

Title	Stress Management policy
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Author	HR
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Version	Date	Description
0.1	Feb 09	First draft in line with Corporate Health Standard requirements
0.2	March 09	Management Board approval
0.3	April 09	Health and Safety Group approval
0.4	May 09	Works Council endorsement with minor amendments
1.0	11/06/09	HRC approval
1.0	24/06/09	Policy EIA'd

1. Introduction

1.1 HEFCW is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

1.2 This policy will apply to all individuals in the organisation. Individuals are responsible for adhering to the requirements of this policy and HEFCW is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

1.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Stress Management Guidance.

2. Definition of stress

2.1 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.

3. Benefits of managing stress

3.1 Effective stress management is beneficial to individuals, line managers, teams and HEFCW as a whole. It can:

- improve the quality of working life;
- reduce sickness absence;
- improve efficiency;
- improve employee relations.

4. Mechanisms available to employees

4.1 The Stress Management Guidance contains useful information on the support mechanisms available to employees through HEFCW, such as contacting a Fair Treatment Advisor (FTA), utilising the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), contacting HR and other external sources.

5. Risk assessment

5.1 HEFCW has a duty under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities and under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 HEFCW is obliged to control any such risk.

5.2 HEFCW's annual Staff Attitude Survey will be the basis for the risk assessment and used as a mechanism to identify stress indicators and highlight any areas of concern by the Health and Safety Group.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 HEFCW

6.1.1 HEFCW will:

- seek to identify workplace stressors and conduct assessments of the risks to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. These assessments will be conducted annually as part of the Staff Attitude Survey and through the monitoring of sickness absence.

- consult with the Health and Safety Group, Works Council, Management Board and HR Committee on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- provide training for all line managers in good management practices.
- provide confidential counselling for employees affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.
- provide adequate resources to enable line managers to implement HEFCW's agreed stress management strategy.

6.2 Line managers

6.2.1 Line managers in conjunction with HR will:

- support and implement recommendations of risk assessments within their jurisdiction;
- ensure good communication between management and employees, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes;
- ensure employees are fully trained to discharge their duties;
- ensure employees are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities;
- monitor workloads to ensure that individuals are not overloaded;
- monitor working hours and patterns to ensure that employees are not overworking. Monitor holidays to ensure that employees are taking their full entitlement;
- attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety;
- ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated;
- be vigilant and offer additional support to an employee who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

6.3 Health and Safety Group

6.3.1 The Health and Safety Group will:

- ensure that regular risk assessments are conducted and reviewed through the annual Staff Attitude Survey via HR;
- provide specialist advice and guidance where applicable;

- ensure that the stress management policy and other relevant Health and Safety policies are regularly reviewed and adhered to.

6.4 Human Resources

6.4.1 HR will:

- provide guidance to line managers and employees on the policy;
- provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress;
- help monitor the effectiveness of measures implemented to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics;
- support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and the line manager on a plan to return to work;
- provide continuing support to line managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to occupational health advisers where appropriate;
- monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress;
- inform Management Board, Health and Safety Group, Works Council and HR Committee of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work and agree actions for implementation.

6.5 Employees

6.5.1 Employees can:

- raise issues of concern with their line manager, Head of Team, Human Resources, Fair Treatment Adviser or Health and Safety representative.
- accept opportunities for counselling when recommended;
- follow the advice and guidance available on stress management;
- make use of the Employee Assistance Programme when required.

6.6 Health and Safety Group representatives

6.6.1 Representatives on the Health and Safety Group will:

- be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could cause stress;
- provide guidance to staff on issues of stress;
- be meaningfully involved in the risk assessment process;
- conduct regular inspections of the workplace to ensure that potential stressors as a result of the working environment are properly controlled.

6.7 Management Board, Works Council and HR Committee

6.7.1 Management Board, Works Council and HR Committee will:

- support the implementation of the policy and guidance;
- oversee monitoring of the efficiency of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and implement workplace health and safety.

7 Queries and review

7.1 This policy has been developed by HR with support from the Office Manager and queries regarding this policy can be directed to either HR or the Office Manager.

7.2 This policy will be reviewed annually.