Stress Management Policy
2019

Record of Revisions

Issue No:	Date:	Summary of Amendment Made:
No 2	22.3.2010	Periodic review – minor amendments: Section 4.6 – inclusion of the full title of the Business Unit and named Teams Section 5.6 – new - 'Working Environment' paragraph Section 5.8 – new - 'Welfare meetings' paragraph The purpose or intent of the document does not change nor do the roles/responsibilities to persons
No 3	2013	Periodic review – official designations updated. Reference to pre-employment questionnaire deleted to fit with requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Reference to Corporate H&S Committee deleted as consultation is now conducted at JTUC
No 4	2016	Periodic review – minor updates made to designations 5.4. Risk assessment section reworded to include the stress indictor questionnaire Final page of contacts refined to Human Resources, Occupational Health and Health and Safety
No 5	2019	Minor updates following periodic review

1. Introduction

Liverpool City Council is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees and will seek to identify and control workplace stressors.

This Policy establishes a positive commitment to tackling the issues around work-related stress.

2. Definition of stress

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as:

"the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them".

This makes an important distinction between **pressure**, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and **stress** which can be detrimental to health. This also makes an important distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge which can be stimulating and motivating, and work-related stress. Work-related stress is the natural but distressing reaction to demands or pressures that the person feels they cannot cope with at a given time.

3. Policy Statement

The Council will help and support staff at all levels to identify and manage stress both in themselves and in those they manage by early recognition and appropriate intervention.

Accordingly, the City Council will take reasonable steps to reduce the incidence of work related stress by:-

- identifying potentially unreasonable levels or sources of stress via the risk assessment process;
- providing work environments which enable employees to effectively carry out their duties and responsibilities;
- recognising the key role of managers and providing them with suitable training, support and guidance to enable them to carry out their responsibilities towards their staff;
- encouraging employees to accept responsibility for their own mental and physical health and to develop a responsible balanced approach to work and their personal lives whilst continuing to recognise the responsibility the organisation has within this process.

In association with the City Council's People Strategy, this Policy supports the promotion of positive mental wellbeing in the organisation.

4.0 Responsibilities for implementation

4.1 Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for health and safety including the management of stress. He will ensure that this remains an effective policy setting out procedures for stress prevention and reduction, together with designated responsibilities for managers.

4.2 Directors and Assistant Directors

Directors and Assistant Directors are responsible for ensuring that:
- the Stress Management Policy is implemented within their areas of responsibility
- the policy is monitored by the Health and Safety Unit and senior management
- provision is made for the effective organisation, planning and implementation of the measures necessary to reduce the risk of stress at work for example :- suitable training and effective communication
- Ensuring that bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated within the City Council and are dealt with through the relevant channels

4.3 Managers

Managers will be responsible for the following:
- Conducting stress risk assessments and implementing their findings
- Ensuring good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes
- Ensuring that staff are fully trained to discharge their duties
- Monitoring workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded
- Monitoring working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking
- Monitoring holidays and encouraging staff to take their full entitlement
- Attending training, as requested, in good management practice and health, safety and welfare
- Ensuring that bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated within the City Council and are reported through the relevant channels
- Following the Attendance Policy and Procedure and making referrals to Occupational Health within the required timescales

4.4 Employees

Employees are responsible for:
- Recognising in themselves potential work-related stressors as per Guidance Note GN14 and the Health and Safety Executive's Management Standards
- Raising issues of concern with line managers or staff of the Occupational Health Unit
- Co-operating with management in the production of stress risk assessments
- Co-operating with systems and procedures implemented for their protection

- Ensuring that bullying, harassment and discrimination are not tolerated within the City Council and are reported through the relevant channels i.e. Grievance Policy and Procedure

4.5 Human Resources

Human Resources staff are responsible for:
- Giving guidance to managers on the Policy
- Assisting in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics
- Providing continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment
- Advising on associated policies, procedures and terms and conditions

4.6 Health and Safety Unit

The Health and Safety Unit are responsible for:
- Giving guidance to managers on the Policy
- Advising and supporting managers in implementing stress risk assessments
- Advising senior managers of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work
- Updating the Policy and associated Guidance Note GN14

4.7 Occupational Health Unit

The Council's Occupational Health Unit is responsible for:
- Conducting health assessments
- Conducting medical assessments relating to short-term and long-term sickness absence
- Providing advice on return to work following sickness absence
- Providing advice to assist in the management of work-related stress
- Advising the City Council of developments in the field of work-related stress management

4.8 Trade Union Safety Representatives

- Safety Representatives will be consulted on any significant changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress.

