Stress management

Policy and
General Information Guide including
Work Related Stress Risk Assessments

Approved by Cabinet: 21 July 2004 for implementation 1 September 2004

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STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. Policy Statement

1.1   Hyndburn Borough Council is committed to providing a working environment that values and promotes the health and wellbeing of all its employees. It recognises and accepts that there are increasing demands and pressures placed upon employees, and to some extent these could be considered an integral and unavoidable part of working life.

1.2   At the same time the Council is fully aware of the need to manage work related stress and is taking positive action by implementing this stress management policy throughout the organisation.

1.3   It will assist those experiencing ill health, and take positive action to support their recovery.

2. Policy Aims

2.1   Our aims are to:

- To recognise the incidence of work related stress and to take action to minimise such risks

- To manage all cases of stress presented in the workplace through effective and sensitive people management

- To develop working practices that reduce the factors that may lead to stress in the workplace

- To assist employees in managing stress for themselves and others

- To monitor the effectiveness of the policy

3. Definition of Stress

3.1   The Health and Safety Executive has defined stress as:-

" the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them. It arises when they worry that they can't cope".

This definition makes an important distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge, and work related stress, which is the natural but distressing reaction to demands or pressures that the person perceives they cannot cope with at a given time.

3.2   Anyone can suffer from stress – no one is immune. Pressures can arise from an individuals personal life as well as from work and individuals will vary in their ability to cope with different types of pressure. Some may recognise that their health is affected and will seek help; others may fail to recognise the symptoms and affect it may be having on them. They may rely on those around them, including their manager and work colleagues to recognise it and take action.

3.3   Although outside factors may be outside an employer's responsibilities, these factors cannot be ignored as they could make employees vulnerable to stress at work as well as affecting their performance in the workplace.

3.4   The Department of Health guidelines on managing work related stress suggest that there are three levels at which employers can and should take action to demonstrate their duty of care to employees. These are:

Level 1 – Prevention
Level 2 – Recognition
Level 3 – Rehabilitation

4. Level 1- Prevention

4.1   Measures at an Organisational level

The authority will promote a culture that values employees as individuals and aims to maximise employee morale and well being by:

☐ Encouraging open communication throughout the organisation

☐ Respond to the views and concerns of employees arising from Employee Surveys

☐ Reviewing and improving policies and procedures that can be effective in improving employee health and well being

☐ Providing access to management development programmes for those with managerial and supervisory responsibility

☐ Raising the awareness of managers and employees about stress and how to manage it, their own and others

☐ Developing individual workplans that agree clear and achievable work objectives

☐ Providing a working environment that protects the well being of employees

☐ Supporting employees to develop themselves, ensuring they possess the relevant skills and abilities

☐ Providing opportunities for employees to maintain and promote their health and well being

☐ Monitoring sickness absence levels to measure the incidence of absence due to stress or nervous debility

☐ Undertaking stress risk assessments which involve consultation with health and safety representatives

4.2   Supporting managers

The authority will:

☐ Develop guidance notes on good management practices to reduce the incidence of work place stress

☐ Provide guidance to managers on how to assess risk in relation to workplace stress

☐ Provide training and development opportunities for managers

☐ Ensure that managers are aware of their responsibilities within the Councils Bullying and Harassment policy and other related HR policies

☐ Ensure that managers are aware of their responsibilities in the management of capability issues arising out of poor attendance or poor performance at work

☐ Support managers to carry out regular development and review meetings as part of the overall performance management framework

☐ Require managers to conduct regular team meetings as part of the Council's communication strategy, where employees are encouraged to raise concerns and deal with issues

4.3 Supporting employees

The authority will:

☐ Provide guidance and advice on managing stress, understanding the causes and preventative measures

☐ Encourage a working environment in which stress arising from work can be discussed sympathetically and positively and the information gained from these discussions fed into risk assessments.

☐ Implement a performance management framework that provides an opportunity for employees to agree clear and achievable work objectives with reasonable timescales attached.

☐ Provide access to training and development in accordance with the Employee Development and Appraisal scheme.

