



Stress Management Policy

About this policy

Purpose

This document describes the stress management policy and procedure. Refer to the table of contents, below, for a full list of topics covered.

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Version control

The table below shows the history of the document and the changes that were made at each version:

| Version | Date | Summary of changes |
|---------|--------------|---|
| 1.0 | July 2008 | First published version. |
| 2.0 | October 2010 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• More elaborate description of the stress management procedure and adoption of a new Stress Risk Assessment Questionnaire.• HR provider's representative trained in evaluating Stress Risk Assessment Questionnaires prior to taking on a stress management case under this policy.• Possible action points resulting from stress risk assessments following the HSE's Management Standards included.• Disability Equality Duty referred to in the policy statement.• Data Protection Act (Subject Access Modification) (health) Order 2000 included in the confidentiality statement.• Headteacher's responsibility to report on the effectiveness of the arrangements for reducing work-related stress to the Governing Body added. |

Next major release

Although this document will be updated as legislation or procedures change, the next major review date will normally be scheduled for three years after the last release.

Distribution

This policy is available on [Trustnet](#) and a copy is held by the school.

1. Policy statement

It is the school's policy to be committed to maintaining a healthy and safe workforce environment and to take all reasonable steps to reduce health and safety risks from stress in the workplace.

This policy aims to support employees who raise concerns of stress at work through a risk based approach, so that appropriate steps may be taken to prevent the situation from continuing or escalating. The main emphasis of this policy is to manage work-related stress through the [Health and Safety Executive Management Standards](#) and through a five-step risk assessment process.

There is no specific legislation regarding the management of occupational stress, however the overarching duty of care owed to an employee by the employer will be observed, as well as the following principles of legislation:

- Under section 2(1) of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 every employer has a duty to ensure so far as reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of all its employees.
- Under regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 employers are required to make suitable and sufficient assessments of the risks faced by their employees.
- Under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and the Equalities Act 2010, positive action must be taken to eliminate employee behaviour of a kind that could cause stress and anxiety to others in the workplace.
- Under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995, and more recent amendments to the DDA, whereby public sector employers have to comply with the Disability Equality Duty 2006, the employer will not treat employees less favourably if their stress is so serious it amounts to a disability under the DDA, and will make reasonable adjustments for those with stress-related disabilities.

Any reports of stress at work will be investigated in line with this policy and individuals will be provided with appropriate support. The school will ensure that adequate consultation takes place with all staff on the content, implementation, monitoring and review of this policy. The Headteacher may wish to delegate line management responsibilities to their nominated management representative and, in such cases, any reference to Headteacher in this policy should be taken as the nominated management representative.

2. Definitions

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed upon them.” This makes a clear distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health. Stress is not a disability but, if it has a substantial or long term effect, it might amount to a disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

3. Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all staff employed by the school. Staff are expected to familiarise themselves with this policy, although it does not form part of their employment terms and conditions.

4. Individual Stress Risk Assessment Procedure

The most effective way of preventing or reducing the risk of stress is to identify the underlying issues causing it by following the [risk assessment process](#) (this can be accessed on TrustNet or from the school) and by seeking employee views. If, despite measures to prevent work-related stress, an employee becomes stressed the Headteacher (or their nominated representative) should undertake a stress risk assessment. The stress risk assessment procedure is explained below.

Note: All information discussed under these procedures must be treated with sensitivity and in strict confidence. Any breach of confidentiality may result in [disciplinary action](#).

Step 1 – Initiating the stress risk assessment

Headteachers (or their nominated representatives) should approach an employee to discuss undertaking a stress risk assessment in the following circumstances:

- When the Headteacher/line manager observes possible signs of stress and changes in an employee’s behaviour, morale or productivity.
- When an employee has approached them and raised work-related stress issues.
- As part of managing sickness absence where a review meeting is arranged, for example, as a result of stress being specified on a sick note.
- As a result of a generic risk assessment.

