



Safety & Wellbeing Policy Arrangement

Section 21 – Stress at Work

E-mail healthandsafety@northlan.gov.uk

Section 21 – Stress at Work

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Statement
3. Identifying a Problem
4. Causative Factors
5. Management Action
6. Procedures
7. Harassment

Appendix 1 - HSE Risk Assessment Questionnaire (adjusted for NLC use)

Appendix 2 - Initial Assessment for small groups and sections

Appendix 3 - Discussion template for managers involved in discussions with individuals

Appendix 4 - Employee Information Sheet

Schedule 1 – Impact Assessments

Section 21 – Stress at Work

1. Introduction

The prevention of ill-health caused by work is a major feature of the occupational health work taking place within the UK. Identifying and tackling the causes, however, of work related ill health is difficult and complex, occupational health being only one component of the wider agenda for public health.

The incidence of stress and its effect on health is one area which warrants - and is receiving - national consideration. While accidents at work are decreasing, other health issues, including stress related illnesses are increasing.

It is in this context that the Council, within its Health and Safety Policy, has formulated guidelines on minimising stress at work.

Stress can involve:

- **physical effects**, such as raised heart rate, increased sweating, headache, dizziness, blurred vision, aching neck and shoulders, skin rashes and a lowering of resistance to infection;
- **behavioural effects**, such as increased anxiety and irritability, a tendency to drink more alcohol and smoke more, difficulty sleeping, poor concentration and an inability to deal calmly with everyday tasks and situations.

These effects are usually short-lived and cause no lasting harm. When the pressures recede, there is a quick return to normal.

Stress is not therefore the same as ill health. But in some cases, particularly where pressures are intense and continue for some time, the effects of stress can be more sustained and far more damaging, leading to longer-term psychological problems and physical ill health.

There is no such thing as a 'pressure-free' job. Every job brings its own set of tasks, responsibilities and day-to-day problems, and the pressures and demands these place on us are an unavoidable part of working life. We are, after all, paid to work and to work hard, and to accept the reasonable pressures that go with that.

Some pressures can, in fact, be a good thing. It is often the tasks and challenges we face at work that provide the structure to our working days, keep us motivated and are the key to a sense of achievement and job satisfaction.

However, people's ability to deal with pressure is not limitless. Excessive workplace pressure and the stress to which it can lead can be harmful and can undermine the health of an employee.

In general, harmful levels of stress are most likely to occur where:

- pressures pile on top of each other or are prolonged;
- people feel trapped or unable to exert any control over the demands placed on them;
- people are confused by conflicting demands made on them.

Problems at work can be triggered or made worse where:

- people feel a high degree of uncertainty about their work, their objectives or their job and career prospects;
- work schedules are inflexible and over-demanding;
- there is prolonged conflict between individuals, including possibly sexual or racial harassment, or bullying, or where staff are treated with contempt or indifference;
- there is a lack of understanding and leadership from Managers or Supervisors. This does not mean that they have to be easy-going and undemanding. People usually welcome clear direction and will often feel less stress if they can see that their Manager at least understands the problems they are under and will do what he or she can.

Certain kinds of job can, by their nature, place heavy emotional demands on employees, which, if not properly addressed, can result in harmful levels of stress. These jobs include those which involve continuous contact with or responsibility for people, those involving exposure to human suffering, injury or death, or those which might involve violence or danger.

Physical conditions in the working environment can also be stressful. These include:

- excessive noise, heat, humidity and vibration;
- the presence of toxic or dangerous materials or other obvious workplace hazards which might not be adequately controlled.

2. Statement

The Council recognises that occupational stress is a potential hazard which can lead to ill health. The Council will therefore:

- (i) Take all reasonably practicable steps, through an agreed risk assessment process, to identify causes of stress in the Council, by monitoring:
 - staff attitude and behaviour
 - deterioration in work performance
 - sickness absence
 - relationships at work
- (ii) Implement control measures, including awareness training which together with good management of people will reduce or remove all unnecessary factors which contribute to stress.
- (iii) Implement both formal and informal procedures for employees to progress stress problems related to workplace conflict.

