



# **Managing Stress in the Workplace**

**July 2018**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Council firmly believes that its employees are its most valuable asset and to enable all staff to perform at their best it is committed to promoting a positive working environment, free from unnecessary or undue pressures. To help ensure and maintain such an environment the Council will work in collaboration with employees, managers, Occupational Health and recognised Trade Unions. The Council will also, where appropriate, work in partnership with external bodies, for example, the Health and Safety Executive, Primary Care Trust.
- 1.2 The Council will support any member of staff who is identified as being subjected to undue pressure at work or experiencing symptoms of stress due to events or concerns outside of work. The Council will achieve this by encouraging early reporting of symptoms by employees, by training line managers to recognise symptoms and informing line managers and employees of the appropriate support mechanisms available.
- 1.3 These arrangements both support and are supported by other Council arrangements, policies and procedures such as, Attendance Management, Flexible Working, Equal Opportunities, Risk Assessment, Performance Management and Dignity at Work.

## 2. Who do these Arrangements Affect?

- 2.1 Any person employed by this Council who:
  - May potentially suffer from undue pressure.
  - May manage persons who may be affected by undue pressure.

## 3. What is Undue Pressure?

- 3.1 Undue pressure is a complex issue that can often involve multiple causes. These causes may be related to events or circumstances in the workplace, may emanate from home life or may result as a combination both.
- 3.2 Most individuals will experience, in their life, times when they feel they are subjected to undue pressure. Such times may occur following bereavements, serious illness, a period of unscheduled unemployment or major upheaval.
- 3.3 In the workplace pressure or challenges can often have a positive effect by motivating individuals and assisting the organisation in its achievement of targets and goals. However persistent undue pressure may result in some individuals experiencing adverse reactions, in other words feeling stressed.

## 4. What is Stress?

- 4.1 The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them”. This definition makes an important distinction between pressure and challenges at work that keep individuals motivated, and stress which can sometimes be detrimental to health.

- 4.2 The Council aims to ensure that all employees understand stress, particularly occupational (work-related) stress and how to identify, prevent and control it. The Council recognises the potential effects stress may have upon performance and attendance and will therefore deal with such matters sensitively and appropriately.

## 5. Why Manage Stress?

- 5.1 The Council has implemented these arrangements in order to reduce the likelihood of occupational stress related illnesses and help ensure the continued good health and well being of all Council employees. Prolonged exposure to undue pressure may significantly increase the risk of psychological and physiological damage, including depression and anxiety conditions.
- 5.2 Compliance with these arrangements effectively demonstrates the Council's compliance with current health, safety and employment legislation, thereby preventing potential legal prosecutions. Compliance with these arrangements will also help to minimise the likelihood of stress related illness and will therefore reduce the potential for stress related absenteeism and consequently any resulting employee liability claims.

## 6. How is Stress Managed Corporately?

### 6.1 Policies and Procedures

The Council has a number of policies and procedures in place that significantly reduce the likelihood of undue pressure (therefore reducing the potential for stress) amongst its employees; these can be found in the Human Resources Section on the Intranet and include:

- Flexible Working & Work Life Balance Policy.
- Leave and Work Life Balance Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy.
- Promoting Attendance & Controlling Absence Policy.
- Whistleblowing Policy.
- Employee Code of Conduct.
- Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Extended Authorised Absence Policy.
- Grievance Procedures.
- Performance Management Scheme.
- Exit interviews.
- Risk assessment.

### 6.2 Staff Surveys

Corporately the Council carry out staff surveys (every two years) which help to identify areas of undue pressure within the organisation. From the results of these surveys Action Plans will be produced to eliminate or reduce the likelihood of undue pressure occurring in areas identified as at risk.

### 6.3 Employee Support Programme (EAP)

The Council provides a free of charge Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) to all employees. The EAP can help and support employees with many of the issues and difficulties they face, whether work or home related. The EAP is provided by a company that is completely independent from the Council. The comprehensive service offers guidance on financial, legal, work, personal, stress and family care issues.

The confidential EAP telephone help line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Calls will be answered by a trained and experienced professional who will discuss problems with employees.

