



Stress and Mental Well-being at Work Policy

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Version	Date	Amendments	Author	Status
0.1 to 0.4	Oct 2021 to Oct 2022	Initial Draft – Reviewed by the HR Team & the Trust Board. Consultation Process – Draft shared with the working group consisting of Senior Leaders, HR, and the Trade Unions.	Lisa-Marie McGrath	Consulted & Reviewed, and implemented agreed points
1.0	01/12/2022	Final Draft – Approved by the CEO and The Trust Board	Lisa-Marie McGrath	Approved
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Stress and Mental Well-being at Work Policy

ABOUT THIS POLICY

1.1 We are committed to protecting the health, safety and well-being of our staff. We recognise the importance of identifying and tackling the causes of work-related stress. We also recognise that while unrelated to the workplace, personal stress can adversely affect staff well-being at work. We want to support the mental well-being of all our staff and will provide appropriate support for staff who are suffering from stress or mental ill-health on a confidential basis where appropriate, regardless of its source.

1.2 We will:

- Promote a culture of open communication. We want staff to feel confident that any concerns they raise about their work or working environment will be addressed. Therefore, we will provide both formal and informal means for them to raise concerns.
- Provide training for managers in good management practices.
- Take account of stress and mental well-being when planning and allocating workloads. We will provide opportunities to discuss these through our appraisal and one-to-one processes.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking and monitor holidays to ensure that staff are using their entitlement.
- Ensure risk assessments include or specifically address work-related stress.
- Facilitate requests for flexible working where reasonably practicable in accordance with our Flexible Working Policy.
- Ensure that our change management processes are designed to minimise uncertainty and stress in any workplace reorganisation.
- Implement policies and procedures to address factors that can cause stress at work or add to personal stress, in particular, so that we can:
 - a) provide a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation; and
 - b) address inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action.
- Provide training to help all staff understand and recognise the causes of work-related stress and mental ill-health, the impact of stress from factors in everyday life and the steps they can take to protect and enhance their mental well-being and that of their colleagues.

- Provide support services such as occupational health, an employee assistance programme, and mental health first aiders for staff affected by or absent by reason of stress.

1.3 This policy covers all employees.

2. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

2.1 We have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that your health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised.

2.2 This policy takes account of our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1998 and Equality Act 2010.

3. PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POLICY

3.1 Our board of directors (the board) has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. The board has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the HR Manager.

3.2 We will monitor the development of good practices in approaches to work-related stress and mental well-being at work and will keep our practices and the effectiveness of this policy under review to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.

3.3 All managers are responsible for recognising potential work-related stress or mental ill-health issues in the staff they manage. They will be given the training to support them in this and should seek advice from the HR Department if they have concerns.

3.4 We have appointed a number of mental health first aiders whose details are available and whose role is to ensure the effectiveness of this policy. Staff can contact a mental health first to discuss any concerns they have about work-related stress or any other issue affecting mental health at work.

3.5 All staff should ensure that they are familiar with this policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. Staff should plan and organise their work to meet personal and organisational objectives and cooperate with support, advice, and guidance offered by Line Managers/SLT. Anyone who experiences or is aware of a situation that may result in work-related stress or undermine mental well-being should speak to a Line Manager/SLT or a mental health first aider.

4. UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

4.1 Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or demands placed on them. Stress is not an illness but sustained over a period of time; it can lead to mental and/or physical illness.

- 4.2 Mental health is a term used to describe our emotional, psychological and social well-being; it affects how we think, feel and act and how we cope with the normal pressures of everyday life. Positive mental health is rarely an absolute state since factors inside and outside work affect mental health, meaning that we move on a spectrum that ranges from being in good to poor mental health.
- 4.3 There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enable individuals to meet their full potential and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when the pressure becomes excessive, it produces stress and undermines mental health.
- 4.4 Pressures outside the workplace, whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown or financial worries, can result in stress and poor mental health. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.
- 4.5 We recognise that individuals react to similar situations in different ways and that what triggers stress and poor mental health varies from person to person.

