CARDIFF COUNCIL

CODE OF GUIDANCE

Stress – Risk Assessment

Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Guidance is to provide assistance to managers in assessing and reducing stress in the workplace.

The Code of Guidance addresses the following:

1.0   The legal responsibilities

There is no health and safety legislation within the United Kingdom relating specifically to stress at work but it is an issue of particular concern to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) which is the body which enforces health and safety law within the Council.

Although there is no specific health and safety legislation referring to stress, two key pieces of legislation require employers to address work-related stress as a health and safety issue:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all employees. It is implied that the term "health" includes "mental health", and "personal injury", as defined in the Act, includes "any disease and impairment to a person's physical or mental condition". The general duty to ensure health of employees at work includes taking steps to make sure they do not suffer stress-related ill health as a result of their work.

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to make suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to health and safety of employees when they are at work. This includes an assessment of the

risks of employees developing stress-related ill health as a result of their work. Measures must be taken to control the risks identified by risk assessments.

The other provisions of the Regulations which apply in relation to stress are the employer's duties to ensure employees capabilities and provide training and specific duties towards young people. The Approved Code of Practice and Guidance on the Regulations states:

"When allocating work to employees, employers should ensure the demands of the job do not exceed the employees ability to carry out the work without risk to themselves or others. Employers should review their employees capabilities to carry out their work as necessary."

The Regulations prohibit the employment of a young person (i.e. someone under the age of 18) for work that is beyond their psychological capability, for example, dealing with violent behaviour or taking decisions under pressure beyond their emotional capability.

2.0 The HSE and stress

The HSE has produced Stress Management Standards and guidelines on work related stress. The Management Standards are based on six key areas (or 'risk factors') that can be the causes of work-related stress. These are:

- DEMANDS of the job
- CONTROL over work
- SUPPORT from managers and colleagues
- RELATIONSHIPS at work
- ROLE in the organisation
- CHANGE and how it is managed.

There is one Management Standard for each risk factor. The standard for each factor defines what is expected and what should be happening. 'Demands' for example, covers issues like workload, work patterns and the work environment. The Standard for Demands is:

- Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their job; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

What should be happening / states to be achieved is / are:

- The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to agreed hours of work;

- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;

- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and

- Employees concerns about their work environment are addressed.

The Management Standards are detailed in Appendix A.

If the six factors are properly managed, work related stress can be reduced. The HSE expects employers to risk assess for stress but does not expect all the Standards to be met at the first attempt. The Standards are goals to be worked towards through an ongoing process of risk assessment and continuous improvement.

HSE guidelines on work related stress are listed at the end of this Code of Guidance in the section "Further Information"

3.0 Definition of work related stress

The HSE define work-related stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed on them."

This makes the important distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge and work related stress which is natural, and the distressing reaction to demands or pressures that mean a person feels that they can not cope at a given time.

It should be noted that lack of pressure can also cause stress and that different people respond to different types of levels of pressure in different ways. What is stressful to one person may not be for another person.

Work related stress is not an illness but if prolonged or particularly intense, it may lead to increased problems with ill health e.g.

- physical effects – heart disease, back pain, gastrointestinal conditions, headaches, high blood pressure
- psychological effects – anxiety, depression, insomnia, apathy, withdrawal, aggression

It can also lead to unhealthy behaviour such as skipping meals, drinking too much caffeine or alcohol and smoking cigarettes.

4.0 Risk assessing stress in the workplace

Completion of a risk assessment does not in itself reduce work-related stress but the actions which it shows can be taken may do so.

