

Stress Management Policy

Policy purpose

1. The Council is responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees while they are at work. We recognise the importance of protecting our employees' psychological wellbeing as well as their physical health. The Council is committed to giving managers and employees the necessary procedures, information and support they need to:
 - recognise and understand the nature and causes of stress
 - take positive measures to manage stress effectively.
2. The Council accepts the Health and Safety Executive, HSE, definition of work-related stress, which is:

‘the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.’
3. The Council acknowledges its general duty of care for its employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Similarly, the Council accepts the need to consider the risk of stress-related ill health when meeting its obligations under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (as amended).
4. The Council acknowledges that anyone can get work-related stress. It's not an illness but, if prolonged or very intense, can lead to health problems. This policy, and the guidance that supports it, is based on the latest information available from the HSE. It includes and promotes the Stress Management Standards approach recommended by them.

Document control

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Policy aims

5. The Council aims to reduce harmful levels of stress by:
 - assessing the risk of workplace stress
 - controlling the risk at source by any reasonably practicable means
 - monitoring workplace stress indicators
 - intervening early to deal with problems
 - providing employee support
 - encouraging sensitive management.

Policy review

6. The risk assessment process requires policies to be reviewed regularly. This policy will be reviewed at least once a year. More frequent reviews may be triggered by information from managers and employees following an incident, or by new guidance.

Policy scope

7. All employees come within the scope of this policy. Recognising and managing stress is an important role for all managers. This policy is primarily concerned with stress arising from the work environment. However, issues outside work can also affect employees' well-being. Often, home and work life is so interwoven that we may not be able to identify any single cause of stress. This means we need to help all employees who are experiencing stress, whatever the cause.

Commitment

8. This policy must become an integral part of the Council's daily business. To make sure this happens, the Chief Executive and the Chief Officer Group will:
 - provide corporate support
 - monitor progress through Directorate Management Teams
 - make sure that the policy is implemented in all directorates.

Roles and responsibilities

9. By working together we can successfully tackle the causes of work-related stress. Everyone within the Council has a responsibility for the health and well-being of themselves and their colleagues. Each person can help by playing their part. See our Stress Management Policy Roles and Responsibilities document for more details

Managers' responsibilities

10. The term 'manager' within our health and safety policies, means **anyone** who has responsibility for managing employees, including school-based staff. All managers must:
- provide sensitive leadership and management
 - make sure they are able to identify the early signs of stress in colleagues and offer support
 - do stress risk assessments, in consultation with employees and involving trade union health and safety representatives as appropriate
 - develop and implement action plans to deal with any significant risks the stress risk assessments highlight
 - take positive action to develop the management competencies needed for preventing and reducing stress at work.

Employees' responsibilities

11. All employees, including managers, should:
- discuss their own stress-related issues with their manager or a Human Resources, HR, adviser, as appropriate. This is so we can provide support as soon as possible
 - take steps, where possible, to minimise their own stress and to change their behaviour if it is causing stress to others
 - consider getting help from Council support services, such as the Wellbeing Counsellors and Occupational Health
 - help managers to minimise the effects of workplace stress.
12. This policy acknowledges that **any** employee could experience stress. The Council believes that seeking help and support is a positive action and **not** a sign of weakness. We encourage this approach to help others in similar situations.

Monitoring and record keeping

Documentation

13. Managers must keep accurate and up-to-date records, including details of:
- risk assessments for any work activity where stress is a significant risk
 - all meetings or other communications about an employee with stress issues, including copies of individual stress action plans.

Inspection and audit

14. Managers must be able to show they have done stress risk assessments and taken positive action to protect their employees. Managers may be asked to prove they have done this during internal inspections by senior managers, health and safety advisers or safety representatives, future audits by the

Health and Safety Team (HST) or visits by the Health and Safety Executive, HSE.

Stress absence data

15. HR can give managers information about stress-related absence. They have details of the number of cases:
 - across the Council as a whole
 - within each directorate
 - at each location
 - linked to different types of work.
16. This information can be used to analyse trends and prioritise action.