During the initial meeting, the Headteacher should explain the stress risk assessment procedure to the employee and hand them the Stress Risk Assessment Questionnaire (Employee). A link to this can be found in Chapter 6 – [Toolkit](#). Both parties (Headteacher and employee) should independently complete the relevant Questionnaires before the first formal stress risk assessment meeting.

The Headteacher should consider whether a referral to the Occupational Health Provider may be appropriate for the employee prior to the assessment meeting. Any absence due to stress will be treated as sickness absence and will be dealt with separately under the [Managing Sickness Absence Policy](#).

The Headteacher should arrange a suitable time to meet with the employee for the formal stress risk assessment meeting, and confirm this to the employee in writing. The School's Human Resources Provider and Health and Safety representative should attend the formal meeting and must therefore be notified of the date and time of the meeting.

Step 2 – Preparation for the stress risk assessment meeting

Both the Headteacher and the employee should complete the relevant Stress Risk Assessment Questionnaires and send them to their HR provider, who will then forward them to all parties involved (including the HR provider's Health and Safety staff) prior to the meeting. Links to the questionnaires can be found in Chapter 6 – [Toolkit](#).

Step 3 – The stress risk assessment meeting

The stress risk assessment meeting should consist of:

- The Headteacher;
- The employee;
- A representative from the school's HR Provider (this should be a person independent from the case who has been trained in carrying out stress risk assessments);
- The HR Provider's Health and Safety representative (if a Health & Safety problem has been identified through the questionnaires);
- A trade union representative or work colleague, if the employee chooses to be accompanied by either.

The line manager should chair the meeting unless the individual case makes it more appropriate for the representative from HR to chair it.

At the meeting, the Headteacher and employee should compare their completed Stress Risk Assessment Questionnaires, and all issues of concern from either the Headteacher's or the employee's forms must be addressed. In essence a gap analysis is undertaken between the information contained on the two forms that have been completed independently.

The Stress Risk Assessment Action Plan template, a link to which can be found in Chapter 6 – [Toolkit](#), must be completed and address the issues raised, seeking advice from experts where required. Issues that cannot be agreed must be referred to the Chair of the Health & Safety Committee for resolution or by arbitration through the [Grievance procedure](#).

The Headteacher and the employee must agree action points and practical solutions that will prevent, reduce or control the identified stressors to the lowest reasonably practicable level. The [Toolkit](#) in Chapter 6 should be referred to for possible actions/solutions resulting from the stress risk assessment. A target date for each action point must be agreed within the action plan, and a date for the review meeting should be set.

Step 4 – Take action

It is important that parties who are assigned responsibility in the action plan have the skill and resources to carry out the actions required. All parties have a clear responsibility to ensure that they meet their particular target dates. If relevant, Headteachers should work with Occupational Health to provide support to staff suffering from stress.

If one of the parties cannot meet his/her target date(s), then all parties must be advised and new target date(s) must be agreed, where necessary a review meeting must be held to address any issues arising from the delay and to agree what interim measures may be needed. The overriding principle is that delay for whatever reason should not place the employee at unacceptable risk.

Step 5 – Review meeting

A date for the review meeting should be agreed at the stress risk assessment meeting, depending on the target dates agreed in the action plan.

The review meeting should – where appropriate – be attended by all parties present at the stress risk assessment meeting and should record what progress has been made against the action plan. It should also identify any problem areas or new issues that may have arisen since the first assessment meeting. Solutions for these should again be recorded in the action plan and new target dates assigned. Further review meetings should be scheduled throughout the review period until all action points have been completed.