Information regarding the EAP is available in the form of leaflets, posters and on the intranet. Information regarding the service is provided to all new employees at induction.

*EAP can be contacted on 0800 882 4102.*

Information is also available on-line at [www.pamassist.co.uk](http://www.pamassist.co.uk) using the following details:

Username: Wyre  
Password: Council

### 6.4 Occupational Health

The Council provides an Occupational Health Service for employees that can be accessed through their line manager or the Human Resources Team. Upon referral, the Occupational Health Advisor will assess the employee and has the option to recommend various treatments, including confidential counselling. A maximum of 6 counselling sessions may be provided, if appropriate.

### 6.5 Other Activities

Employees are encouraged to access:

- the programme of activities available at the YMCA Leisure Centres. Further information can be accessed on the YMCA website - <http://ymcayactive.org> Or
- the wellbeing sessions held by Mindsmatter, Lancashire Care NHS.

## 7. How is Stress Identified and Managed Locally

- 7.1 The Council's risk assessment arrangements require that all activities that carry a significant risk are assessed. Such assessments must include consideration and assessment of the risk from undue pressure. The assessment must determine the controls already in place to manage undue pressure and decide if these controls are adequate or if further controls are required. If further controls are required these must be agreed with the person responsible for managing the activity and once agreed implemented and monitored.

- 7.2 For an example risk assessment see appendix 1. The arrangements for carrying out a risk assessment and the template required can be found on the Intranet under the Health & Safety pages.
- 7.3 Local monitoring of sickness absence along with the conducting of return to work interviews will further help line managers identify individual employees suffering from signs of undue pressure or the symptoms of stress. The line manager may then use any of the previously mentioned corporate policies to help manage and improve the situation, for example the line manager may wish to offer flexible working or special leave. Line managers may also refer employees to the EAP helpline or the Occupational Health Service if they feel employees may be at risk from or are showing symptoms of stress (for signs of stress see appendix 2).
- 7.4 Line managers must ensure that they have an effective process to facilitate two way communications between themselves and their team members. Communication processes may include regular My 1-2-1 meetings, team meetings, supervision meetings, informal chats, My 1-2-1 + meetings etc. Employees should be encouraged to raise concerns and discuss any relevant problems.
- 7.5 All employees have a legal duty to report any symptoms of work related ill health (including stress) and must be encouraged to do so at the earliest opportunity. Employees also have a duty to co-operate with line management on issues relating to health and or safety. This duty extends to attending any service offered to reduce, combat or eliminate the likelihood of stress.

## 8. Individual Stress Assessments

- 8.1 Where there are concerns that a member of staff may be under undue pressure an individual stress assessment must be carried out see appendix 3.
- 8.2 The stress assessment is a systematic process that looks at the detail of a person's role, it should ideally be carried out with the line manager as they are often the people best placed to control the workload and allocation of responsibilities. In situations where the employee – manager relationship may be an issue the process may be carried out by another appropriate manager.
- 8.3 Consideration should be given to the following which are potential causes of stress in the workplace. This should be done jointly between the employee and their manager and carried out privately without interruption.
- 8.3.1 Demands of the Role – how is the employee coping with the demands of their job, this includes work patterns, work environment, skills and their capability?
- 8.3.2 Control of their work – how much say does the employee have in the way they do their work, timing of breaks, control over pace, use of skills and initiative or opportunity to develop?
- 8.3.3 Support in work – this includes support from line management & colleagues and other support structures e.g. resources, networks etc.
- 8.3.4 Relationships – are working relationships with managers and colleagues free from bullying and other unacceptable behaviours?

- 8.3.5 Role in the organisation – do individuals clearly know what their role and responsibilities are? Is there any confusion or lack of clarity regarding what is expected of them?
- 8.3.6 Managing change – how change is or has been managed and communicated. Are individuals given timely information regarding changes that may affect them?
- 8.4 Any actions identified as a result of carrying out the stress assessment should be agreed and both the manager and employee should sign the assessment form and any supplementary notes.

