

## Managing Stress

Stress is the word that many people use when they are describing how the demands of their life seems to be becoming too great for them to cope with. The ability to cope varies from person to person and what one person finds stressful may not be a problem for another. Whilst many of us suffer with stress at times in our day to day lives, long term stress is known to be bad for our health and many of us would like to find ways to gain some control over it.

A relentless build-up of pressure, without the opportunity to recover, can lead to harmful stress. The important thing is to recognise the warning signs while you can do something about it.

### Symptoms of Stress

Stress sufferers often demonstrate well recognised symptoms which vary from person to person. The main symptoms are listed below but all of these will not necessarily be present at any one time:

- Increased heart rate;
- Increased sweating;
- Headaches;
- Giddiness/ Blurred vision;
- Aching muscles, particularly neck and shoulders;
- Rashes;
- Reduced immunity to infections;
- Depression/generally negative outlook;
- Increased anxiousness;
- Increased irritability and moodiness;
- Increased intake of alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, etc.;
- Reduced ability to sleep;
- Lack of concentration;
- Poor work performance;
- Inability, or reduced ability, to cope with normal tasks and situations;
- Increased sickness absence;
- Poor timekeeping.



### Dealing with Stress

There is much that can be done by an individual to reduce unnecessary stress and the harm it can cause. The following actions may be of assistance, depending on the individual:

- Avoid stressful situations if possible;
- Accept that some situations cannot be avoided, face up to them and prepare for them;

- Talk to someone about your concerns, don't let things build up. This could be a friend or colleague. Your manager or HR team will be able to provide you with direct support. The Council's counselling service is also a source of anonymous help and assistance and is available via a 24 hour helpline;
- Moderate your intake of caffeine and alcohol;
- Keep healthy by using a properly balanced diet and regularly exercising;
- Ensure adequate sleep at night;
- Allow time each day to do something restful or use relaxation techniques etc.
- Set realistic goals and deadlines;
- Deal with one task at a time;
- Think positively.

Specific information on managing stress can be accessed by employees via the Healthy Working Lives notice boards, CONNECT or the Council's Counselling Service online at [www.timefortalking.co.uk](http://www.timefortalking.co.uk). Specific advices can also be obtained from Business, Organisational and People Solutions.

### Available Help

Help is available in a wide range of forms to include:

- Family doctor or local health centre;
- Individual counselling can be arranged with the Council's Counselling Service by telephoning 0800 970 3980;
- Courses on Stress Management may be available via Talent and Organisational Development.

You can also consider the following when seeking ways to minimise the stress:

- Identify what causes you stress;
- Know what your limitations are;
- Learn to accept things that you cannot change;
- Try to manage your time more effectively;
- Avoid unnecessary conflict;
- Become a positive thinker;
- Follow a healthy lifestyle and keep active;
- Make time to relax and have some 'me time';
- Meet friends;
- Try to avoid alcohol and caffeine as a means to cope.



### **Further Guidance**

The following documents may provide further guidance in relation to work related stress:

AS21 – Stress at Work;  
 AS34 – Support for Mental Health and Wellbeing;  
 GD4 - Managing Stress in the Workplace;  
 GD14 - Supporting Mental Health.