☐ Keep employees informed on issues that affect them and provide opportunities for them to be involved in decision making

☐ Promote a culture of consultation, participation and two way communication throughout the organisation, either individually or through the Councils formal mechanisms e.g. JCC and Corporate Health and Safety Team and Health and Safety Committee

☐ Take reasonable care for employees' safety in relation to their physical and mental well being

4.4 Supporting elected members

The authority will:

☐ Develop guidance and advice on managing stress, understanding the causes and preventative measures

☐ Support elected members to develop effective officer member relationships within the officer/member protocol and code of conduct

- Review role descriptions to ensure they provide clarity and guidance to individuals within the political management framework

- Ensure that elected members have access to training and development in accordance with the elected member development strategy

- Promote understanding on the responsibilities and accountabilities attached to the political decision making processes

4.5   Assessing risk

4.5.1   Risk assessment is the key to managing stress. The Health and Safety Executive identifies the following key factors which they believe can lead to workplace stress:

- Culture
- Demands
- Control
- Support
- Relationships
- Roles
- Change

4.5.2   Risk assessments will focus on these key factors and will examine whether existing measures to control harm are sufficient or if more needs to be done. The council has developed a related procedure for work related stress risk assessments. For further information and guidance refer to this procedure.

4.5.3   It is recognised that despite any preventative action to identify, remove or reduce stressors, there may still be occasions when employees may suffer from work related stress.

5. Level 2 – Recognition

5.1   Any employee exhibiting signs of stress should be given the opportunity to discuss this in a sympathetic and constructive environment.   An appropriate manager should carry out an individual risk assessment with the employee concerned following the guidance set out in Procedure for Undertaking work related stress risk assessments. This procedure will act as a guide for the manager to explore areas that the employee may be having difficulty with.   Where the employee identifies that the Line Manager/Employee relationship is a major factor that contributes to their Stress at Work an alternative manager or an officer from Human Resources **(see section 7 on confidentiality**) should be allocated to

undertake this role. An employee has the right to representation at the meeting. Outcomes of the meeting should be recorded on an individual action plan and a review date set.

5.2   Where individuals may be exhibiting symptoms of stress due to conflict or a breakdown in relationships; managers should take positive action to mediate such problems and resolve them. All employees have a duty to work cooperatively and to pursue a professional working relationship with managers, colleagues and peers at all times.

5.3   Where deemed appropriate, employees identified as suffering from stress may be referred to the Councils Occupational Health Advisor who may recommend counselling for the individual. In such circumstances employees will be afforded time off to access counselling and support.

5.4   Every effort will be made to support employees experiencing difficulties at work because of stress caused in their home life. This support may take the format of offering flexible hours (see Flexible Working Policy for further guidance) or providing time off for counselling.

6.   Level 3 – Rehabilitation

6.1   Rehabilitation will generally be required following a period of sickness absence. Considerations may include a phased return to work (see Capability Policy for further guidance).

6.2   Where the illness was caused by work place factors, managers should seek to eliminate or reduce the risk in relation to any identified sources of stress. Following periods of long-term absence managers should undertake an individual risk assessment to enable them to take any necessary action to reduce or eliminate the risk prior to that employee returning to work. Any alterations should be considered in accordance with the sickness absence management policy.

6.3   It is the duty of line managers to smooth the path for employees returning to work after a period of sickness and to avoid them being exposed to any further risk. Employees suffering from stress or a stress related illness should be treated with the same degree of care as those suffering from a physical illness or condition.

7.   Employees ' Responsibilities and Confidentiality

7.1   All employees are encouraged to be aware of their own levels of stress; take adequate care of themselves and take action to prevent deterioration

in their health. They need to work with managers to minimise the incidence of work related stress. This may involve making reasonable adjustments when working practices need to change due to forces outside the managers control.

7.2   Employees are requested to report matters of concern of a health and safety nature, as soon as they arise, including stress at work, to their manager. Employees have a role to play in identifying solutions or proposing actions to bring about improvements. Discussions with managers will be confidential; however it must be recognised that their manager has a responsibility to take appropriate action to resolve an issue. This may require the need to discuss any issues with a more senior manager, or a member of staff within Human Resources, or the Councils Occupational Health Advisor.

7.3   Likewise employees approaching Human Resources staff direct must again understand that any issues raised may need to be referred to a senior manager. Issues identified which may involve bullying, harassment or inappropriate management will be managed through the appropriate policies.