3. Identifying a Problem

Managers will need to be aware of circumstances that may result in mental health issues developing within an employee group. Where an employee shows evidence of some or all of the following, this could indicate that they are under stress:

Staff attitude and behaviour

- Loss of motivation and commitment
- Staff working increasingly long hours but for diminishing returns
- Erratic or poor timekeeping

Work performance

- Reduction in output or productivity
- Increase in wastage and error rates
- Poor decision making
- Deterioration in planning and control of work

Sickness absence

- Increase in overall sickness absence, in particular frequent short periods of absence

Relationships at work

- Tension and conflict between colleagues
- Poor relationships with clients
- Increase in industrial relations or disciplinary problems

Personal Symptoms

- Increased anxiousness
- Increased irritability and moodiness
- Lack of concentration
- Inability or reduced ability to cope with normal tasks and situations

There are a number of ways to assess the risk from stress. The assessment process can be one of the following:

- 1) Service/Divisional assessment.

The assessment process for a group of workers in a Service or a division can be achieved using the HSE assessment tool, the survey form associated with this process can be found in appendix 1. Use of this tool should only be considered after discussion with the Service Health and Safety team.

2) Sectional Evaluation

Where there is a need to assess a small team, the HSE tool is generally accepted as being inappropriate, although the questions within the survey form can still be used, as an alternative, the short survey tool outlined within appendix 2 can be used to seek the views and concerns of the team members. Further guidance and support is available from the relevant Service Health and Safety team.

3) Individual Discussion

Where an individual has highlighted personal issues within the workplace, then a manager can use the template, replicated in appendix 3, to facilitate a discussion with the employee concerned. A short information sheet is also available to give some initial support to an employee (see appendix 4). Further guidance on dealing with individuals can be obtained from the relevant Service HR team or the Council's Counselling Service.

4. Causative Factors

The following factors may be associated with work related stress:

- Lack of control over the work;
- Conflicting demands;
- Overwork;
- Underwork;
- Monotonous, repetitive work;
- Uncertainty about job security;
- Unrealistic targets or performance standards;
- Peer pressure, including harassment;
- Poor management;
- Lack of support, both from peers and managers;
- The work environment: excessive noise, temperature, humidity, poor decor, etc.

The above is only an example of some of the causes of stress. It must be remembered that repetitive work may be thought of as boring by some people whereas others may be happy with the routine. There is a whole range of causes of stress and depending on how an individual reacts to a situation will determine if he/she suffers the effects of stress.

5. Management Action

Good management can help reduce or remove unnecessary stress and the following aspects should be the objectives of all managers:

- confidence and competence;
- consistency of treatment;

- good two-way communication;

combined with:

- some flexibility without being unfair to individuals, or tolerating those whose real object is to avoid work or transfer their problems to others;
- scope for varying working conditions and for people to influence the way their jobs are done - increasing their interest and sense of ownership;
- an open attitude by managers to what people say to them about their jobs or about the stresses of their work;
- ensuring people are treated fairly and that bullying and harassment of those who seem not to 'fit in' is not allowed;
- ensuring that staff have the skills, training and resources needed to do their jobs properly.

The provision of information, instruction and training is a critical part of the organisation's efforts to reduce the effect of stress on the individual and the organisation. Training is readily available via Talent and Organisational Development and also in an e-learning format accessible via Connect.

Managers will need to assess the training needs of their staff and take steps to provide such training. The risk assessment process will help with this process.

Additional support for managers and employees in dealing with mental health issues can be found within the health and safety pages of CONNECT i.e. online training and specific guidance documentation (AS34 - Support for Mental Health and Wellbeing).

6. Procedures

Should an employee be obviously suffering from stress or should they make it known to their line manager or other member of management it is important that this is recognised as a serious problem. It should not be seen as a personal problem but an issue which management and the Council are committed to addressing. As part of the absence management programme, absences where it is suspected or known that stress may be the cause should be fully investigated to determine the cause. It is important that individuals are not made to feel guilty about their stress problems and a serious attempt should be made to alleviate any work related factors. If necessary they should also be encouraged to contact their General Practitioner and/or make use of the Council's Occupational Health procedures.

Should medical information be received which notifies that an employee is suffering from work related stress then the employee should be referred via the Council's Occupational Health procedures.