Preventing stress

17. Managers must take a proactive approach to preventing work-related stress. They are responsible for identifying workplace stress and taking practical steps to reduce its causes. Managers must also make sure that, wherever possible, employees are not subjected to pressures that are likely to cause them harm.
18. Managers must:
 - follow the stress policy and guidance
 - attend mandatory stress risk assessment training
 - do preventative team stress risk assessments and individual stress action plans where necessary - employees need to be protected
 - implement HR procedures - using policies and procedures consistently to protect vulnerable employees is an effective stress control measure. This applies to recruitment and selection, induction procedures, achievement and development, promotion, management style and so on
 - provide training and support - this allows employees to do their job competently and confidently, which helps them avoid stress
 - communicate and listen effectively - managers must make sure that communication channels are genuinely open at all levels. This includes consulting employees and their representatives on all significant health matters that might affect them.
19. The Council has approved work life balance procedures, which may ease stress problems for some employees.

Access to support for employees

20. The Council has an in-house [Occupational Health \(OH\) service](#) that can provide advice on health issues, including those linked to stress. Managers should refer any employee suffering from the symptoms of stress to the

service as soon as possible, so help and support can be offered. See the Advice and Support section, paragraph 27, for OH contact details.

21. Managers can also use:

- the [Mental Health First Aid's Line Managers' Resource](#) which give practical advice to help managers support people with mental health conditions, and
- our Stress Management Toolkit - Sources of Information and Help document. This lists organisations that provide guidance and support for people struggling with a range of personal and health issues.

Support during rehabilitation

22. Employees returning to work after lengthy absences may need help while they build up their fitness and adjust to work routines. Managers should take a leading role in this by:

- encouraging employees to self-refer to talking therapy services, such as [Trent Psychological Therapies Service](#) or [Insight Talking Therapies](#)
- completing a fitness for work personal risk assessment before the employee returns to work
- asking the individual what support they'll need and developing a written action plan. Use the Individual Stress Action Plan to do this. You can find a copy on iDerby and the Schools' Information Portal. Where an employee highlights excessive workload as a specific problem for them, you **must** develop and implement an action plan to reduce this. A Court of Appeal decision has ruled that an employer who fails to do this will be considered negligent, even if they have other support systems in place, such as counselling services.
- arranging a phased return to work, if appropriate. This should be done in accordance with the Return to Work after Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure
- regularly checking that any measures are implemented and effective.

Information and guidance on stress

Stress management toolkit

23. This is a suite of documents that aim to give managers and employees practical advice on meeting the requirements of this policy. The toolkit includes:

- stress management policy - roles and responsibilities
- stress management policy - managers' guidance
- stress Management Policy - managers' checklist
- tackling work-related stress - a guide for employees
- preventative team stress risk assessment form and a worked example
- individual stress action plan form and guidelines

- HSE's stress management competency indicator tool
- tips for talking to stressed or distressed employees
- sources of information, help and support.

You can find copies of all these documents on [iDerby](#) and the [Schools' Information Portal](#).

Stress management training

24. Training in stress risk assessment and stress management is mandatory for managers. See our Health and Safety Training pages on iDerby and the Schools Information Portal for more information.
25. Other training will be made available where appropriate, and when risk assessments highlight significant problems.

Advice and support

26. The [Health and Safety Team](#) (HST) provides advice and training on stress risk assessment and stress management. Contact HST by:
 - calling 01332 640748, or
 - emailing employee.healthandsafety@derby.gov.uk
27. [Occupational Health](#) (OH) gives advice to managers on stress issues. They will also advise on treatment and rehabilitation for those individuals who have suffered ill health as a result of stress. Contact OH by:
 - calling 01332 **640543**, or
 - emailing occupational.healthservice@derby.gov.uk.

Confidentiality

28. The policy requires strict confidentiality on the part of the employee, their colleagues, manager and corporate advisory services.