5. Summary of roles and responsibilities

5.1. Headteacher (or nominated representative)

- Evaluate and manage the risk of work-related stress, considering the existing arrangements that are in place. The evaluation should be done through the annual generic risk assessment and by seeking employee views in team meetings and one to ones, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Review Job Descriptions to identify safety critical roles and tasks that may involve stressors.
- Ensure that findings of any risk assessments are recorded. The risk assessments should identify any lifestyle issues that may impact on stress levels at work.
- Identify additional arrangements to reduce the risk of work-related stress to as low a level as reasonably practicable, which could include providing information and training, improving communication, and changing working procedures.
- Review workplace conditions to ensure that they do not contribute to work-related stress.
- Ensure that work-related stress risk assessments are reviewed for their confirmed application as part of the annual risk assessment process and when any significant change is made.
- Be aware of employees who may be affected by work-related stress through managers obtaining regular feedback and maintaining a watching brief.
- Ensure that staff are fully trained to perform their job duties.
- Ensure that staff are provided with appropriate developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure staff are not overloaded, and working hours and overtime (where applicable) to ensure staff are not overworking.
- Monitor holidays to ensure staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Encourage a culture in which stress is not regarded as a sign of weakness, ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated and that all staff are aware of the [Whistleblowing](#) and [Harassment and Bullying Policy](#).
- Set up arrangements for individuals to report work-related stress, through meetings with managers and self assessment tools such as the questionnaire given in the appendix.
- Ensure that all members of staff, and especially line managers, have access to specialist advice through the HR Provider's Health and Safety representatives and Human Resources representatives.

- Encourage members of staff to inform their line manager of any concerns regarding stress.
- Ensure that, when a work-related stress report is made, the underlying causes (including lifestyle issues) and actions to remove these causes are identified.
- Ensure that members of staff are consulted on arrangements for reducing work-related stress.
- Encourage and arrange referral to occupational health where appropriate.
- Ensure that support, e.g. confidential counselling, special leave and back-to-work assistance, is provided to members of staff who are suffering from stress at work, and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside of work, e.g. bereavement or separation.
- Ensure that the arrangements for reducing work-related stress are monitored and reviewed for their effectiveness and reported to the Governing Body on a regular basis.

5.2. Employee

- Inform their line manager (or suitable person) in the first instance if they themselves perceive to be suffering from excessive pressure or stress at work.
- Raise issues of concern with their line manager, Headteacher, the school's HR provider or the provider's Health & Safety staff.
- Participate in the stress risk assessment process where it is initiated.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended and attend occupational health appointments if referred.
- Follow appropriate systems of work laid down for their safety.
- Must not bring deliberately false or malicious allegations of stress/bullying or similar, as this may result in disciplinary action taken against the employee.

5.3. Human Resources

- Give guidance on the stress policy to Headteachers (or their nominated representative).
- Participate in the stress risk assessment meetings where appropriate and give guidance to the manager and employee on the assessment of the questionnaires and on drawing up the action plan.
- Help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress.
- Advise Headteachers (or their nominated representative) and individuals on training requirements.
- Provide continuing support to Headteachers (or their nominated representative) and individuals in a changing environment.

5.4. HR Provider's Health and Safety staff

- Provide advice and awareness training on stress.
- Train and support Headteachers (or their nominated representatives) in implementing stress risk assessments.
- Inform the employer of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

Note: If the school's HR provider doesn't provide their own Health and Safety staff, the Headteacher can opt to use The Learning Trust's Health and Safety staff services.

5.5. Trade Union Health and Safety representatives

- Be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress.
- Consult with members on the issue of stress including conducting workplace stress surveys.
- Be meaningfully involved in the stress risk assessment process.

5.6. Governing Body

- Perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented.
- Oversee the monitoring of the policy and other measures to reduce stress at work and promote workplace health and safety.

6. Toolkit

The toolkit can be downloaded from TrustNet, or by clicking on the links below:

- [Health & Safety Executive's Six Management Standards.](#)
- [Stress Risk Assessment Questionnaire \(Headteacher or nominated representative\).](#)
- [Stress Risk Assessment Questionnaire \(Employee\).](#)
- [Stress Risk Assessment Action Plan Template.](#)
- [Possible actions/solutions resulting from stress risk assessment.](#)