Should an employee indicate that work related stress is problematic, there are two issues which require to be considered:

1. Where work related factors are considered to be the underlying cause of stress;
2. Where stress is occasioned by harassment.

These may not be mutually exclusive. To recognise difficulties for employees complaining of or wishing to complain of harassment, a separate policy has been prepared. Harassment may not necessarily give rise to stress, per se, but to reflect the circumstances which warrant investigation and action, the Dignity at Work Policy has been prepared to separately address the processes specific to this sensitive aspect of personnel and employee relations.

For work related stress concerns, it is recommended that:

1. The employee advises his/her line manager or supervisor, of the concern;
2. The line manager or supervisor would discuss the concerns with the employee and identify, where possible, the causes of the work related stress;
3. Where the circumstances are established as work related, the line manager should in conjunction with senior officers, endeavour to minimise, alleviate or eliminate such factors;
4. Concurrently with measures to identify and eliminate these factors, the line manager would encourage the employee to liaise with his/her GP where stress was contributing to an adverse effect on the employee's health;
5. Where investigation concludes that work related factors are not deemed to be the cause of stress, the employee should be so advised and further medical advice should be sought by the employee through their own GP.

A document aimed at helping managers to discuss the matter of work related stress with employees has been prepared and can be found within appendix 3. Service Health and Safety teams may also develop more locally relevant tools and an approach should be made to the relevant Service Health and Safety team for information and support.

7. Harassment

Harassment at work can take varying forms and in varying degrees. It may be explicit or implicit, deliberate or unintentional. Harassment may or may not give rise to stress and may not necessarily result in ill health. Complaints or incidents relating to harassment may on occasion be directed towards the employee's line manager, or supervisor, and in these circumstances, harassment complaints may not be appropriately referred or satisfactorily resolved by an employee's immediate line manager.

The Dignity at Work Policy has been prepared to reflect the specific aspects of harassment. Both documents should be referred to in circumstances where stress is identified as a consequence of incidents or the work environment.

In both sets of circumstances, Services should inform Business Organisational and People Solutions who will monitor progress and provide advice and assistance as necessary.



HSE Stress Assessment Questionnaire

Please tick the box under the statement best describing your views

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1 I am clear what is expected of me at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
2 I can decide when to take a break	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
3 Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
4 I know how to go about getting my job done	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
5 I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
6 I have unachievable deadlines	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
7 If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
8 I am given supportive feedback on the work I do	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
9 I have to work very intensively	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
10 I have a say in my own work speed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
11 I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
12 I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
13 I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
14 There is friction or anger between colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
15 I have a choice in deciding how I do my work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
16 I am unable to take sufficient breaks	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
17 I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
18 I am pressured to work long hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
19 I have a choice in deciding what I do at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
20 I have to work very fast	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
21 I am subject to bullying at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
22 I have unrealistic time pressures	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
23 I can rely on my line manager to help me out with a work problem	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Please move onto page 2 noting a slight change in the wording of the response statements

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
24 I get help and support I need from colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
25 I have some say over the way I work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
26 I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
27 I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
28 Staff are always consulted about change at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
29 I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me about work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
30 My working time can be flexible	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
31 My colleagues are willing to listen to my work related problems	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
32 When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
33 I am supported through emotionally demanding work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
34 Relationships at work are strained	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
35 My line manager encourages me at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Thank you for completing the questionnaire, please make sure it is returned to the assessment co-ordinator as detailed below.

Assessment Co-ordinator:

Mark any correspondence as "**Confidential - Stress Assessment Material**"

Assessment Title:



Initial Assessment Tool

This is an in-house tool that is aimed at offering a quick assessment of the organisational issues that may be acting as stressors within a section. It may well precede a full assessment based on the HSE tool, or it may be sufficient to provide an assessment in more individual circumstances

The principle requirement of the Management Regulations is that the employer undertakes to reduce the risk associated with work-related hazards, which may give rise to accidents and/or ill health. The key Management activity is Risk Assessment. In summary these steps are.

- Identifying hazards in the workplace
- Identifying those members of staff who may be at risk
- Evaluating the risk (Assessment)
- Managing the risk (Control)
- Monitoring
- Re-assessing as appropriate
- Recording all significant risks and details.

What are the hazards.