## 9 Stress due to Events/Issues Outside of Work

- 9.1 Where stress is recognised or cited by an employee the following action should be taken ideally by their direct line manager.
- Discuss the matter fully with the employee ensuring complete confidentiality
  - Refer to Occupational Health
  - Encourage the employee to contact the EAP service
  - Consider if any flexible working options may assist the employee
  - Carry out an individual stress risk assessment if appropriate

## 10. Sickness Absence due to Stress

- 10.1 Absences should be dealt with in line with the Promoting Attendance Controlling Absence Policy.
- 10.2 Any employee who is absent from work due to stress should be referred to Occupational Health at the earliest opportunity
- 10.3 Where Occupational Health recommends that work would be beneficial to the employee consideration should be given to whether arrangements such as home working, flexible working options or phased return can be made to enable the employee to return at the earliest opportunity.
- 10.4 Where work is cited as a possible cause of the stress absence the line manager or other appropriate person should meet with the employee at the earliest opportunity to carry out the individual stress risk assessment with any actions agreed as an outcome assisting a return to work.

## 11. Responsibilities

### 11.1 Human Resources

- Management of the Occupational Health Service.
- Management of the Employee Assistance Programme.
- Facilitation of surveys to help identify areas where undue pressure may be occurring in the Council.
- Facilitation of stress related training.

- Provide advice, support and guidance to the Council and its line managers on matters relating to stress management.
- Produce absence reports highlighting incidents of stress related absence.
- Ensure appropriate supporting policies, as previously identified, are in place and regularly reviewed.

## 11.2 Occupational Health

- Assess those referred and provide or facilitate appropriate treatments.
- Provide advice, support and guidance to the Council and line managers on matters relating to stress management.

## 11.3 Line Managers

- Ensure that stress issues are addressed in the activity based risk assessments they carry out for their areas (see appendix 1).
- Implementing and communicating these arrangements to all relevant employees.
- Ensure that they are able to identify the signs and symptoms of stress in individuals.
- Identify and support members of staff who are experiencing undue pressure or stress.
- Carry out individual assessments with employees when symptoms of stress are identified (see appendix 3).
- Ensure good communication with all staff
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties
- Monitor workloads to ensure that staff are not overloaded
- Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement
- Ensure bullying and harassment is not tolerated
- Direct employees suffering from stress symptoms to the appropriate support mechanisms that are available, eg. EAP, Human Resources, Occupational Health.
- Be aware of policies that address work-life balance, eg. Flexible Working, Special Leave etc.
- Monitor sickness/absence rates within their areas to identify undue pressure or symptoms of stress.
- Make contact with individuals who are off sick with stress and offer support.
- Conduct return to work interviews for all staff who have been off sick.
- Attend stress related training when requested.

## 11.4 Employees

- Are responsible for bringing to the attention of their line manager issues they feel may be contributing to making them feel under undue pressure.
- Are responsible for co-operating with line management regarding any support offered to reduce or eliminate undue pressure or feelings of stress, including attending awareness training if requested.
- Should access the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) if they would like someone independent to talk to.
- Be receptive to opportunities of counselling and/or other offers of physical and psychological assistance when recommended.
- Attend any Occupational Health or Counselling sessions that have been arranged.

- Attend any training related to stress that is provided.
- Take individual responsibility for their own health and help to establish and improve a healthy working environment.
- Be receptive to colleagues who may be showing signs of stress, be supportive and report any areas of concern to the manager as appropriate.
- Contribute to team discussions and participate in the action planning.

## 12. Confidentiality

- 12.1 Any information gathered regarding the mental or physical well being of any employee will be considered of a confidential and sensitive nature, data protection and any other relevant medical codes of confidentiality will be adhered to.

## 13. Equality Impact Assessment And Monitoring

- 13.1 The operation of this policy will be monitored for its impact on different equality groups in line with the Equality Act 2010. This will enable the Council to assess whether any differences have an adverse impact on a particular group, such that further action would be required.

## 14. Data Protection

- 14.1 In implementing this policy, the Council will ensure that any personal data relating to the application of this policy will be obtained, processed and destroyed in line with Data Protection requirements.

