

Human Resources

Management of Stress at Work Policy

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 This document outlines the policy for the prevention and management of stress at work in for London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.
- 1.2 The School is committed to maintaining the health and safety of its employees in the work environment. The School recognises that this duty of care extends to psychological health as well as physical health. Employees also have a duty of care to report aspects of work that may affect their health and safety as required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The School and its employees have a responsibility to identify and manage work related stress by working in partnership.
- 1.3 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999) imposes a duty on employers to make a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. This duty extends to psychological risks to health and is a statutory duty for all employers.
- 1.4 All employees within the School may be exposed to stress. Non-work related stress issues can combine with work related stress to produce pressures which can be detrimental to the physical and/or mental wellbeing of employees and to the smooth running of the School.

2. DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as: "A reaction people have when excessive pressures or demands are placed upon them, and arises when an individual believes they are unable to cope" The common term for these pressures or demands is "stressors" and a person's reactions to stressors are termed "stress responses."
- 2.2 Pressure is part and parcel of all works and helps keep us motivated. But excessive stressors particularly over a period of time can lead to stress which undermines performance and can become detrimental to health. It is important to remember that reaction to stress is a very individual experience. Individual stress can be influenced by our own beliefs, attitudes and unrealistic expectations of others. Individual reaction to stressful situations may also be influenced by our conditioning, cultural background, education, life experiences, states of health and personality type.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy applies to all employees of the School and all those carrying out duties on behalf of the School.

4. ACCESS TO THE POLICY

- 4.1 All employees are entitled to access to this policy which is located on the School's Intranet. Copies are also available from the Human Resources Department and any employee can seek guidance from line management, their trade union representative or the Human Resources Department.

5. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 5.1. To work in partnership with employees and the Trade Union Representatives to develop working practices that reduce the factors that may lead to stress in the workplace and to ensure that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken so as to reduce and control the risk of stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed in particular during periods of organisational change and changes in work demands.

- 5.2 To manage stress through both effective leadership and management practices by providing training for managers and supervisors and by encouraging employees to recognise and to be involved in the management of stressors which affect them.
- 5.3 To provide adequate resources to enable the Health and Safety Committee to develop effective procedures to reduce and manage work related stress in order to support individuals who may be affected.
- 5.4 To provide employees with information/training on the management of work related stress and to offer access to immediate support through their line manager, and Occupational Health.
- 5.5 To provide employees with ongoing support through managers, Human Resources advice, Occupational Health and access to access to mediation, confidential counselling.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 The School's Senior Management Team has a responsibility to ensure that the general principles of this policy are followed and that:
 - They are fully implemented and supported by Directors and Heads of Departments;
 - The duty of care under current legislation is fully complied with;
 - Encourage and support activities that aid the promotion of employees' health and wellbeing.
- 6.2 Managers responsibilities are to:
 - Attend training and updates as required by the School in order to raise personal awareness and deliver effective management practices and implementation of specific action plans and interventions for reducing and managing work related stress;
 - At the request of Occupational Health, the employee or as identified by the manager, undertake work related stress risk assessments in a timely manner within their working areas and act on their recommendations where possible;
 - Ensure that employees have had appropriate training to carry out their duties;
 - Monitor planned workloads;
 - Monitor working hours, overtime working and the taking of annual leave to ensure that employees comply with the current policies relating to annual leave and working hours management;
 - Offer support to employees that maybe experiencing identified stress outside of work e.g. bereavement or family issues;
 - Ensure that all employees declaring/identifying anxiety/stress/depression are referred immediately to Occupational Health.
- 6.3 The responsibilities of the Human Resources Department are to:
 - Provide guidance to managers and employees on the School's policies related to the management of work related stress;
 - Assist and support the implementation of the stress management standards within the School;

- Monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating statistical sickness absence evidence;
- Provide, in conjunction with the Occupational Health Services, continuing support to managers and employees in a changing environment and encourage access to counselling and other support services as appropriate;
- Keep the provisions within this policy in line with employment legislation and best practice people management principles.

6.4 The responsibilities of the Health and Safety Committee are to:

- Contribute to arrangements to ensure this policy is implemented across the School;
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress at work;
- Contribute to the provision of information to the Senior Management Team, regarding the implementation, efficacy of this policy and the measures in place within the school to reduce and manage work related stress

6.5 The responsibilities of the Occupational Health Department are to:

- Provide specialist advice and training as required including training on stress awareness in self and others;
- Contribute to training and support of managers in the implementation of the stress management standards;
- Provide, in conjunction with the Human Resources Department, monitoring of levels of occurrence of stress and other illnesses associated with stress;
- Contribute to sickness absence management by engagement with employees who have been off sick with stress and their managers to provide advice and/or recommendations for a return to work plan;
- Advice on support services such as mediation, the Human Resources Department, Counselling service and any other external agencies as required;
- Work in conjunction with the Health and Safety Committee and where applicable on developments in stress at work activity;
- Support the School in ensuring that all relevant legislation and standards are adhered to.