Anything with the potential to cause harm, damage and/or ill health is a hazard. In terms of stress at work these particular hazards are better known as stressors (factors which may cause pressure on an individual) too much or too little pressure for example, can have a damaging effect on an individuals health.

Who may be at risk - what is an acceptable risk.

Nobody is immune from stress and individuals are vulnerable to stress in differing degrees. Risk is the likelihood of stressor(s) having a undesirable effect on employees, to the extent that it manifests as stress. What constitutes an acceptable risk is not as clear cut as for example, deciding the safety of a piece of equipment.

The questionnaire/ issues, which follow, although having an element of responsibility for managers, are also the duty of the individual employee. Employees have a duty to identify health and safety issues, which may affect them or their colleagues.

Questionnaire.

Please take the time to study the forms and give each question a score from 1 to 4 indicating your choice by a circle around the number selected.

1 = Strongly Agree.

2 = Agree.

3 = Disagree.

4 = Strongly Disagree.

Please enter employee No. _____ this will only be utilised if personal contact has to be made after analysis of the results is completed.

The initial questionnaire is to gather the thoughts of individuals, this may result in some follow up work.

Introductory Risk Assessment of Organisational Stressors

For use as an initial assessment tool, additional assessment may be required at Service level

ITEM	WORK SITUATONS	Circle No			
A	There is adequate comfort in my working environment, temperature, humidity, ventilation, lighting, and freedom from hazardous substances/cigarette smoke.	1	2	3	4
B	The design and availability of equipment, machinery, or furniture used by me is suitable/adequate for my work, and I would consider it to be reliable and comfortable.	1	2	3	4
C	There are adequate staff facilities, rest areas, canteens, toilet facilities (well equipped, comfortable, not overcrowded)	1	2	3	4
D	The work I undertake involves excessive physical demands, heavy lifting, standing for long periods, repetitive handling.	1	2	3	4
E	The workload given to me corresponds to the time available for me to do it.	1	2	3	4
F	The work I do involves, working to tight deadlines, always expected to perform at a high level.	1	2	3	4
G	I perceive that the work I do may be emotionally draining, caring for clients, dealing with the public.	1	2	3	4
H	I feel there appears to be and have been instances of discrimination, intimidation and harassment from clients and/or members of the public.	1	2	3	4
I	I work unsociable hours, more hours than contracted to do, shift work, take work home, evening meetings, on call, very little time for lunch break.	1	2	3	4
J	My work involves unclear tasks, confusing instructions and/or job role unclear.	1	2	3	4
K	I feel I require more/better training necessary for me to undertake my work responsibilities.	1	2	3	4

ITEM	WORK SITUATIONS	Circle No			
L	The jobs I do are, boring, unchallenging, repetitive and/or monotonous	1	2	3	4
M	I feel I receive an unfair salary for work I am expected to do.	1	2	3	4
N	I feel that there are work situations not being taken into account, (please list items below).	1	2	3	4
O	There are often times when relationships within my team are difficult and causing stress.	1	2	3	4
P	I am aware of times when I have witnessed discrimination, bullying, unhelpful criticism, intimidation and/or harassment from other staff within my work place.	1	2	3	4
Q	I feel that I am undervalued within my team due to behaviour of colleagues, clients, management, and/or society.	1	2	3	4
R	I feel there are times when support given to my colleagues or me could be improved to help reduce stressful situations.	1	2	3	4
S	I feel that there are times when I am not consulted and/or feel unable to express my opinions within the working team.	1	2	3	4

Comments/Notes



Stress/Mental Wellbeing – An Individual Template

The following template is for use by Manager's in cases where employees report being affected by medical conditions related to mental wellbeing or stress as detailed below. The template can be used prior to any employee being absent due to their condition as well as for those returning to work following an absence and should be utilised for any condition that relates to stress.

North Lanarkshire Council, through the Health and Safety function, undertakes a rotational assessment of work related stress (WRS) within each Service area. It is aimed at identifying organisational issues that affect the way in which groups of employees work and what causes them stress. Stress is not a medical condition, if the human body is exposed to stress for a prolonged period of time then medical conditions which may well develop are, for example, depression, anxiety, nervous debility etc.