7.4   Where employees are referred for counselling, confidentiality will be afforded over the use of sessions and their content. An employee must understand that matters raised with a counsellor are confidential and the Council will not be aware of the contents, or able to take any appropriate action to resolve matters.

8.   Audit and evaluation

8.1   The authority will need to become aware of the factors that are most likely to lead to excessive pressure and stress in the workplace. It is committed to working with managers, employees, elected members and trade unions to identify which aspects of the working environment are causing most difficulties and to work together for improvements. Any work related stress audit will make use of best practice and available guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.

8.2   The Councils existing procedures in relation to performance management will contribute towards evaluating the effectiveness of the policy. Examples include: sickness absence monitoring, Investors in People reviews, employee surveys, grievances, exit questionnaires.

8.3   In addition results of risk assessments and monitoring activities will be made available to the Corporate Health and Safety Team and the Safety Committee.

8.4   The policy will be reviewed bi-annually to ensure it meets the needs of the organisation and its employees. The results of this evaluation will be reported to the Safety Committee and Cabinet

9.   Legal background

9.1   The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on employers to take reasonable care for employees' safety in relation to their physical and mental well being. In addition the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to identify and assess risks to employees' health and safety and take appropriate preventative measures to remove or reduce them.
Health and Safety Law is not the only legal reason why action needs to be taken to tackle work related stress. It should be noted as follows:

9.2   Section A4 of the Public Order Act 1986, makes it a criminal offence to use threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour likely to cause harassment, harm or distress. This can be relevant to bullying.

9.3   The prevention of Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence for a person to pursue a course of conduct , which amounts to the harassment of another person.

9.4   The European Working Time Directive provides for a maximum 48 hour working week and regular rest breaks. Harassment that may lead to stress related illness, as a result of discrimination is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995

10.   Related Council Policy and Procedures

Undertaking stress risk assessments – guidance for managers

Capability Policy and Guidelines

Flexible Working Policy

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Communications Strategy

Corporate Health and Safety Policy

Employee Development and Appraisal Scheme

Performance Management Framework

Substance Misuse Policy

The above policies can be accessed through the Councils Hyntranet or via the Employee Handbook

Undertaking Work Related Stress –Risk Assessments – Procedure and Guidance for managers

1.   Steps to take prior assessment

1.1   The following will help to prepare for the assessment:

- Discuss work-related stress with all employees, explaining that you want to identify if there is a problem within your area;

- Make them aware that the council has a stress management policy and as part of the policy is committed to undertaking regular risk assessments in regard to work related stress

- Share your aims with your employees and explain the risk assessment process and the risk factors identified by the HSE

- Remind employees of the guidance booklet for employees on stress awareness and ensure they all are able to access a copy

- Remind them that they should raise any concerns they may have at any time, either on a an individual basis or at team meeting

2.   The risk assessment process

The work-related stress risk assessment follows the same principles as any other risk assessment:

Step 1 –Identify the hazards
Step 2 – Decide who may be at risk and how
Step 3 – Evaluate the risk by
          i) Identifying what action you are already taking
          ii) Deciding whether it is enough or whether there is more you need to do
Step 4 – Record any significant findings
Step 5 – Review the assessment at appropriate intervals

2.1   Identify the hazards

For work related stress there are seven broad categories of risk factors as identified by the HSE:

- **Culture** – of the Council and the department – how work-related stress is approached

- **Demands –** such as workload and exposure to physical hazards;

- **Controls –** how much say a person has in the way they do their work;

- **Relationships –** covering issues such as bullying and harassment;

- **Change** – how change is managed and communicated;

- **Role –** whether the individual understands their role; and whether the council ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles;

- **Support, Training and Unique Factors –**

    - **Support –** from peers and line management;

    - **Training** – for the person to be able to undertake the core functions of the job;

    - **Unique Factors** – are there any special needs or circumstances that need to be taken account of

More detailed information on these factors can be found in the Stress Guidance booklets for managers and employees and at appendix A.

There are a variety of ways in which the information can be gathered for the risk assessment, for instance:

Informal talks to staff - either at team meetings or via normal daily contact. You should be able to pick up if staff are continually unhappy or not performing well.