## Appendix 1 - Example of Risk Assessment

### Wyre Borough Council Risk Assessment Form 1

This Form can be used for the assessment of all organisational risks including; Health and Safety; Risk Management & Business Continuity.  
 This Form must be used in conjunction with Form 2 – Agreed Actions  
 For Details of Risk Ratings see Form 3

Directorate: Resources

Date of Assessment: **EXAMPLE**

Section: Reception desk

Assessment Team  
**EXAMPLE**

Location: Civic Centre

Assessment Activity: Working behind Reception greeting visitors and answering telephone enquiries.

Do the hazards create a business continuity risk? Yes / No

WHAT IS THE HAZARD	What is the Potential Harm	Who is at Risk	Controls In Place	LIKELIHOOD	Severity	Risk Rating	FURTHER POTENTIAL CONTROLS
Lone working	Verbal abuse Physical assault	Employee	Personal Safety Arrangements Risk Assessment Arrangements Telephone communication Call alarm under desk	2	2	4	Handling aggression training
Long periods on VDU	RSI's, eye strain,	DSE/ Workstation User	DSE Arrangements Workstation assessment carried out Activity changes to allow rest from DSE	1	2	2	Job rotation
Electrical items	Electric shock Trips over loose cables	Employees in the work vicinity	All electrical items regularly PAT tested Cables routed under and behind desks	1	2	2	Regular office safety inspections

WHAT IS THE HAZARD	What is the Potential Harm	Who is at Risk	Controls In Place	LIKELIHOOD	Severity	Risk Rating	FURTHER POTENTIAL CONTROLS
Undue work pressures	Stress symptoms	Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demands – Supplementary support available for the desk at busy times</li> </ul>	2	2	4	Line managers to ensure staff read and understand Managing Work Related Pressure Arrangements

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control – shift patterns agreed with staff, breaks agreed amongst staff, IPA 5 to provide staff development.</li> <li>• Support – regular 1-1's for staff. Line manager has open door policy. IPA system.</li> <li>• Relationships - 1-1's, bullying and harassment policy, whistle blowing policy.</li> <li>• Role – Job descriptions, IPA, 1-1's</li> <li>• Change – team meetings, e-mails, newsletters, quicknotes, team briefs etc.</li> </ul> <p>Management Work Related Pressure Arrangements Health referral procedures Absence management policy</p>				Attending any stress management training
Biological – Germs and viruses	Illness	Employee Others the employee may come into contact with	<p>Counter separating employees from public.</p> <p>Occupational health scheme</p>	3	2	6	
All Agreed Actions and Target Dates must be recorded on Form 2 (OH&SF 002)							

**Wyre Borough Council Risk Assessment Form 2 – Example - Agreed Actions**

This Form must be completed with the Section Manager and in conjunction with Risk Assessment Form 1

Further Control Agreed	Resource implication	Person Responsible	Signature	Target date	Completed
Line managers to ensure staff read and understand Management of Stress Arrangements	Time	Line Managers		On induction And Regular refreshers	
Front of House staff to be advised to undergo flu jabs offered by Occupational health	In the region of £20 per injection + time resource	Appropriate line manager Occupational health Scheme		Annually in November	
Handling Aggression training	Training cost + Time resource	Line Managers		On induction And Regular refreshers	

Assessment / Activity / Area / Type

Section Manager Responsible for this Action Plan.....

Signature.....

Action Plan Review Date.....

## Recognising the Possible Signs of Stress

The following list is **some possible** signs of stress however these may also be caused by something other than stress. Always seek medical advice if you are worried about your health.

- **Physical Signs**

Decreased energy, constant fatigue.  
 Persistently raised pulse or blood pressure.  
 Flushing or sweating.  
 Headaches, including migraine.  
 Sleep disturbance.  
 Sexual problems.  
 Muscle tension, aches or stiffness (especially neck and shoulders), backache.  
 Skin problems (hives, eczema, psoriasis, itching).  
 Constant colds, minor ailments or infections.  
 Dizziness, disturbed vision.  
 Heart palpitations, chest pain.  
 Asthma or shortness of breath.  
 Digestive problems – nausea, constipation, diarrhoea, abdominal cramps, heartburn.  
 Trembling.  
 Dry mouth.