6.6 The responsibilities of all employees and all those carrying out duties on behalf of the School are to:

- Familiarise themselves with information regarding the management of stress at work and School policies and procedures provided at induction and in the local work environment;
- Be aware of their own responsibility for health and safety at work;
- Inform their manager and where applicable the Human Resources Department and the Occupational Health Department if they are experiencing difficulties at work which are or could result in work related stress.

6.7 In addition to this, they should recognise that they are able to:

- Raise concerns with their line manager, the Occupational Health Department or the Human Resources Department regarding any physical or psychological stress symptoms which affect them at work;
- Avail themselves of support mechanisms when recommended e.g. mediation and should accept opportunities for counselling/therapy when recommended.

6.8 The responsibilities of the Safety/Trade Union Representatives are to:

- Work in partnership with management to ensure that the general principles of this policy are adhered to;
- Be involved in the risk assessment process when applying the stress management standards;
- Be allowed access to statistical and anonymous data concerning stress related issues;
- Attend training and updates as required by the School in order to raise personal awareness and contribute to the development and implementation of this policy.

6.9 Managers, the HR department and trade union representatives are responsible for providing advice and guidance to employees on the application of this policy and procedure, as well as bringing any mutually beneficial improvements to this policy to the attention of the School.

7. BENCH-MARKING

7.1 To provide a good bench mark by which to assess the School's current position and to measure the effectiveness of its training and the support mechanisms the School will use any anonymised information such as annual staff survey data, return to work interviews,

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 The Health and Safety Executive requires every employer to conduct risk assessments for health and safety hazards including work related stress.

8.2 Risk management is part of every managers day to day responsibilities, it should inform judgements about the appropriateness of policy options and/or service delivery methods, and as such should be integral to both strategic and operational management.

8.3 Stress risk assessments should be carried out by managers on the identification or notification of a hazard.

8.4 The School is committed to adhering to these HSE requirements in carrying out risk assessments and following the HSE recommendations of a five step approach when implementing risk assessments:

8.5

- Step 1 – identify hazards
- Step 2 – assess the risks to health – who might be harmed and how
- Step 3 - evaluate the risk and identify actions – develop control measures
- Step 4 – record findings and implement action plan
- Step 5 – monitor and evaluate effectiveness, communicate results

8.5 Managers should meet with staff in groups and individually to help identify areas of concern. Issues relating to wider work processes may be risk assessed as department issues, however issues relating to personal concerns of staff should be examined in a confidential environment again using the above parameters.

8.6 It may also be necessary to undertake a stress risk assessment of an area or a review of department or work processes. In addition to individuals raising concerns, managers may become aware of potential issues relating to stress from department

meetings, sickness absence rates, and general morale. This may also be considered when initiating new work processes.

Individual risk assessments should be completed (Appendix 6) where an individual reports work-related stress. This assessment may be completed with the individual with the support of the line manager or by Occupational Health.

Where there are cases of work-related stress in a department this should also act as a trigger for the completion of a departmental risk assessment identified in Appendix 7. Occupational Health should also be notified as they may advise further assessment using the HSE on-line assessment tool. The process for management action is summarised in Appendix 4.

9. PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING STRESS RELATED ILLNESS

- 9.1 Stress related illnesses can be managed from three perspectives, by way of organisational, managerial and/or personal self-management (see Appendix 3).
- 9.2 When carrying out a risk assessment management and employees can identify any work related stress using the non-exhaustive list of stressors at Appendix 2.
- 9.3 Once a stress related illness has been identified, it is important that managers, employees and all those carrying out duties on behalf of the School which could include normal day to day responsibilities.
- 9.4 As stress is an individual response to a perceived pressure people will have different coping thresholds and it can be difficult to predict who is likely to suffer with stress. A further complication is that people have different coping thresholds depending on other circumstances in their lives. It should therefore be remembered that stress can be accumulative and is not necessarily predictable.
- 9.5 Good management techniques should alert managers to changes in their employees, such as, personality changes, performance etc. that may indicate that an individual is unable to cope with the workload. However some people will not display overt signs and managers cannot always predict when someone is stressed. Often the first indication is when an episode of sickness occurs with stress/anxiety or depression on the certificate. Once alerted to a potential issue, managers should immediately discuss this with the employee concerned and complete a referral to Occupational Health for ongoing support. Referral forms can be found on the School's intranet.
- 9.6 If an individual feels they are experiencing work-related stress they should report to their manager, if appropriate, in order that a referral is made to Occupational Health and an individual risk assessment is carried out.
- 9.7 Individuals can also seek confidential advice on the management of work-related stress from Occupational Health. The Health and Safety Executive has extensive information on their web site on work-related stress which can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards

10. MONITORING

- 10.1 Once a risk assessment has been undertaken and the outcomes implemented a review date should be set. If issues are still ongoing the Human Resources or Occupational Health department should be contacted for further advice.