Performance Management interviews – this provides an ideal opportunity for them to explore individually with staff what factors may be preventing them from performing better in their job.

Focus Groups – if information already available identifies particular groups or sections that are more susceptible to work related stress then a focus group can be set up to examine the causes and look for possible solutions.

One to one Interviews – if information available identifies that a particular group or section is more susceptible to work related stress then in some circumstances it may be more appropriate to hold one to one interviews rather than a focus group.

Return to Work Interviews – these provide a valuable opportunity to examine whether short-term absences may be linked to work related stress.

Sickness/Absence Statistics – the format of return to work interviews has been changed to make it easier to capture information on absences which may be attributable to work related stress.

Consultation – reports from undertaking staff surveys may highlight information for further examination. As may local health and safety reps or union reps. These possible valuable sources of information should not be ignored.

2.2   Decide who might be harmed and how.

2.2.1   Work related stress could affect any member of your team, especially those exposed to the risk factor categories mentioned above.

2.2.2   There are times when people are more vulnerable to work related stress and management should give serious consideration to anyone in the categories mentioned below:

- Suffered previous stress related illness;

- Experiencing recent domestic crisis, such as bereavement;

- Vulnerable worker for example young workers.

2.3   **Evaluate the risk –** to decide if enough has been done.

2.3.1   Consider how likely it is that each hazard mentioned in 2.1 above could cause harm to your employees. In taking action ask yourself for each:

- What action is being taken?

- Is it enough?

- If not, what more will you do?

2.3.2   You should eliminate the risk as far as possible. You should try to take action that protects everyone, rather than just a few individuals.

e.g   for example an employee may be working at a level detrimental to their health and the manager may have to intervene to reduce their exposure to further stress, thereby protecting both the individual and the Council.

2.4   **Record the significant findings**

2.4.1 You must record the significant findings of your risk assessments on the attached form and communicate your findings to employees.

2.4.2 The assessment should be used to monitor progress and keep an eye on particular hazards.

2.5   **Review the assessment**

2.5.1 You are required to review all risk assessments including those relating to work related stress <u>annually</u> or on a significant change of circumstances to ensure they are still relevant and where necessary reassess.

APPENDIX A
(Guidance extracted from HSG218 Tackling Work Related Stress by HSE)
FACTOR 1 – CULTURE

Organisational culture is key to determining how successful you will be in managing work related stress. Organisational culture is often very strong, rooted in history and difficult to change. An organisation has a positive culture when:

- Work related stress and health issues are treated seriously and the organisation responds positively to any concerns
- There is good open communication between employees and between employees and management
- Staff are consulted and, where possible, able to participate in decisions that may affect them
- Staff are supported emotionally and practically
- Staff 'buy into' their work i.e. they are undertaking tasks because they understand what they are trying to achieve and are proud of their achievements for personal and organisational reasons
- Problems are recognized and solved promptly
- Working long hours is not encouraged
- Staff are not encouraged to take work home

Some ideas for improvement

- Communicate regularly with staff, particularly those working remotely and be open and honest about what is happening at work and how it may affect them
- Adopt partnership approaches in the workplace to encourage staff to work with you to tackle work related stress or any emerging business problem. Encourage staff to talk to you at an early stage about work related stress, mental health issues and their concerns about work. Create an environment where these issues do not carry a stigma.
- Try to involve staff in the planning process so they understand how their work 'fits'.
- Offer internal support. This could be practical things, like coaching or it could be emotional support during personal crises.

The way you embrace these issues can influence how committed employees feel towards the organisation and how committed they feel the organisation is to their welfare. It can also affect how willing employees are to talk about matters that are causing them genuine concern.

FACTOR 2 – DEMANDS

Demands on the individual are often quoted as the main cause of work related stress.
There are five areas of concern regarding demands:

Work overload

Work overload can occur when a person is allocated a great deal of work, but insufficient resources (in terms of ability, staff, time or equipment) to cope with it. This can be quantitative overload (simply having too much work to do) or qualitative overload (where the work is too difficult for the employee to do).

Employees faced with work overload may try to cope by working excessive hours, which may lead to health problems and problems outside work. Working excessive hours can lead to fatigue which in turn can impact on performance, creating a vicious circle of more time and effort being put into the work, with less being achieved. Employees may also take work home, which can be detrimental to their family and social life.