- **Psychological Signs**

Increased anxiety.  
 Irritability, anger, mood swings, tearful, over-emotional.  
 Depression.  
 Difficulty concentrating, memory lapses, mind racing, indecisiveness, confusion.  
 Low self esteem, loss of confidence.  
 Feeling helpless or hopeless.  
 Loss of motivation.  
 Loss of sense of humour.

- **Behavioural Signs**

Increased smoking or drinking.  
 Argumentative (road rage, domestic or workplace conflicts).  
 Fidgeting (nail-biting, foot-tapping).  
 Reduced interest in appearance.  
 Changes to diet – over-eating or loss of appetite.  
 Poor time management.  
 Withdrawn, isolation from social activities.  
 Constantly on the go.

There are various strategies that can be used if you feel that you are suffering from stress:

- Prioritise and deal with the high priority first.
- Think of issues and try to come up with solutions.
- Only try to tackle things you can change.
- Don't be too hard on yourself – there's no need to be perfect every time, keep things in proportion.

- Share a problem and seek advice from others, utilise family, friends, colleagues, manager, HR, Occupational Health, EAP.
- Don't be reluctant to seek medical help if you are worried about your health.
- Make some time every day for yourself and find time to relax.
- Look after your health by taking a balanced diet, avoid excessive drinking and smoking, try to exercise regularly and try to adopt a wide range of interests.
- Learn to delegate or ask for help.
- Have proper breaks for meals.
- Make your manager aware if your job is overloaded or under loaded.
- Take a deep breath and take a step back from the situation before reacting.

	<b>PAM Wellbeing Limited</b>	Palmyra Square Chambers 13-15 Springfield Street Warrington WA1 1BB Tel 01925 22 70 00 Fax 01925 236 289 E-mail: info@pamwellbeing.co.uk
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## HSE STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

### Management Guidance Tool

**A manager with direct line management responsibility for the individual is best placed to conduct this assessment. This is a checklist only and notes must be recorded, concerns documented and actions allocated and assigned completion dates. A review date must be assigned where actions are required.**

#### **1 Demands**

**Standard** : Employees indicate that they can cope with the demands of their jobs

Demand	Concerns	Action Required
Work pattern		
Work environment		
Skill match		
Within capability		

#### **2 Control**

**Standard:** How much say the person has in the way they do their work

Control	Concerns	Action Required
Timing of breaks		
Control over pace		
Use of skills & initiative		
Opportunity to develop		

### **3 Support**

**Standard:** Includes relationships with line management and colleagues & support structures in place e.g. learning resources and colleague circles/consultations

<b>Support</b>	<b>Concerns</b>	<b>Action required</b>
<b>Colleagues</b>		
<b>Managers</b>		
<b>Access to resources</b>		
<b>Systems &amp; Feedback</b>		

### **4 Relationship**

**Standard:** Includes promoting positive working to avoid and manage conflict

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Concerns</b>	<b>Action required</b>
<b>With management</b>		
<b>With colleagues</b>		
<b>Processes to raise concerns in place</b>		
<b>Positive behaviours promoted within the business</b>		

### **5 Role**

**Standard:** Understanding the role and responsibilities within the organisation

<b>Role</b>	<b>Concerns</b>	<b>Action required</b>
<b>Clear role definement</b>		
<b>Responsibilities</b>		
<b>Reporting</b>		
<b>Conflicts</b>		

## **6 Change**

**Standard:** Organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated.

<b>Change</b>	<b>Concerns</b>	<b>Action required</b>
<b>Timely information provided regarding reasons for change</b>		
<b>Adequate consultation</b>		
<b>Probable impact communicated</b>		
<b>Support provided</b>		

*To complete the assessment, colleagues should be offered the opportunity to comment on any aspects of their work which they feel has not been covered in the assessment.*

*Colleagues must be advised that supplementary notes will be filed with this checklist in the employment record*

*This assessment however is NOT part of any grievance procedure. Where necessary, colleagues should be redirected to the appropriate avenue for resolution of issues raised which are considered outwith of the remit of this assessment.*

### **FURTHER ADVICE**

[www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards)

[www.people-am.com](http://www.people-am.com)

**Date of Assessment:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Assessor Signature :** \_\_\_\_\_

**Colleague Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_