



Dame Alice Owen's School
The Dame Alice Owen Foundation - 1613

GUIDANCE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF WORK RELATED STRESS

Guidance agreed by the Governing Body Personnel & Remuneration Committee

May 2020

To be reviewed
(every 2 years)

Summer 2022

This guidance has been negotiated with the Professional Associations/Trade Unions and is recommended for use.

To be monitored by the Governing Body Personnel & Remuneration Committee

1. Scope and objective

This guidance is designed to cover all employees of the School. This guidance does not constitute a policy nor does it form part of any contract of employment.

Absences due to work related stress are increasing every year. Work related stress can affect anyone regardless of seniority or length of service. To manage incidences of work related stress it is important that managers and staff are equipped in minimising stressors in the workplace.

The purpose of this guidance is, as far as it is reasonable, to:

- raise awareness of the School's duty of care to its members of staff
- ensure that managers responsible for staff having an understanding of what work related stress is and potential causes
- ensure the causes are addressed as appropriate, with relevant, reasonable measures introduced to control the risk to health
- promote reasonable steps that can be taken in supporting a member of staff back to health
- ensure that the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly defined and understood in order to achieve successful management of work related stress.

This guidance is supported by and should be read in conjunction with the Schools' other policies, particularly; Health & Attendance, Leave of Absence, Bullying &

Harassment, Disciplinary, Capability and Grievance. The appropriate and timely use of the various policies available can help reduce instances of work related stress.

2. What is stress?

Stress is defined by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them”.

It should be noted that this definition does not see stress and pressure as one and the same. It is widely recognised that pressure has a positive influence on performance and wellbeing if managed correctly, whereas excessive pressure can be detrimental to the mental and physical health of an employee.

Both the School and the member of staff should try to identify at what point pressure may become excessive and implement reasonable adjustments to ensure the avoidance of excessive pressure which may be detrimental to the health of their staff members.

It is reasonable for management to assume that in any workplace there are likely to be periods that are more pressurised than others and also that;

- staff members in a school environment will be subjected to periods of pressure at work
- staff members are psychologically capable of withstanding reasonable pressures at work
- sustained and / or excessive pressure at work over long periods of time can result in anxiety, depression and/or a poor work-life balance. This is commonly considered to be work related stress and can be detrimental to the physical and mental health of employees.

3. Potential Causes of work related stress

Causes of stress differ for individuals as stress is determined by their perception of a situation or stressor. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) identify six factors under ‘stress management standards’ which could lead to work related stress if they are left unmanaged:

- Demands
- Control
- Support
- Relationships
- Role
- Change

3.1 Demands

- Do members of staff perceive they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs?

This includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment. The impact of high demands can be reduced if the employee is able to have a high level of control over their work.

3.2. Control

- Do staff members perceive they are able to have a say about the way they do their work?

Consider how much say the member of staff has in the way they do their work. The impact of high demands and low control can be reduced by having high levels of support, either from colleagues or from their manager.

3.3. Support

- Do members of staff perceive they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors?

This could include encouragement and/or resources provided by line management and colleagues. Support can range from a simple conversation, to an Occupational Health (OH) referral. If further advice on management support is required please contact the School's HR advisory team.

3.4. Relationships

- Do members of staff perceive they are subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work?

This includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Relationships can be one of the biggest sources of stress, especially where there are problems like perceptions of bullying and harassment.

3.5. Role

- Do staff members perceive there to be a lack of understanding around their own role and / or responsibilities?

This could include whether or not the member of staff understands their role within school and whether their manager ensures that they do not have conflicting roles. Problems with the role are probably the easier problems to solve, as a simple

conversation can often lead to clarification and a greater understanding on both sides of both the perceived problem(s), and the expectations of management.

3.6. Change

- Do staff members have a perception of disengagement from organisational change?

Consider how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the School. Change does not have to be at an organisational level to have an impact on individuals or teams, for example, changes in staff members, line managers or the type of work or technology used by the team can be just as stressful.

Understanding that these six factors can cause stress for members of staff can help the School and managers answer the questions:

- Does the School or a particular department/team have a problem with stress?
- if 'yes', what needs to change to reduce that stress?
- if 'no' what needs to change to prevent stress becoming a problem in the future?

