the School.

7. Training

- 7.1 Training is available to all management levels to help them with the implementation of the Stress Management policy and the conducting of risk assessments.
- 7.2 Personal Resilience Training is available to employees as part of the Council's Training and Development Programme.

8. Evaluation and Review

- 8.1 The effectiveness of this policy will be measured by using data on sickness absence attributed to stress related illness, quantitative data in relation to Occupational Health referrals and appropriate qualitative information.
- 8.2 This policy will be reviewed periodically in line with good practice and experience gained through implementation. Any amendment to it (other than factual amendment following changes in statute or Council structures) will be subject to consultation with the recognised Trade Unions through the appropriate Joint Consultative Panels.

9. Confidentiality

- 9.1 Employees who feel under excessive pressure should seek help and support from their direct Supervisor or Line Manager/head teacher. Where they feel unable to do this they should raise their issues with the next tier of management. All cases will be handled with the utmost discretion and confidentiality. Advice may be sought from Human Resources.
- 9.2 Where counselling is provided via Occupational Health provider the detail of discussions with the counsellor will not be shared with any third party, but general reports will be provided to the relevant Human Resources Business Partner and Manager on how employees are progressing.

10. Sources of Information and Help

- 10.1 Warrington Borough Council has a personal wellbeing toolkit that contains a wealth of information regarding how to keep your mind and body healthy. This information can be found on the Warrington Rewards website at <https://warrington.rewardgateway.co.uk/Home>. If you don't already have a log-in all you need is your payroll number.
- 10.2 Within the toolkit there is a wealth of information, assessments and links to organisations who can offer specialist assistance from healthy eating, smoking cessation, coping with pressure to a full employee support provision providing advice and information on things such as finance, legal advice, wellbeing, counselling and mental health to name but a few.
- 10.3 Other sources of information:

HSE <http://www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm>