



SHANKLEA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Stress Reduction and Prevention Policy

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Approved for issue by:	Gareth Pearson	Signature	Date
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Shanklea Primary School

Stress Reduction and Prevention Policy

1 Scope

This policy has been recommended for adoption by Northumberland County Council. It relates to all employees, including those who work on a temporary or supply basis.

This policy takes into account best practice from the Health and Safety Executive.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to increase awareness of stress and enable schools to implement effective strategies to prevent and reduce this amongst their workforce.

The Health and Safety Executive defines 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. Sources of stress can be external like bereavement or internal, for instance too much pressure of work. Symptoms could include: inability to concentrate, irritability, excessive tiredness, indecisiveness, frequent absence from work, emotional fragility or attending work when physically ill/ working excessive hours (sometimes referred to as ‘presenteeism’).

3 Policy statement

The governing body is committed to promoting good health at work and recognises the effects stress may have on individual employees and the need to provide suitable support mechanisms for employees suffering from the negative effects of stress

The governing body is committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of its workforce. It acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors. Whilst a degree of pressure can be a positive force at work, excessive pressures can have a negative effect on both the health and performance of all employees.

The school will fulfil this commitment through the implementation of the Management Standards developed by the Health and Safety Executive. The standards define the characteristics, or culture, of an organisation where the risks from work related stress are being effectively managed and controlled. The Management Standards cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence; these are covered in greater detail in section 6.

To demonstrate the school's commitment to reducing the risk of stress, the governing body will ensure that:

- Stress risk assessments are undertaken in order to identify workplace stressors and introduce control measures designed to eliminate stress or mitigate risks. These risk assessments must be regularly reviewed.
- Guidance and training intended to identify and reduce workplace stressors is provided to all employees.
- Appropriate training and support interventions for managers and supervisory employees are provided in good management practices to reduce stress in the workplace.
- The services of the County Council's Welfare Officer is offered to anyone who needs support
- Confidential counselling is available to employees affected by stress caused by either work or external factors through a 24 hour helpline directly accessible to all employees.
- Staff and the representatives of recognized trade unions will be consulted on proposed actions relating to the prevention of workplace stress.

4 Legal considerations

All employers have a legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure the health safety and welfare at work of their employees. This includes minimising the risk of stress-related illness or injury to employees.

5 Roles and responsibilities

Governing body: The governing body has overall responsibility for ensuring that there is an appropriate and effective policy and also procedures in place for preventing and reducing stress. It is recommended that these comply with best practice and advice and guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.

Headteacher: The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the policy and procedures adopted by the governing body are fully implemented and followed by all employees and is also responsible for allocating the necessary resources.

Managers: Managers (including the Chair of Governors in respect of the Headteacher) have a responsibility to:

- Undertake risk assessments and implement any control measures identified within their jurisdiction
- Make reasonable adjustments for their employees in relation to limitations arising from medical conditions.
- Communicate effectively with their employees, particularly where there are organizational and procedural changes.
- Ensure their employees are fully trained to discharge their duties and ensure they are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that their employees are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that their employees are not overworking.
- Monitor annual leave, lunch and other breaks to ensure their employees are taking their full entitlement and ensure adequate rest and relaxation time is allocated.
- Undertake appropriate training as identified in good management practice and health and safety awareness.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to employees who are experiencing personal problems such as bereavement or separation.
- Review sickness absence statistics in order to monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress.
- Encourage their employees to seek support and advice via the Welfare Officer or the Personal Counselling Helpline, using the procedure outlined at 7 below, and/or to seek timely advice from Occupational Health if appropriate. The manager should consider recommendations and advice from the Welfare Officer, Occupational Health Unit or other specialists. These staff can also provide confidential support, advice and information on external sources of assistance which may be most appropriate for individual needs.

Employees: Employees have a responsibility to:

- Raise any work related issues with managers.
- Understand the definition of stress.
- Take their annual leave, lunch and other breaks to which they are entitled.
- Manage their time and workload effectively and seek support and guidance from their line manager if required.
- Make use of the advice available on how stress can be prevented and controlled through maintaining a healthy lifestyle.
- Raise issues of concern, at the earliest opportunity with their line manager and, where appropriate, their GP and/or their union. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to discuss issues with the Welfare Officer, Safety Representative or Occupational Health Advisor.
- Seek support and advice from the Welfare Officer, or via the Personal Counselling Helpline, particularly when this course of action is recommended by your manager or others.