As a supportive first step, identifying where the stressors are can be helpful. Tools such as an Individual Stress Assessment Form (appendix 2) can be useful here

Good practice guidance for each of the above factors can be found in the Management Standards section of the HSE website, which can help you to encourage a proactive approach to preventing and managing stress in the workplace;
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm>

4. Duty of Care

The judgement in the case 'Barber v Somerset County Council (2004)' has provided useful guidance and practical steps to employers which the HSE have incorporated into the stress management standards.

The judgement puts the onus back onto employers to take responsibility for the health and wellbeing of staff. Somerset County Council in this case had a duty of care to their employee to inquire about his health, which they failed to do.

There are limitations on the information employers receive, and therefore cannot be expected to act on information they are not privy to/ an employee has not disclosed.

An employer does not legally have to prevent ill-health caused by stress outside of work (e.g. domestic/ personal issues), however it is recognised that problems outside of work can impact employees and their performance may therefore suffer as a result. Schools should therefore try, where appropriate, to empathise with the

situation and assist the employee where possible, this can be via an Occupational Health referral or by using the School's Employee Assistance Programme.

5. Recognising the signs and symptoms of workplace stress / mental health conditions

Symptoms of work related stress or mental health conditions can be many and varied depending on the individual and their circumstances. The below list of common symptoms is not exhaustive and will not occur in every case, but is a guide which may help you identify work related stress and mental health concerns sooner, both in yourself and staff you line manage:

5.1. The way a member of staff acts;

- taking more time-off
- arriving to work later
- appearing nervous and agitated
- not delivering in their role
- distracted
- behaviour that is out of character.

5.2. The way a staff member feels;

- withdrawn
- isolated
- loss of motivation
- loss of appetite/overeating
- emotional reactions - crying, tearful.

6. Roles and suggested responsibilities

6.1. Member of staff

- To apply reasonable management of their own emotional wellbeing at work
- To cooperate with their line manager, Human Resources and Occupational Health personnel in relation to the appropriate support and management action
- To raise any concerns at the first available opportunity with the appropriate person, proposing solutions to how this may be remedied in the short and/or long term.

6.2. Manager

- To support individuals (members of staff) who report work related stress through discussion, asking appropriate questions (see appendix 1), identifying

stressors (see appendix 2) and early resolution where possible through short term measures such as reasonable adjustments

- To carry out stress risk assessments of work related stressors (see appendix 3)
- To implement reasonable management strategies identified by the risk assessment
- To review risk assessments as appropriate
- To consider implementing reasonable adjustments recommended by Occupational Health ensuring that they do not cause long-term detriment to school.

6.3. Headteacher

- To give guidance and support to managers regarding the management of stress in the workplace
- To encourage appropriate communication between members of staff and managers
- To offer additional support for staff members suffering from work related stress where practicable.

6.4. Governing body

- To actively promote a healthy workforce.

6.5. Herts for Learning HR Services

- To give guidance and support to Headteachers
- To coordinate the provision of internal support services e.g. ill health review meetings and occupational health appointments.

6.6. Occupational Health

- To provide specialist advice in response to work related stress referrals.

7. Support available

7.1. Employee Wellbeing Assistance Programme

Optum (Carewell) is HCC's employee assistance programme available to all school employees (including those made redundant up to a year after leaving). The School can buy into the service - available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, online or on the phone.

Accessed via - <https://www.livewell.optum.com/public/welcome.asp>

Remploy - Remploy is the UK's leading provider of disability employment services, supporting disabled individuals towards work; ensuring employers can recruit, retain and sustain the right individuals; partnering to create value and drive results and working with commissioners to deliver value for all.

Accessed via - <https://www.remploy.co.uk/>

7.2. Confidential Support and Advice

Mind - Providing advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. Campaigning to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

Accessed via - <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

Mind in Mid-Herts - There are 4 offices across Hertfordshire providing a one-stop shop to improve emotional and physical wellbeing. The centres offer a range of services, including self-help groups, training courses and exercise programmes.

Accessed via - <https://mindinmidherts.org.uk/about-us/>

Rethink Mental Illness - Challenging attitudes and changing lives since 1972, helping people living with conditions like [schizophrenia](#), [bipolar disorder](#), [personality disorders](#) and [more](#) to recover a better quality of life.

Accessed via - <http://www.rethink.org/>

Depression Alliance - Depression Alliance has almost 40 years' experience in working closely with healthcare professionals and government agencies, to improve local services and to ensure a healthier, happier life for the millions affected by depression.

Accessed via - <http://www.depressionalliance.org/>

Time to Change - Time to Change is England's biggest programme to challenge mental health stigma and discrimination.

Accessed via - <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>

Teacher Support Network - Teacher Support Network believes no teacher should have to cope with emotional strain alone and is always there to listen. Their dedicated helpline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Accessed via - <http://www.teachersupport.info/>

Appendix 1

Approaching stress at work / mental health concerns

As a manager, if you have specific concerns or you recognise possible signs and symptoms of stress at work or mental health concerns, it is important that you address these at an early stage. Using a one-to-one meeting or informal discussion to talk to the staff member, here are some tips for an effective discussion:

- meet in a private, confidential setting
- be clear about confidentiality, and that you have a duty as a manager to disclose information if you suspect the member of staff could cause harm to themselves (or others)
- use open questions when talking to the staff member to help them open up. A good starting point is to simply ask them how they feel
- listen to what the member of staff says. Do not make judgements or assume everyone deals with stress in the same way
- ask the staff member whether there are any problems at work (or outside of work) impacting upon their wellbeing that they wish to talk about
- signpost the member of staff to interventions which can offer further support (see Section 7), encouraging them to make contact and obtain further support

Questions to ask	Phrases to avoid
How are you feeling at the moment?	You're clearly struggling
I've noticed you don't seem to be your usual self, you seem to be a bit down / upset / under pressure / frustrated / angry etc. etc. Is everything OK?	You need to drop this mood; it's affecting others within the team.
I've noticed you've been late (quite) a few times recently, is everything OK?	Your timekeeping is poor; I'll be keeping my eye on things going forward.
I've noticed your books haven't been marked in a while and you're usually great at keeping on top of this. Is everything OK?	Your performance is unacceptable at the moment.
What would you like to happen? How? Is there anything I can do to help?	What do you want?

What support do you think you might help?	We're all in the same boat here. Who do you expect to pick up the work you can't manage?
Have you spoken to your GP or looked anywhere else for support?	What do you expect me to do?

As per the Disability Discrimination provision of the Equality Act 2010, it is important to note that the staff member is not required to tell you about a health condition or disability; however you can put it to them that should they not disclose a problem, it is hard for you to make workplace adjustments around it.

It should be further noted that if you break confidentiality this could be a breach of the Disability Discrimination provision of the Equality Act 2010.

If you have concerns about yours skills in handling these difficult conversations, then consider developing these skills as part of your professional development. Check the HfL website for further information on Training and Events.

Appendix 2

Individual Stress Assessment Form

Please read and consider the following questions, ticking the appropriate answer.

		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I am clear what is expected of me at work					
2	I can decide when to take a break					
3	Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine					
4	I know how to go about getting my job done					
5	I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour					
6	I have unachievable deadlines					
7	If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me					
8	I am given supportive feedback on the work I do					
9	I have to work very intensively					
10	I have a say in my own work speed					
11	I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are					
12	I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do					
13	I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department					
14	There is friction or anger between colleagues					
15	I have a choice in deciding how I do my work					
16	I am unable to take sufficient breaks					
17	I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation					
18	I am pressured to work long hours					
19	I have a choice in deciding what I do at work					
20	I have to work very fast					

Appendix 3

Stress Risk Assessment template

Use this form to assess the level of stress to individuals whilst carrying out their day to day role or following a period of intensive activity or change within the school or establishment. Review and tailor the contents of this generic risk assessment to meet your school's individual circumstances.

Record what action you are already taking to reduce the risk of stress and what further action is required. Record any other significant findings and actions required to reduce risk further where existing controls are insufficient, assigning the actions to an appropriate manager.