Before undertaking the assessment

- talk to staff about work related stress and the reasons for carrying out a risk assessment
- explain that it is not possible to eliminate all stress at work but steps can be taken to reduce it and help staff
- consider carrying out the assessment as a group, involving Trade Union representatives and Human Resource staff
- consider information and data which can help identify if there is a work related stress problem:
    - informal talks with staff
    - comments from staff regarding headaches, palpitations, tiredness, skin irritations, indigestion, difficulty sleeping, or feelings such as helplessness, lack of control, tenseness or increased worrying
    - performance appraisal feedback
    - sickness absence
    - day to day performance
    - accident rate
    - staff turnover
    - consider comments made in exit interviews
    - staff feedback and Team Briefings e.g. concerns about violence, workload, lack of training, deadlines
    - staff morale
    - individual behaviour e.g. cynicism, withdrawal, crying, fixation in meetings, mood swings, lack of concentration, lack of confidence
    - increased use of alcohol
    - staff working excessive hours
    - staff taking work home
    - staff lateness and leaving early

The risk assessment process

The risk assessment form for assessing risks in compliance with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 should be used and the principles of "Five Steps to Risk Assessment" as outlined in the HSE publication of that title and in the Cardiff Council Code of Guidance – Risk Assessment applied. The five steps are:

- identify the hazards
- decide who might be harmed and how
- evaluate the risk by:
    - identifying the action already being taken
    - deciding if enough action is being taken
    - deciding if more action is required and what is needed

- record the significant findings of the assessment
- review the assessment at appropriate intervals

Step 1: Identify the hazards

The HSE identify six broad risk factors for work related stress (i.e. the Management Standards:

- demands of the job
- control over work
- support from managers and colleagues
- relationships
- role in the organisation
- change and how it is managed

Step 2: Who might be harmed and how

Work related stress can effect anyone at anytime but in particular circumstances, staff may be more vulnerable e.g. re-organisation of work, new legislation, staff shortages, deadlines, returning to work after stress related illness or long term sickness or working in isolation. In carrying out the assessment consideration should be given to the team as a whole and the individuals of that team.

People react to stress in different ways and the effects of stress can be identified by considering issues mentioned previously e.g. sickness, absence, staff comments, morale, performance etc. The six factors contained in the Standards can affect different people in different ways.

Step 3: Evaluate the risk

Each of the six factors identified in Step 1 need to be considered and in particular the following three questions need to be asked:

- what action is already being taken to address the issue?
- is enough action being taken?
- does more action need to be taken?

When answering the questions the principles of controlling any risk should be applied in the following order:

- avoid the risks e.g. reduce the risks of violence
- combat risks at source e.g. reorganise work, clarify roles
- adapt the work to the individual e.g. alleviate monotonous work
- consider overall factors and job design e.g. organisation of work, working conditions, use of technology, communication systems
- ensure staff have appropriate training and instruction

It is not possible to identify all the actions which can be taken to reduce stress but considering each of the six risk factors and the three questions above, steps to help reduce stress can be identified. Not all of the factors above will apply in all work

situations and it is important that risk assessments are carried out in respect of individual situations.

Risk assessing and stress feature a partnership approach based on openness, honesty and trust.

Factor 1: Demands

Demands on the individual are often cited as the main cause of work- related stress. Demands should be managed and can be divided into the following broad categories:

- overload:
    - too much work
    - too difficult work
    - unreasonable deadlines
- underload:
    - insufficient work
    - under stimulating work
- physical environment:
    - noise
    - vibration
    - lighting
    - ventilation
    - temperature
- psychosocial environment
    - verbal abuse and physical violence
    - isolation
    - emotional demands

The following can assist in reducing stress from work demands:

- ensure sufficient resources
- prioritise work
- re-negotiate deadlines
- strike a balance so staff are not overloaded, underloaded or confused about jobs
- re-allocate work
- train staff
- encourage staff to talk at an early stage if they feel they can not cope
- talk as a team about what needs to be done, who is doing what and ways of sharing the workload
- ensure shift work systems are agreed with staff and are fair
- risk assess the physical environment and take steps to control risks
- assess the risk of violence (verbal and physical) and take steps to control risks

Factor 2: Control

Control is the amount of say an individual has in how their work is carried out.

The following can improve control in the workplace:

- enable staff to plan their own work and make decisions how work should be completed and problems tackled
- enable staff to use various skills to carry out work
- work as a team
- only monitor individual output if this is essential
- managers should be supportive e.g. if things go wrong or staff are unable to cope with pressures

Factor 3: Support

This risk factor recognises the need for individuals to receive support from peers and managers, training to undertake their job and for individual differences to be taken into account.

Issues to be considered in addressing the factor include:

- support and encouragement should be given even when things go wrong
- listening to and involving staff
- encouraging staff to talk about work related stress at an early stage
- provision of adequate training (including induction training) to do the job
- considering individual skills and personalities
- bringing the Employee Counselling Service, (029 2046 8565) or the Teachers Support Network (08000 562 561) to the attention of staff
- encouraging staff to attend Stress Awareness Workshops
- referring staff for specialist assistance e.g. see Health Helplines on the Human Resources, Health and Safety Intranet site, or General Practitioners
- giving staff a copy of the HSE leaflet "Tackling work related stress – A guide for employees"
- encouraging staff to attend appropriate coping skills training e.g. stress management, assertiveness, time management
- carrying out return to work interviews after sickness absence.

Factor 4: Relationships

"Relationships" is the way people at work interact with colleagues. It includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

All staff should be aware that bullying and harassment is totally unacceptable in Cardiff Council and that action will be taken if it occurs. (See Harassment Policy 1.CM.109)

A culture should be encouraged where people trust each other and recognise the contributions everyone makes to be a team.

Stress can also be caused by physical or social isolation e.g. lone working, or by poor interpersonal relationships between colleagues or staff and managers.   Team building activities and good communication can improve relationships.

Factor 5: Role

Individual roles should be clearly defined and understood and in particular consideration should be given to two particularly stressful areas in a person's role – "role conflict" and "role ambiguity". Clarity of role can be addressed by:

- ensuring staff have a defined role
- having up to date and relevant job descriptions
- encouraging staff to talk at an early stage if they are unclear about priorities or tasks
- giving staff clear direction and instructions
- performance appraisal
- team meetings

Factor 6: Change

Change is inevitable in the Council e.g. new technology, restructuring, different priorities, new systems etc. It can be managed by:

- explaining why it is happening, what is happening, the timetable and how it will occur
- providing appropriate training
- proper communication
- involving staff
- supporting staff
- reviewing the changes
- consulting with trade unions
- open door management

Step 4: Record the significant findings

The significant findings of the risk assessment should be recorded on the risk assessment form and the findings shared with staff.   An example of a risk assessment addressing the risk factors and suggesting control measures is included as Appendix B. It may be useful to develop an Action Plan to address any further controls which are necessary. The Action Plan should be kept under review and updated / added to as appropriate.

Step 5: Review the assessment

Assessments should be reviewed whenever there is reason to think that they are no longer valid or there is a change planned. The HSE suggests this review should initially be every six months but if there are no significant changes it can be done annually. Staff should be involved in the review process.

If there are changes in an individual's life, e.g. domestic changes, illness, consideration should be given as to how this may affect the assessment and it should be reviewed if necessary.   Although most stress risk assessments will address a team on occasions, e.g. return to work after stress related illness, it may be appropriate for the manager to carry out an individual risk assessment and include it in the individual's personal file.

4.0 And finally ……..

Sometimes, with the best will in the world, a manager can be a source of stress e.g. making unrealistic demands, own stressed behaviour (not taking breaks, working long hours, taking work home, rushing around), favouritism, bullying, poor communication, not really listening or general management style.

Consider your behaviour and expectations and if it would be useful, attend a Stress Management Course for Managers facilitated by Human Resources.

Further information

- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 HSE L21
- Tackling work related stress – A managers guide to improving and maintaining employee health and wellbeing (HSG218)
- Real Solutions, Real People – A managers guide to tackling work-related stress (ISBN 0 -7176-2767-5)
- Working together to remove stress at work – A guide for employers (Available on the HSE website at www.hse.gov.uk)
- Tackling work related stress – A guide for employees (ISBN 0 7176 2065 4)
- Cardiff Council Code of Guidance – Risk Assessment
- Cardiff Council Code of Guidance – Employment of Young Persons (including unpaid, work experience and volunteers)
- Cardiff Council Harassment Policy and Procedure
- Cardiff Council Leaflet – 'Managing Stress'

APPENDIX A

THE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

DEMANDS

Includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work;
- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;
- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and
- Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed

CONTROL

How much say a person has in the way they do their work

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work;
- Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work;
- Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work;
- The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills;
- Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and
- Employees are consulted over their work patterns.