We also know that work involving a fast pace and the need to resolve conflicting priorities is associated with a higher risk of psychiatric disorder, poor physical fitness or illness. An example is several people giving the same person large amounts of work with short deadlines. It is important to remember that most staff need to have a certain amount to challenge and pressure to keep them interested in the work and motivated. The key is to strike the right balance through discussion with all those involved in the work.

There may be occasions when the section has to work at extreme levels to meet a deadline. In such circumstances staff should be told why it is essential and that their extra efforts are appreciated.

Capability and capacity

Regulation 13(1) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers, when entrusting tasks to employees to take into account their capabilities as regards health and safety. Paragraph 80 of the Approved Code of Practice says:

When allocating work to employees, employers should ensure that 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.

This includes making sure that employees' mental health is not put at risk through the work they are required to do. Providing training for the job is an important ingredient. Particular attention must be paid to the demands placed upon young workers. The above Regulations prohibits the employment of a

young person for work that is beyond their psychological capacity; e.g. dealing with violent and aggressive behaviour, or having to take decisions under pressure may be work that is beyond a young person's emotional coping ability.

Work underload

The problem here lies with the employee not being sufficiently challenged by work. Job underload, associated with repetitive, routine, boring and under-stimulating work can lead to the employee feeling dissatisfied and under utilised.

Physical environment

Aspects of the physical environment that can affect employees include noise, vibration, temperature, ventilation, humidity, lighting and hygiene.

Some studies have shown that employees make a greater number of errors when there are high noise levels, and noise levels have also been found to increase vulnerability to accidents. Exposure to noise is associated with reported fatigue, headaches, irritability and reduced ability to concentrate. In one study reported stress levels were increased by a combination of different factors, depending on where people were working and the physical environment they were exposed to. Vibration is considered to be a powerful source of stress. It affects brain chemistry and function. In those exposed to harmful substances, fears concerning effects of these can increase anxiety.

Psychosocial environment

People who deal directly with the public may face aggressive or violent behaviour. They may be sworn at, threatened or even attacked. This can be a cause of anxiety.

Some ideas for improvement:

- Ensure there are sufficient resources to do the work allocated.
  If there is not then seek guidance on priorities.
  Support your staff by helping them prioritise or renegotiate deadlines
  Cover workloads during staff absences

- If people are underloaded, think about giving them more responsibility, but make sure they have been adequately trained.

- Strike a balance between ensuring that employees are interested and busy, but not underloaded, overloaded or confused about the job.

- Train staff so that they are able to do their jobs

- Talk to your team regularly about what needs to be done, because this can:

Help you understand the challenges the team faces

- Find ways of sharing the work out sensibly and agreeing the way forward for the team

- Gain team commitments and cohesion to the work you have planned.

- Lead by example

FACTOR 3 – CONTROL

Control is the amount of say an individual has in how their work is carried out. Research has shown that not having much say in how work is done may be associated with poor mental health and a higher risk of alcohol dependency. Research also suggests that when there are greater opportunities for participating in decision-making, greater satisfaction and higher feelings of self-esteem are reported. Non-participation appears to be linked to work related stress and overall poor physical health.

Some ideas for improvement:

- Give more control to staff by enabling them to plan their own work, make decisions about how that work should be completed and how problems should be tackled.

- Enrich jobs by ensuring staff are able to use various skills to get task completed and that staff can understand how their work fits in with the wider aims of the unit.

- Only monitor employees' output if this is essential. Regular meetings with staff could be arranged to see how things are going. At these meetings managers could provide advice and support where necessary, and ensure staff are coping

- A supportive environment is crucial. Staff need to know that managers will support them, even if things go wrong or if they find that they are unable to cope with added pressures.

FACTOR 4 – RELATIONSHIPS

We use the word relationships to describe the way we interact with people at work for business purposes.

Other people can be important sources of support but they can also be sources of stress. At work, relationships with bosses, peer and subordinates can dramatically affect the way we feel at the end of the day. There are two particular aspects of relationships that could lead to work related stress – bullying and harassment.

Harassment is taken to mean unwanted conduct based on sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, colour, religion or belief, nationality, ethnic or national origin or disability that affects the dignity of people at work.