An organisational stress risk assessment is not appropriate for use with an individual and whilst resources exist to undertake assessments of Service groups and smaller sections, there is no stress risk assessment mechanism for an individual. Individuals that experience stress need to be considered on a case by case basis using various supportive mechanisms e.g. Employee Counselling Service, Dignity at Work Policy, Occupational Health and/or Physiotherapy Services etc.

Where WRS, or an associated medical condition e.g. Anxiety, depression, nervous debility etc is evident within a "Fit Note" then this information should be followed up either as soon as possible in conjunction with HR or during the return to work interview, whichever is most appropriate. Where the matter has not been identified as a result of an absence, then an opportunity for a one to one discussion should be arranged by the relevant manager as soon as possible. Failure to adequately assess risks a work activity may have on an employee's mental health can lead to prosecution of the Council and/or the manager.

In recognising that managers need some guidance on how to deal with this issue, the following document can be considered a template for such discussions. It is based on the Health and Safety Executive's Stress Management Standards, and can be used to provide a focus for manager led discussion with an employee reporting occupational stress and/or associated conditions. The Council's intranet also has e-learning courses as well as the Council's Mental Health Policy and associated guidance available for further assistance.

The "standards" box outlines the best practice expected by the HSE. Whilst it is not always feasible to adopt all elements of best practice, managers can use this list as a guide to the areas that should be discussed. The "Self Assessment" box seeks to ask the manager about the actions they have taken to remove occupational stressors from their team's and/or the individual's work activities. These factors can be discussed with the employee concerned and the box used to make notes on the issues discussed.

The final page seeks to develop an individual action and/or record the outcome of the discussion. This should include the actions that the employee has to undertake in order to reduce the affect of any identified stressor.

Note: it is recognised that some issues cannot be taken forward because of the nature of the post, the provision of service etc (e.g. school crossing patrollers can't really choose when to start or finish). Advice and support on role adjustment is readily available from the relevant HR team and consultation with them, before and after a stress discussion, is to be encouraged. Managers are cautioned against creating new working arrangements or work patterns without consulting HR teams prior to it being offered formally to employees.

Standard 1: Demands

HSE Recommendations

'How do I help this employee cope with the demands of their job?'

Be aware that work demands should be adequate and achievable in relation to the agreed hours of work and that jobs must be within employees' capabilities, consider:

- Involve staff in identifying the resources they require to do their job effectively: provide appropriate training, equipment and other resources as required;
- Help staff plan for periods of particularly intensive work activity, where this can be predicted; help them prioritise and renegotiate deadlines;
- Cover workloads during staff absence. It is important that staff returning from sick leave are not deluged with a backlog of work;
- Share work sensibly and fairly amongst colleagues: ensure clarity about who is doing what and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort;
- Ensure that all physical hazards are dealt with through the risk assessment process and that all Health and Safety policies are applied consistently.

NB Employees should be familiar with the procedure for raising and discussing concerns, individually and confidentially. They also need to be confident of a prompt response.

Self Assessment

What is in place to help this member of staff cope with the demands of their job?

Are current arrangements adequate and sufficient?

What more could reasonably be done?

Notes:

Standard 2: Control

HSE Recommendations

'How do I enable employees to have a say about the way in which they do their work?'

Provide opportunities for staff to develop and apply their initiative, and support flexibility in working arrangements (where possible)

- Consult staff on decisions that will affect them at work
- Be positive in acknowledging diversity amongst staff and appreciate that different skills will mean different approaches to work
- Allow staff to plan and implement delegated tasks with minimum intervention from management ; agree the mechanisms through which they can provide progress reports and access support, if required
- Identify employees' skills and interests: provide opportunities for staff to develop and apply these at work.

Self Assessment

What is in place to enable this member of staff to have a say about the way in which they do their work?

Are current arrangements adequate and sufficient?

What more could reasonably be done?

Notes:

Standard 3: Support

HSE Recommendations

'How do I ensure that employees receive adequate information and support from colleagues at all levels?'

Lead by example and encourage a healthy work/ life balance. Provide frequent opportunities for discussion with staff.