6 Assessing Stress

In order to control work-related stress, managers have first to ascertain whether it exists, and to what extent, within the workplace. The [HSE Indicator Tool](#), available on the HSE website, can be used as an employee survey to assess the extent to which stress exists amongst the workforce.

Carrying out a team stress risk assessment based on these principal causative factors should indicate the extent to which any of these factors present a problem and how likely they are to be the cause of work-related stress. A model risk assessment using the management standard format can be found in Stress at Work – A Guide for Managers available from the Northumberland Schools' Network.

Other tools and indicators available to support the risk assessment in determining the extent of any problem may include:

- Providing a means whereby employees can talk freely and confidentially about any problems.

- Employee appraisals.
- Sickness absences / patterns of absence
- Exit interviews
- Worker turnover rates
- Reduced productivity rates and/or reductions in work standards
- Workplace focus groups
- Grievances/disciplinary actions

Each of these tools will provide some information about the perceived levels of work-related stress within the workplace. However, they all have limitations and should not be used in isolation or taken as a 100% accurate reflection of the actual situation. When stress is identified as an issue within a department, a team stress risk assessment should be completed by the relevant senior leader.

The HSE's Management Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work. These are:

- **Demands** – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- **Control** – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
- **Support** – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- **Relationships** – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- **Role** – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- **Change** – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

7 Managing Stress

Line managers should have a private discussion with an employee who is exhibiting possible signs of excessive stress. This could be apparent if it is affecting their work performance, conduct or relationships with others.

The manager has a responsibility for the health and safety of employees they manage and must ensure that their employees are not placed at risk as a result of the situation. This can be a very sensitive matter and it is quite likely the employee may become agitated and/or deny they have any issues. As part of the interview, the manager should inform the employee of all the support

available under this policy (see section 8) and should offer the support of the Welfare Officer and consider a referral to Occupational Health. If an employee seeks help, any discussions, records or other information must be kept confidential. Where the employee is given time off work to attend counselling or medical treatment, the reason for the absence is also kept confidential.

If the employee agrees, the Welfare Officer will arrange a private interview with them as soon as possible to explore ways of resolving the issues. The content of the referral and associated meetings is strictly confidential. However, the line manager will need to be made aware of the meeting if reasonable time off is requested. The case will be monitored by the Welfare Officer who, with consent, will consult with the line manager on general overall progress. However, the content of any counselling will remain strictly confidential. Any written records remain the property of the counsellor or medical practitioner. Legislation relating to Data Protection and Access to Medical Records must be strictly complied with.

Guidance about contacting employees when they are off sick with stress is set out in the Managing Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.

8 Internal Support Services

This section summarises all internal sources of support and expertise available to schools' employees and managers.

Welfare Services

The Welfare Officer, Dorothy Clark is based at County Hall and can be contacted by telephone on 01670 623123 or by email: Dorothy.Clark@northumberland.gov.uk.

Occupational Health Unit (OHU)

The Occupational Health Unit provides guidance and support to managers in implementing stress risk assessments and providing reasonable adjustments. It also supports individuals who have been off sick with stress and provides advice to management to facilitate a return to work.

Personal Counselling Helpline (DAS)

Employees wishing to seek confidential support and advice can contact the Personal Counselling Helpline provided by DAS. This is available 24/7 Tel 0844 8939012

Training

The Northumberland HR for Schools team can assist schools to identify potential providers and commission appropriate training.

9 External Support Services

A selection of external sources of support and expertise available to schools' employees and

managers include:

- Teachers' Support: 24/7 free telephone helpline 0800 0562561.
- All NHS General Practitioners can provide support, help and advice.
- NHS funded 'Improving Access to Psychological Therapies' (IAPT) services are available in the community Northumberland and elsewhere and take self-referrals. APT services are for people with common psychological problems including anxiety or depression. The service for Northumberland residents is provided by MHCO. Contact details are: www.mhco.org.uk/northumberland 0300 1234 502 or admin@mhco.org.uk. Similar services are available in other localities.
- Contact details for the Samaritans are: www.samaritans.org.uk 0845 790 9090
- Good online self-help resources have been produced by Northumberland and Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust and can be accessed at www.nw.nhs.uk/pic/selfhelp

10 Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed as required to reflect changes in legislation or practice.

