



Stress Management Health & Safety Management Standard Issue 2 (June, 2009)

Part A: Principles, Responsibilities and Practical Actions

Introduction

This document contains corporate standards and guidance on the management of stress at work. It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that stress related issues are managed in line with this document in any area under their control.

Structure

This document is divided into four parts:

- **Part A:** Principles, Responsibilities and Practical Actions
- **Part B:** Team-Based 'Preventative' Stress Risk Assessments
- **Part C:** Individual 'Reactive' Stress Risk Assessments – 'Stress Action Plans'
- **Part D:** Stress and Sickness Absence

Managers' Checklist – Stress Management

1. Are you aware of your role in the prevention and management of stress?
2. Has a preventative group/team based 'Stress Risk Assessment been carried out? (See Part B)
3. Do you understand how to recognise the [signs and symptoms](#) of stress in individual employees?
4. Are you aware of the mechanisms and [interventions](#) available to support individual employees experiencing pressure or stress?
5. Are you aware of the reporting mechanisms for work-related stress?
6. Are you aware of the processes for carrying out 'reactive' stress risk assessment for individual employees? (See Part C)
7. Are the six [Health & Safety Executive \(HSE\) management standards](#) in place and being delivered?

Policy and Principles

Stress management policy

Leicester City Council is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of its employees and recognises that employee well-being is important to its performance and service delivery, together with supporting people as valued employees.

The council aims to take positive measures to manage stress effectively and to create an environment where stress is prevented so far as is reasonably practicable; and that where it becomes an issue for individual employees, they are encouraged to seek support.

This policy is primarily concerned with stress arising from work, but the Council also recognises that events occurring outside work may also lead to stress that may have an impact on an employee's work. Therefore, employees should be given appropriate assistance whatever the cause.

Supporting principles

The following principles apply to LCC's approach to managing stress:

- The management of stress should be dealt with in a way that is non-discriminatory and in accordance with LCC's equal opportunities policy.
- Employees should be dealt with fairly and consistently across the organisation.
- There should be a positive and preventative approach to stress, rather than a punitive one.
- Individual confidentiality will be respected.
- Open communication between managers and employees should be encouraged and promoted.

HSE management standards

As part of the Council's policy and approach to stress, the HSE's stress 'Management Standards' is recognised as being the desired goal for the prevention, minimisation and management of stress issues in LCC. Managers should work towards ensuring that the 'states to be achieved' identified in the standards are achieved within LCC. The HSE's stress management standards can be found on the [HSE's website](#).

Defining Stress

Stress and pressure

The HSE defines stress as:

'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them'.

Pressure, in one form or another, will be present in all jobs. Pressure and challenge, even when high, can be motivating and stimulating. Pressure that can be responded to effectively is a factor in achieving job satisfaction. However, pressure at a level and a time where an individual cannot cope can lead to stress, as can too little pressure or challenge.

It should also be noted that individuals do not have a predisposition to stress. An individual's response will depend on the amount of pressure and their ability to cope at the time, and will therefore differ from person to person. However, no one can be regarded as being 'immune'.

Roles and Responsibilities

Elected Members and senior managers

- Demonstrate their commitment and support to this policy, by ensuring that the principles and approaches to managing stress are implemented.
- Reflect the policy's principles and approaches in their management practice.
- Ensure that resources are available to ensure that stress management arrangements are implemented.
- Provide adequate support to line managers in the implementation of this policy.

Managers (at all levels)

- Conduct and implement the recommendations of risk assessments within their area of control.
- Ensure good communication between themselves and staff, particularly where there are organisational changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to undertake their duties and are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Ensure that employees have access to appropriate training on recognising stress and manage pressure.
- Monitor workloads, working hours and whether staff are taking leave.
- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health & safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their area of responsibility
- Offer support to employees who are experiencing stress outside work.

Individual employees (including all managers)

- Support LCC's stress actions and initiatives.
- Recognise that they themselves may be a cause of stress to others, accept responsibility and take action to deal with this.
- Attend appropriate training so that they are better able to recognise and manage pressure and stress in themselves and others.
- Communicate openly and honestly with their manager and colleagues.
- Identify causes of stress in the workplace and report them appropriately to their line manager.
- Make use of opportunities to access confidential counselling when relevant or recommended.

Trades Union representatives

- Help promote and support stress initiatives in the workplace and to encourage full participation by everyone.
- Make employees aware of support mechanisms available to them.
- Support the monitoring and review of this policy (e.g. via H&S committees).

Practical steps for managers

Practical actions relevant to managers at all levels, which can help to avoid and minimise the impact of stress are given below. In addition, the 'Stress at Work - Assessment of Good Management Practice' form provides examples of practical actions that can help to avoid and minimise the impact of stress.

