

HARLOW COUNCIL

Addendum to Health and Safety Policy

Management of Stress at Work

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Introduction

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a specific responsibility on employers to take all reasonable steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a further duty on employers to assess the risks to the health and safety of their employees.

Harlow Council is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees and recognises that workplace stress is an important health and safety issue, and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

In accordance with the commitment contained within the Council's Health and Safety Policy, adequate resources will be provided to deal with the health and safety implications of the management of stress.

Failure to comply with the requirements of this policy is a disciplinary offence, which in serious cases could lead to dismissal.

Definition of Stress

The Health and Safety Executive defines 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.

General Policy Statement

Harlow Council recognises that work related stress is fast becoming a significant cause of sickness absence. This is not only a problem for the Authority if sickness levels rise, but a stress related illness can be very debilitating for the individual member of staff.

The Health and Safety Team will work with Human Resources, using the recognised six HSE key areas, identifying possible stressors within the workplace and working towards positive actions to assist the employee.

Responsibilities

Health and Safety Team

- Provide specialist advice on stress at work
- Arrange for stress risk assessments to be undertaken
- Support managers on the implementation of actions following stress risk assessments
- In conjunction with Human Resources support individuals who have been off sick with a stress related illness and advise them and their management on a planned return to work
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress
- In conjunction with Human Resources arrange appropriate stress awareness and stress management training as required

Managers

- Co-operate with stress risk assessments that are carried out within their jurisdiction
- Implement recommendations of risk assessments within their jurisdiction
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes
- Ensure staff attend relevant stress training courses as required
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful development opportunities
- Monitor workloads to ensure staff are not overloaded
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure staff are not overworking
- Monitor holidays to ensure staff are taking their full entitlement

Human Resources

- Give guidance to managers on the stress policy
- Monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics
- Advise managers and individuals on any appropriate training requirements
- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing workplace environment and encourage referral to occupational workplace counsellors where appropriate
- Signpost to the Employee Assistance Programme, (EAP), for steering towards a wide range of support networks including mental health.. Consists of a team of professional consultants/advisors with expertise in mental health and its impact in the workplace
- Provide information and highlight the support supplied by MIND – literature on healthy mental wellbeing, contacts and coping strategies

Employees

- Raise issues of concern with your line manager, Health and Safety Team or with your safety representative
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended

Role of Safety Representatives

Safety representatives:

- Should be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress
- Should be able to consult with staff on the issue of stress including conducting any workplace surveys
- Should be meaningfully involved in the risk assessment process

Role of the Safety Committee

- The Safety Committee will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented and reviewed as required
- The Safety Committee will oversee monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety

Summary

Harlow Council recognises that work related stress is becoming a significant health and safety issue and is committed to putting in place measures to minimise the risk.

The following are the main actions being implemented:

- Work towards identifying workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to reduce stress, or control the risks from stress, to an acceptable level
- Consult with staff representatives on all proposed action to the prevention of workplace stress
- Discuss relevant training for staff/managers on how to manage workplace stress and stress awareness as required
- Provide access to confidential counselling, as appropriate, for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors
- Ensure that an employee's working arrangements are re-assessed prior to a return to work following a period of stress related sickness

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Revision History

Revision date	Previous revision date	Summary of Changes	Changes marked
August 2006	None	Original Draft document	
11/03/2008	July 2006	Updates from Draft. Inserted Revision History. Logo changed	No
2/9/2008	11/3/2008	General update and introduction of the HSE's management standards	
1/2014	9/2008	Reviewed and updated	No
5/2018	1/2014	Change of H&S name/dates/version	No
5/2018		Removal of reference to stress management strategy and replaced with support service – Remploy/access to Work - Inclusion of mental health wellbeing - Inclusion of reference to MIND support	No
March 2020		Replace Remploy with reference to Employee Assistance Programme	No