SUPPORT

Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;
- Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it;
- Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job; and
- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

RELATIONSHIPS

Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
- Employees share information relevant to their work;
- The organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour

ROLE

Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible;
- The organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;
- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear; and
- Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

CHANGE

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

The standard is that:

- Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / states to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reason for proposed changes;
- The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals;
- Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs;
- Employees are aware of timetables for changes;
- Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

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HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

Workplace Location(s)……

……………………………………………………………………

Task/Activity …………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………

Date …………………………………

Signed…………………………………

Assessment Review Date……………

HAZARD	WHO MIGHT BE HARMED	RISK RATING	IS THE RISK ADEQUATELY CONTROLLED?	WHAT FURTHER ACTION IS NECESSARY TO CONTROL THE RISK?	RESIDUAL RISK
Look only for hazards, which you could reasonably expect to result in significant harm under the conditions in your workplace. Use the following examples as a guide:- • Slipping/tripping hazards • Noise • Electricity • Fume • Fire • Vehicles • Dust • Violence • Chemicals • Moving parts of machinery • Manual Handling • Work at height • Ejection of materials • Poor lighting • Pressure systems • Low temperature	There is no need to list individuals by name - just think about groups of people doing similar work or who might be affected e.g.:- • Office staff • Operators • Maintenance personnel • Cleaners • Contractors • Members of the public • People sharing your workplace **Pay particular attention to:-** • Disabled persons • Young persons • Inexperienced staff • Visitors • Lone Workers • Pregnant/Nursing women	Prioritise risk as high, medium or low	Have you already taken precautions against the risks from the hazards you listed, for example: have you provided:- • Adequate information, instruction or training? • Adequate safe systems or procedures? Do the Precautions:- • Meet the standards set by a legal requirement? • Comply with a recognised standard? • Represent a good practice? • Reduce risk as far as reasonably practicable? If so, then the risks are adequately controlled, but you need to indicate the precautions you have in place. You may refer to procedures, manuals, etc. giving this information.	What more could you reasonably do for those risks which you found were not adequately controlled? Priority should be given to those risks, which affect large numbers of people and/or could result in serious harm. Apply the principles below when taking further action, if possible in the following order:- • Remove the risk completely • Try a less risky option • Prevent access to the hazard (eg by guarding) • Organise work to reduce exposure to the hazard • Issue personal protective equipment	Prioritise as High, medium or low

List hazards here:	List groups of people who are especially at risk from the significant hazards which you have identified:	Risk	List existing controls here - or note where the information may be found:	Describe the action needed to improve matters where it is reasonably practicable to do more to control risks. **Specify also the target date for action and the person to action**.	Residual Risk
DEMANDS **eg** **Work overload** **Work under load** **Difficult work**			Workloads discussed at team meetings – reallocate work if necessary. Workload discussed monthly with employees. Personal work plans developed/ Personal Performance and Development Plan. Resources periodically reviewed e.g., people, time, equipment. Time management / prioritisation courses available for staff. Regular breaks allowed especially if work is complex or emotionally demanding. Realistic deadlines set and renegotiated if necessary. Staff not encouraged to take work home or work long hours – situation is monitored. Workload matched to people / team resources. Employees whose work is emotionally demanding are supported eg job rotation . Possible 'pinch points' identified		
Physical Environment			Workplace and work activity risk assessment (generic and specific) carried out and reviewed as appropriate and at least once a year. Workplace inspections by managers. Workplace inspections by the HS Advisers. Mechanism in place for employees to raise concerns e.g. Team Meetings, Hazard Reporting Book. Health and Safety Training needs analysis carried out annually and appropriate training provided		