Bullying is taken to mean persistent unacceptable behaviour (or a single, grossly unacceptable act) by one or more individuals in the organisation against one or more employees. The behaviour is perceived by the person experiencing it to be offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or involving an abuse of power.

Bullying and harassment are two forms of behaviour that are unacceptable in organisations an almost inevitably generate stress and can lead to stress related illnesses.

Some ideas for improvement:

- Work in partnership with employees to ensure that bullying and harassment never emerge as an issue.

- Ensure that employees are aware of the various procedures already in place such as the Harassment at Work Procedure, Disciplinary Procedure and Grievance Procedure.

- Create a culture where members of the team trust each other and can be themselves while they are at work

- Encourage employees to recognise the individual contributions of other team members and the benefits of the whole team pulling together.

FACTOR 5 – CHANGE

Many organisations have undergone significant change in the last decade or so. They have had to adapt the way they work to accommodate, for example, new technology, competition and changing market conditions. Often their response has included restructuring, downsizing and adopting entirely new ways of working. Poor management of change can lead to individuals feeling anxious about their employment status and reporting work related stress.

Some ideas for improvement:

- Explain what the organisation wants to achieve and why it is essential that the change takes place – explain the timetable for change and what the first steps are going to be. Talk about what the change will mean in terms of day to day activity and discuss whether there are any new training needs.
- Communicate new developments quickly to avoid the spread of rumors in the organisation.

- Face-to-face communication is usually best so that people have the opportunity to ask questions and say what they feel, but any means e.g. paper or electronic would be helpful.

- Have an 'open door' policy where staff can talk to you about their concerns or any suggestions they have for improving the way the change is managed.

- Give staff the opportunity to comment and ask questions before, during and after the change.

- Involve staff in discussions about how jobs might be developed and changed and in generating ways of solving problems.

- Supporting your staff during change is crucial.

- After the change think about revising work objectives to avoid role conflict and role ambiguity.

- Revise your risk assessments to see if any changes have resulted in increased hazards to staff.

FACTOR 6 – ROLE

You can help reduce stress by ensuring that a person's role in the organisation is clearly defined and understood, and that the expectations placed on them do not conflict. There are two potentially stressful areas associated with a person's role in an organisation. They are role conflict and role ambiguity.

Role conflict – role conflict exists when an individual is torn by conflicting job demands or by doing things they do not really want to do, or things which the individual does not believe are part of their job. Workers may of ten feel themselves torn between two groups of people who demand different types of behaviour, or believe the job entails different functions.

Role ambiguity – role ambiguity arises when individuals do not have a clear picture about their work objectives, their co-workers' expectations of them and the scope and responsibilities of their job. Often this ambiguity results simply because a manager or supervisor has never adequately explained what is required of them or because the job has changed without this being acknowledged in the job description. A wide range of situations can create role ambiguity, e.g. entering a new job or organisation, a promotion or transfer, a new boss, the first supervisory responsibility or adapting to a change in the structure of the existing organisation.

Some ideas for improvement:

- Make sure staff have a clearly defined role, e.g. through a personal work plan which enables them to understand exactly what their roles and responsibilities are;

- Encourage your staff to talk to you at an early stage if they are not clear about priorities or the nature of the task to be undertaken;

- Talk to all your staff regularly to make sure that they are completely clear about the current job, what it entails, what you expect of them and what they can expect form you;

- Make sure that new members of staff receive a comprehensive induction to the service area

- If your organisation has undergone change, check with members of your team to make sure they understand their new roles and are comfortable with them.

FACTOR 7: SUPPORT, TRAINING AND FACTORS UNIQUE TO THE INDIVIDUAL

The HSE insist that every employer should provide adequate health and safety training but they also recommend that employees also receive sufficient training to undertake the core functions of their jobs.

Employees need to be competent and feel comfortable doing their jobs. You should provide training to equip staff with the skills they need. If new work is taken on, make sure that objectives can be achieved using skills and competencies that staff have, or that can be developed quickly.

If you are recruiting new employees, make sure that they are matched to the job (in terms of skills, ability and commitment), receive an induction and are aware of your policy on work-related stress.