5. SUPPORTING MENTAL WELL-BEING AT WORK

- 5.1 We want to ensure that our workplace supports good mental health for all staff. However, we recognise that there may be occasions when work or outside work events result in staff feeling that their mental health is suffering. Anyone who feels that they are suffering from work-related stress should follow the steps set out in paragraph 6 in addition to making use of the support services referred to in this policy, which all staff are encouraged to access if they ever feel they need support or assistance.
- 5.2 All managers should work with the HR Department and make appropriate referrals to the Occupational Health provider to support staff. In particular, they need to:
- Promote a culture of open communication.
 - Effectively plan and provide feedback on performance.
 - Ensure that staff receive the necessary training.
 - Monitor workloads and reallocate work where necessary.
 - Ensure that staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and others and act on behaviour that falls below those standards.
- 5.3 We have a number of mental health first aiders who can be contacted by any member of staff who is experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress and who can provide details of available support. Details of mental health first aiders can be obtained from the HR department.
- 5.4 We have the following services in place to assist staff who may be suffering from stress or poor mental health:

- Training and workshops on stress management and mental well-being to assist staff and managers in recognising and coping with stress and taking care of their mental health.
- A confidential helpline staffed by independent advisers with access to specialist counsellors. The helpline provides help with physical, mental and social issues and is available **24 hours a day**. The helpline number is **0800 882 4102**.
- The HR Department can be contacted on **0161 532 3250**.

5.5 Help and information can also be obtained from Mind, the mental health charity, www.mind.org.uk or the Samaritans, www.samaritans.org.

5.6 If any staff member is considered by their Line Manager/SLT or colleagues to be at serious risk of self-harm or harming others, action must be taken straight away. The matter should be referred to the HR Department, who will seek medical advice from the Occupational Health provider if that is reasonably practicable. Every effort will be made to contact any person nominated by the staff member as an emergency contact. Where necessary, the emergency services will be called. The well-being of the staff member and those around them will, at all times, be our first concern.

6. ADDRESSING WORK-RELATED STRESS

6.1 If you believe you are suffering from work-related stress, you should first discuss this with your line manager. If you feel unable to do so, you should contact a mental health champion and the HR department. You should also access the support services referred to in paragraph 5.

6.2 Once an issue affecting your health comes to the attention of your Line Manager/SLT, we will discuss with you what steps can be taken to address that issue. Those steps may include any of the following:

- A review of your current job role, responsibilities, workload and working hours. Adjustments may be agreed to on a temporary basis and subject to further review, where appropriate.
- Where it appears that stress has been caused by bullying or harassment, investigation under our Disciplinary and/or Grievance Procedures.
- Referral for medical advice, treatment, and/or a medical report is to be provided by the occupational health provider or any specialist or GP who has been treating you.
- If you are on a sickness absence, discussion of an appropriate return to work programme. Our Sickness Absence Policy may be applied.

6.3 The occupational health provider and EAP services will continue to be used appropriately to help staff overcome work-related stress and other stress problems and the impact that they have on their ability to do their duties.

7. ABSENCE DUE TO STRESS OR MENTAL ILL-HEALTH

7.1 If you are absent due to work-related stress or mental ill-health, you should follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained in your contract and/or our Sickness Absence Policy.

7.2 In cases of prolonged or repeated absence, it may be necessary to apply the procedure set out in our Sickness Absence Policy and Capability Procedure.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

8.1 Information about stress, mental health and mental well-being is highly sensitive. Therefore, every staff member is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality required when dealing with information about stress or mental health, whether they are supporting a colleague or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a workplace policy or procedure.

8.2 Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action.

8.3 However, there are occasions when information about stress or mental well-being needs to be shared with third parties. For example:

- Where steps need to be taken to address work-related stress, such as reallocating work within a team.
- Where medical advice is required on how to support a staff member, address issues raised by work-related stress or address issues raised by mental ill-health.
- Where allegations of harassment, bullying or other misconduct require a disciplinary investigation or proceedings to take place.
- Where a member of staff presents an immediate danger to themselves or others.

In these circumstances, wherever possible, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.

9. PROTECTION FOR THOSE REPORTING STRESS OR ASSISTING WITH AN INVESTIGATION

9.1 Staff who report that they are suffering from work-related stress or mental ill-health, who support a colleague in making such a report or who participate in any investigation connected with this policy in good faith will be protected from any form of intimidation or victimisation.

9.2 If you feel you have been subjected to any such intimidation or victimisation, you should seek support from your Line Manager/SLT and the HR department. You may also raise a complaint in accordance with our Grievance Procedure.

9.3 If, after investigation, you are found to have provided false information in bad faith, you will be subject to action under our Disciplinary Procedure.