- Encourage staff to take meal breaks, full annual leave entitlements and actively discourage a 'long hours' culture
- Meet with staff regularly, in groups and on a one-to-one basis. Ask for opinions, listen to responses and provide constructive feedback. Encourage staff to talk to each other about projects in which they are involved
- Discuss emerging pressures at staff meetings and talk about managing these together. Encourage staff to become involved in generating solutions as well as identifying concerns.
- Encourage staff to share individual concerns with you at an early stage
- Support and encourage staff experiencing difficulties; ensure that they are aware of available support services, such as, counselling, welfare and occupational health services
- Offer collective and individual training opportunities in relevant areas e.g. stress management, time management, assertiveness

Ensure that new staff receive induction training and appropriate mentoring and support; invite feedback on the value of the experience and revise induction procedures accordingly

Self Assessment

What is in place to ensure that this member of staff receives adequate information and support from colleagues at all levels?

Are current arrangements adequate and sufficient?

What more could reasonably be done?

Notes:

Standard 4: Relationships

HSE Recommendations

'How do I promote positive working relationships and eliminate unacceptable behaviour?'

Lead the development of a culture in which staff share, trust each other and pull together as a team

- Regularly praise and encourage staff; look for opportunities to celebrate the success of individuals and groups
- Provide opportunities for staff to work together in small groups on a variety of projects
- Talk to your team regularly and encourage open and honest feedback
- Offer interested staff training in related skills development e.g. active listening skills, restorative practices
- Ensure all staff are aware of, and have access to, the council's policy on dignity at work
- Agree a confidential in-house system for reporting instances of unacceptable behaviour at work; develop procedures which ensure a prompt response from management

Self Assessment

What is in place to help this member of staff experience positive working relationships?

Are current arrangements adequate and sufficient?

What more could reasonably be done?

Notes:

Standard 5: Role

HSE Recommendations

'How do I ensure that employees understand their roles and responsibilities?'

Develop clear remits and ensure that requirements are compatible and practical

- Ensure all staff are issued with clear job descriptions, which highlight the core functions and responsibilities of their post
- Develop personal work plans and discuss these with staff; clarify priorities and the detail of tasks
- Provide opportunities for your staff to discuss their respective roles and responsibilities with each other
- Display improvement / action plans prominently and remind staff regularly about development priorities and targets

Self Assessment

What is in place to ensure that this member of staff understands their roles and responsibilities?

Are current arrangements adequate and sufficient?

What more could reasonably be done?

Notes:

Standard 6: Change

HSE Recommendations

'How do I actively engage employees during organisational and workplace change?'

Consult employees about proposed change; provide them with opportunities to influence proposals and track change as it occurs.

- Provide staff with concise and accurate information about any proposed change. Ensure they understand reasons, timescale and the way in which the change will impact on them at work
- Give staff regular updates at staff meetings and supplement with messages on a bulletin board or in a day book, for example
- Provide a confidential system to enable staff to comment and ask questions before, during and after the proposed change; invite staff to suggest ways in which the management of change within the workplace could be improved
- Involve staff in revising short and long term work objectives, in line with the requirements of the change
- Be sensitive to the impact of change on individual members of staff; acknowledge the time required for physical, mental, social and emotional adjustment

Self Assessment

What is in place to help this member of staff engage actively with organisational and workplace change?

Are current arrangements adequate and sufficient?

What more could reasonably be done?

Notes:

Stress/Mental Wellbeing Assessment - Action Plan/Record of Discussion.

Name of Employee

Date of Discussion

Review Date

Points for Action	Responsibility	Timescale

Employee's Signature

Manager's signature

Extracted from HSF32

Employee Information - 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. Specific advice 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.

Extracted from IS89

Impact Assessments

Document Title: Health and Safety Policy - Arrangement Section 21 - Stress at Work

Date: 1 March 2017

Review Date: As circumstances dictate

Environmental Impact Assessment: This document has been assessed for significant environmental impact; no detrimental impact has been identified

Equality Impact Assessment: This document has been assessed for significant equality implications; no significant issues have been identified.

General Comments: This document is the arrangement section, relating to the management of occupational stress, associated with the Council's health and safety policy required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the general aims of the council is to ensure a healthy and safe working environment for all persons working for or make use of Council Services. Nothing in the document serves to have any negative impact on the above issues and indeed, in general, associated documents will encourage positive consideration of the factors to ensure all members of the workforce and community are afforded access to the same safe and healthy workplace.