The way you support both new and existing staff is key to reducing or moderating work related stress. The way you provide that support can vary from offering help in times of crisis, through to informally congratulating a member of the team for a job well done.

Even when the work has not been completed to the standard you required, you should attempt to provide constructive, supportive advice. For example, you can provide advice on where things went wrong and what you would like to see happen in the future. Simply reprimanding your staff and doing nothing else is unlikely to be helpful – your staff will not learn anything and they are likely to be anxious about undertaking similar tasks in the future.

You need to take account of the make-up of your team. For example, some members may thrive on working to tight deadlines, others might like to plan their

work so that they know what they have to do and when. Try, as far as possible, to cater for these individual differences by talking to your staff as a team – you might find that there is scope to allocate work in a way that suits all team members, or that you can manage the work in a different way for different people.

Do not try and train staff to be stress-resistant. There is little evidence it works, but even so, stress management is not the answer – stress prevention is.

Some ideas for improvement:

- Give support and encouragement to staff, even when things go wrong;

- Listen to your staff and agree a course of action for tackling any problems – it is important for staff to feel that the contribution they make at work is valued;

- Involve your staff – they need to 'do their bit' to identify problems and work towards agreed solutions

- Encourage staff to share their concerns about work-related stress at an early stage;

- Provide your staff with suitable and sufficient training to do their jobs;

- Give new staff a proper induction into the unit and organisation;

- Take into account that people's skills and the way they approach the work will differ;

- Value diversity – don't discriminate against people on the grounds of race, sex disability or other irrelevant reasons;

- Encourage a health 'work-life balance'

- Encourage staff to take their annual leave entitlement and their meal break

GENERIC RISK ASSESSMENT WORK-RELATED STRESS

SERVICE AREA		WORK AREA/ ACTIVITY BEING ASSESSED:	
DATE			
ASSESSORS		INDIVIDUALS/ GROUPS AT RISK	

IDENTIFICATION OF HAZARDS

FACTOR	ANY HAZARDS INDENTIFIED	LEVEL OF RISK H/M/L	PREVENTATIVE ACTION	BY WHOM BY WHEN
FACTOR 1 CULTURE- Of the organisation and how it approaches work-related stress				
FACTOR 2 DEMANDS- Such as the workload and exposure to the physical hazards e.g *Is it realistic? Can employees cope with what is expected of them? Are their opportunities to discuss workload?* **pls see appendix A for further guidance**				
FACTOR 3 CONTROL- How much say the person has in the way they do their work Are workplan reviews carried out? Are employees involved in organising and planning work? **pls see appendix A for further guidance**				

FACTOR	ANY HAZARDS INDENTIFIED	LEVEL OF RISK H/M/L	PREVENTATIVE ACTION	BY WHOM BY WHEN
FACTOR 4 RELATIONSHIPS- Covering issues such as bullying and harassment Are there tensions within the team? *pls see appendix A for further guidance*				
FACTOR 5 CHANGE- How organisational change is managed and communicated *e.g. Are employees consulted/involved in local changes? Do they understand why change is necessary and how it will affect them?* *pls see appendix A for further guidance*				

FACTOR	ANY HAZARDS INDENTIFIED	LEVEL OF RISK H/M/L	PREVENTATIVE ACTION	
FACTOR 6 ROLE- Whether the individual understands their role in the organisation; how they contribute to the "bigger picture". *pls see appendix A for further guidance*				
FACTOR 7 SUPPORT, TRAINING, FACTORS UNIQUE TO THE INDIVIDUAL- Support from peers and managers. Training to undertake the core functions of the job. Catering for individual differences *Are employees aware of flexible working opportunities?* *Do they get praise and recognition for a job well done?* *Do team meetings provide opportunities to discuss any problems?* *pls see appendix A for further guidance*				

REVIEW REQUIRED BY:

WORK-RELATED STRESS INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLAN

NAME OF EMPLOYEE		JOB TITLE	
DATE OF MEETING		SERVICE AREA	
MEETING ATTENDED BY			

ACTION PLAN			
CAUSES OF STRESS IDENTIFIED	AGREED ACTION	ACTION DATE	REVIEW DATE

ACTION PLAN AGREED BY:	EMPLOYEE:	DATE	
	MANAGER:	DATE	
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW MEETING	DATE:		