1. Speak to your staff.
 - Do all your staff have equal access to information, briefings, etc.? Consider any home workers, temp and part time staff.
 - Do you share information with your staff and ensure you don't keep 'bad news' secret?
 - Do you remember to pass on all the briefings and information that you receive?
2. Make sure team meetings happen.
 - Only rearrange them if absolutely necessary. Never cancel them without rearranging.
3. Make sure all staff have their appraisal.
 - Do you know how to undertake an appraisal? Consider your own training needs in this area.
 - Do you consider the individual's training needs at their appraisal?
 - Do you ask about things that stop them working as effectively as they could?
 - Are you and the individual clear about priorities? Do you and the individual understand how their priorities relate to the overall priorities of the team and service?
4. Have regular '1-2-1s' with individuals.
 - Ensure you allocate time for '1-2-1s' to take place.
 - Only rearrange them if absolutely necessary. Never cancel one without rearranging.
 - Always cover workload issues, and discuss and clarify priorities.
5. Know what to do if an employee tells you they are 'stressed'.
 - Make sure you know how to use the 'Stress Action Plan' tool.
6. Intervene quickly and positively if someone is absent due to stress.
 - **Do not** avoid contact with employees who are off work due to stress.
 - Quickly starting and maintaining contact with absent staff is especially important if their stated reason for absence is stress.
 - If they are unwilling to be in contact with you, speak to HR about alternative contact arrangements.
7. Be flexible.
 - If someone has something going on in their home life that is affecting their work, consider what LCC could do to help, even if on a short-term or temporary basis.

Signs of Stress

Some of the common signs of stress are:

- Persistent or recurrent moods – anger, irritability, detachment, worry, depression, guilt or sadness.
- Changed behaviour – difficulty concentrating or remembering things, inability to switch off, loss of creativity, making more errors, double checking everything, eating disorders, covering up mistakes by lying, increased use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs.
- Physical sensations/effects – aches and pains, raised heart rate, increased sweating, dizziness, blurred vision, skin or sleep disorders.

Managers should also be aware of the following possible signs of stress in individuals:

- Increase in overall sickness absence – particularly frequent short-term absences.
- Poor work performance – less output, lower quality, poor decision making.
- Relationships at work – conflict between colleagues, poor relationships with clients or other stakeholders.
- Staff attitude and behaviour – loss of motivation or commitment, poor time-keeping, working longer hours but with diminishing effectiveness.

Where managers have concerns they should discuss these with the individual concerned (see Part C).

Stress Interventions

Support for managers and employees

The following support mechanisms are available:

- **HR teams** – To provide support and guidance to managers and employees in dealing with stress, and in the use of related policies and procedures.
- **Health & Safety Services** – To provide support and guidance on risk assessment processes.
- **Occupational Health (OH)** – To provide medical advice and guidance on the impact of stress on individuals' health and their work, and what steps LCC and/or the employee may take.

Confidential counselling – Employee Assistance Programme

A free, confidential counselling service is available to LCC employees, provided by [Amica](#). As well as support to individuals, Amica are also able to provide support and advice to managers, including how to deal with a critical incident / adverse event.

Work-life balance (WLB) and flexible working options

Personal or home issues may reduce the individual's ability to cope with normal work pressures and vice versa. Therefore, even if the primary cause is not thought to be work-related, appropriate support should be provided to the employee. This support may include looking at how the organisation can help the employee achieve a better work-life balance, either on a temporary or permanent basis. Further information on flexible working options is available from [Insite](#) or from HR.

Training

Specific courses aimed at individual employees and managers are available, free of charge via [City Learning](#).

Physical/environmental factors

Employees may report that physical or environmental factors are a potential cause of stress. Issues of this type should be addressed through the requirements of existing relevant legislation (e.g. the [Workplace or Display Screen Equipment Regulations](#)) with further advice from your H&S team.

Violence

Stress arising from violence at work issues should be addressed through LCC's guidance on [violence at work](#), with further advice from your H&S team as appropriate.

The role of other policies and arrangements

Many other existing policies and arrangements relate, directly and indirectly, to the management of stress. These include:

- [Appraisal, Supervision and '1-2-1s'](#) - These provide employees and managers with a valuable opportunity to get together and discuss work related issues.
- [Grievance Procedures](#) - All LCC employees have a right to raise any grievance relating to their employment and have it settled fairly and without undue delay.
- [Harassment and Discrimination Procedure](#) - Employees who feel they have been harassed or discriminated against in relation to their employment have a right to raise their complaint under the Harassment and Discrimination procedure.
- [Attendance Management Policy \(AMP\)](#) - The AMP sets out the Council's approach to managing absence. See also 'Stress and Sickness Absence' below.
- [Organisational & Staffing Change Protocol](#) - 'Appendix R' sets out protocol for organisational reviews, including the required arrangements for consultation and communication during periods of reorganisation.
- [Capability Procedure](#) - The purpose of the procedure is to provide a fair process for reviewing an employee's capability and dealing with any problems identified. The emphasis is not be on punishment, but on helping employees to do their jobs to the required standards.
- [Code of Conduct](#) - Includes potentially relevant information, including relationships with colleagues and other expected standards of behaviour at work.

Reporting Incidents of Work-Related Stress

If an employee feels they are experiencing work-related stress, managers should ensure that the individual reports it on the LCC 'SO2' Incident Report Form. As part of their investigation, the line manager should:

- Review any previous stress risk assessments carried out (whether team or individual risk assessments).
- Ask the employee to provide reasons and examples of why they feel they are experiencing work-related stress (this should lead on to the creation of a 'Stress Action Plan').
- Identify any further actions to be taken (e.g. reviewing existing stress risk assessments, undertaking a Stress Action Plan, etc.) and record the actions to be taken on the Incident Report Form.

Absence from work due to stress (whether work or non-work related) must also be reported in accordance with LCC's [sickness absence reporting procedures](#).