List hazards here:	List groups of people who are especially at risk from the significant hazards which you have identified:	Risk	List existing controls here - or note where the information may be found:	Describe the action needed to improve matters where it is reasonably practicable to do more to control risks. **Specify also the target date for action and the person to action**.	Residual Risk
Verbal Abuse / Physical Abuse			Violence at work included in general risk assessments. Control measures suggested in Code of Guidance – Violence at Work. Training provided to help employees deal with and defuse difficult situations. Job rotation where necessary		
Competency			Training needs analysis annually and up to date training records. Personal Performance and Development Plan / personal work plans. Training linked to performance monitoring arrangements to ensure it is effective and sufficient.		
Working Patterns			Shift work systems kept under review. Flexi-time / Special Leave Overtime kept under review		
Lone Working			Lone working is risk assessed. See Code of Guidance – Lone Working		

List hazards here:	List groups of people who are especially at risk from the significant hazards which you have identified:	Risk	List existing controls here - or note where the information may be found:	Describe the action needed to improve matters where it is reasonably practicable to do more to control risks. <u>Specify also the target date for action and the person to action</u>.	Residual Risk
CONTROL **eg**. **Lack of control over pace of work.** **Lack of control over prioritisation of work.** **Not involved in decision making.**			Systems implemented that enable employees to have a say in their work eg. project meetings, one to ones, performance review. Regular team meetings held with for two-way dialogue. Project management principles applied to work e.g. agree on objectives / rules/ timescales / support / review meetings. How decisions are made is kept under review with staff involved in decision-making. All Team Member skills are utilized.		
SUPPORT **eg.** **Lack of management support.** **Lack of adequate training.** **Individual factors**			One to one talks about issues / pressures. Team meetings include discussion on pressures. Work-related stress included in team meetings / performance reviews. Staff asked what support they would like from managers / colleagues. Staff given regular and constructive feedback. Training needs analysis and training (including refresher training). Employee Counselling Service / Teachers Support Network brought to the attention of staff. Staff encouraged to attend coping skills training eg. Time management / Stress Awareness Workshop. Staff have a copy of the HSE leaflets – Tackling Work Related Stress, and Working Together to Reduce Stress at Work – A Guide for Employees. Staff have a copy of the Cardiff Council leaflet 'Managing Stress'. Return to work interviews carried out after sickness absence and documentation completed and put on personal file. Individual risk assessment if someone has		

		been ill with alleged work related stress or if otherwise appropriate. Staff advised of specialist assistance eg. Employee Counselling Service, General Practitioner, Health Help lines on Health and Safety Intranet Site, Occupational Health Service. Phased return to work after long term sickness absence if appropriate. Opportunities provided for career development. 'Buddy System' (HR developing in 2005). Stress Action Plan developed, implemented and kept under review. Staff encouraged to report any problems. Induction training includes information on health and safety and support mechanisms. See Code of Guidance-Induction Training	
RELATIONSHIPS **eg.** **Bullying** **Harassment** **Social or physical isolation** **Poor relationship with managers,** **Interpersonal conflict.**		Staff are aware of Harassment Policy and Grievance Policy Open management style Additional support provide for staff who work in isolation Team building activities carried out Good communication systems e.g. one to ones , Team Briefing, team meetings Celebrate success e.g. informal lunches ,wash-up meetings	

ROLE **eg.** **Unclear role in team/ organisation** **Poor direction / instructions** **Conflicting lines of management** **Conflicting objectives and priorities**		Roles clarified in team meetings Corporate values / objectives / initiatives / Service Area Business Plans discussed at Team Meetings Role and objectives clarified in personal work plans / Personal Performance and Development Plan / one to ones Clear job descriptions Role clear in induction Effective communication between teams e.g. "guest" speakers at team meetings ,joint team meetings	
CHANGE **eg. Communication of change** **Uncertainty**		Staff involved in change process eg -why it is happening -objectives -how it is happening -key steps/milestones -staff views sought Effective communication systems eg one to ones ,team meetings ,regular updates even if there is no news Impact of change on roles explained /discussed Open door management policy Process kept under review/project managed Appropriate support provide Consultation with trade unions	