NB - if an individual advises that they are suffering from stress or has a period of ill health absence due to stress a separate occupational health assessment should be carried out.

Establishment:	Assessment by:	Date:
Risk assessment number/ref if applicable:	Manager Approval:	Date:

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who	Action by when	Completed
<p>Are there excessive job demands?</p> <p>Workload, work patterns and work environment</p>	<p>Staff</p> <p>Ill health may result: anxiety, depression.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance management process in place • Regular meetings with staff, both team meetings and one to one/ performance management which would discuss and anticipate workload. 				

<p>Dealing with bad behaviour</p> <p>Ofsted inspections</p>	<p>Illness may lead to absence from work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that skills and abilities are correctly matched to job (person spec and job description) • Headteacher / Managers monitor sickness absence data and staff turnover rates • Work environment concerns, e.g. temperature, ventilation, noise, are taken seriously and investigated • Times and lengths of meetings agreed and adhered to. A limit to after-school meetings as far as reasonable • Staff have an opportunity to take a genuine break at lunch time • Ensure teachers and middle leaders in particular maintain a reasonable work life balance • Governing bodies have considered how they can support the Headteacher in terms of work-life balance, new models of leadership, leadership time, career coaching and professional development opportunities 				
<p>Control - how much say a person has in the way they do their work</p>	<p>Staff Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work • Staff encouraged to develop new skills to help them. Undertaken new and challenging pieces of work • Staff consulted over their work patterns or changes to their work patterns 				

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of the workload impact of each new initiative before it is introduced • PPA time in operation, reliable and can be completed offsite • Scope for flexible working arrangements considered 				
<p>Support - includes the encouragement and resources provided</p>	<p>Staff Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of staff are supported through school policies and procedures • Regular team meetings / one-to-ones to discuss emergent issues • Staff are aware of the support that is available to them • Staff receive regular constructive feedback as part of their performance management • Identification of any training needs conducted through performance management • Staff can access CPD on a fair and equitable basis • Mentoring and coaching available where necessary • Schools have the option of buying into the Employee Assistance Programme provided by PPC Worldwide (Positive People Company). It offers online, telephone and face to face 				

		<p>counselling on a range of personal and professional themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headteacher support service - confidential support service provided for Headteachers 				
Role - whether people understand their role and the school ensures there are not conflicting roles	<p>Staff</p> <p>Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff understand their role and are suitably trained • Performance management used to help individuals clarify their role and priorities • Standards of performance agreed • New members of staff receive adequate induction into their role and objectives • Recruitment process in place with Job Descriptions and Person Specifications • Effective system of induction for new and supply staff 				
Change - how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated	<p>Staff</p> <p>Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff made aware of why change is happening and key steps for change • Realistic timetable set out for change • Staff directly affected are involved in the change process • Regular communication and consultation with all those affected • 'open door' policy to help members of staff who have concerns 				

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training provided for new / changed roles 				
<p>Relationships - promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour</p>	<p>Staff Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The School promotes positive behaviours by ensuring the School's Behaviour Policy robust and adhered to • Discipline, grievance and bullying/harassment procedures are in place and accessible to staff • Managers are encouraged to deal with and staff encouraged to report unacceptable behaviour • Training provided to help staff deal with difficult situations • Identify ways to celebrate success • Explore team building exercises • Whole school / departmental activities / events held 				
<p>Undetected / poorly managed stress</p> <p>Failure to recognise signs leading to more serious ill health</p> <p>Repeated ill health through poor management</p>	<p>Staff Ill health (depression, anxiety) leading to absence from work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All incidents of potential / actual work related stress reviewed • Advice from HR and/or Occupational Health sought • Leave of Absence Policy in place and adhered to, return to work • interviews held and remedial action taken as appropriate 				

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff encouraged to proactively raise issues / concerns with their manager / head • Staff awareness of available support improved e.g. counselling, Occupational Health, GP, Employee Assistance Programmes etc. • The School has participated in the wellbeing programme for schools or undertaken HSE survey tool • Exit interviews held 				
Assessment review date usually within one year, or earlier in the event of an incident, a change in conditions or if more frequent review is warranted		 (dd/mm/yyyy)			