- Safety Representatives will be consulted on the development and monitoring of policies and procedures designed to manage work-related stress.

- Formal consultation on changes to this Policy will be undertaken initially via the Corporate Health and Safety Committee and then the Joint Trade Union Committee

5.0 Arrangements for Managing Stress at Work

The following actions are taken to reduce the risk of stress at work.

5.1 Recruitment and selection

All potential employees (including those seeking re-deployment), will be given sufficient information about the job and their role so that they are able to assess their own suitability for the post. The interview process is also designed to determine eligibility.

5.2 Health assessments

All selected candidates are required to complete a health questionnaire, which seeks to identify any reasonable adjustments that need to be made prior to the candidate taking up their post. Where potential issues are identified, a stress risk assessment is conducted by the manager prior to commencement.

5.3 Induction

All employees will be given both corporate and site-specific workplace induction into their role. Where practicable, the site-specific workplace induction should be conducted prior to the commencement of their duties.

5.4 Risk assessment

Factors that may lead to work-related stress are identified by the completion of a stress indicator questionnaire. The questionnaire addresses the six main areas of work design which can affect stress levels. They are:

- demands
- control
- support
- relationships
- role
- change

This is a collaborative and inclusive process between managers and their staff but it is the manager's responsibility to ensure that it is undertaken and that any issues identified are addressed through the risk assessment process and the development of safe systems of work, as required.

5.5 Management Style

Managers throughout the organisation will adopt a style of management that allows their staff to feel confident in approaching them to discuss aspects of work which may have the potential to contribute towards workplace stress. Clear and open communication between managers and staff is an important element in creating an environment free from work-related stress.

5.6 Working Environment

Work environments will be provided which enable employees to perform their duties effectively. Avenues of communication to raise workplace-related health, safety and welfare concerns will be maintained and such issues addressed.

5.7 Performance management

Performance appraisal meetings and other less formal means of supervision can provide appropriate and confidential opportunities for the discussion of potential work-related stressors. It is essential therefore that such meetings take place at appropriate intervals

5.8 Sickness absence and ill-health during employment

All employees who are absent from work due to sickness are required to complete a sickness absence form which is forwarded to their line manager. Records of sickness absence levels are maintained and monitored and the recording of absences, including the reason for absence, must be as accurate as possible by utilising fully the appropriate recording system.

Employees may also be referred by their manager for an occupational health assessment. The Occupational Health Unit advises managers and members of staff on health matters related to work. Where appropriate employees will be referred for professional counselling.

The handling of individual staff welfare meetings and visits may be delegated by management to other persons if deemed necessary to assist in the recovery of the employee and facilitate their return to work. However, regardless of duration or cause, the management of any case of sickness absence remains the responsibility of the line manager**.**

All staff who are off sick shall participate in a return to work interview and managers should ensure that these take place on the first day of return from an absence or as soon as is practically possible.

5.9 Training and development

Liverpool City Council will ensure that staff and their managers have the skills and abilities appropriate to their role in the organisation. Training and development opportunities will be provided to achieve this goal. The principal method of identifying individual training and development needs is the performance appraisal process. The

training and development implications of significant changes to Council policies, procedures, systems and processes will be identified and acted upon.

6.0 Work/life balance

Liverpool City Council is committed to promoting a positive work/life balance and it is the responsibility of both managers and staff to co-operate towards achieving this goal. There are many policies and procedures in place to assist with this:

Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave
Special Leave
Job Share Scheme
Voluntary Reduced Hours
Flexible/Extended Flexible Working Schemes
Annual Leave

There is a wealth of advice and guidance available to managers and staff when addressing the issue of work-related stress. The following are other City Council services, policies and procedures which may be useful.

1.   The Human Resource Service intranet site provides a variety of policy and guidance documents covering areas such as:
    - recruitment,
    - disciplinary and grievance,
    - sickness absence management
    - flexible working
    - general terms and conditions of employment

2.   Medical advice on the causes and consequences of work-related stress can be sought from the City Council's Occupational Health Unit occupational.health@liverpool.go.uk

3.   Advice on completing work-related stress risk assessments and control strategies, as outlined in GN 14 Management of Work-related Stress, can be gained from the City Council's Health and Safety Unit at healthandsafetyunit@liverpool.gov.uk