

Marsh Community Centre Charitable Company

Stress policy

Created December 2017

Introduction

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

This policy will apply to everyone in the company. Managers are responsible for implementation and the company is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

Definition of stress

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.

Policy

Marsh Community Centre will identify all workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.

- The company will provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices.
- The company will provide confidential supervisions for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.
- The company will provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the company's agreed stress management strategy.

Responsibilities

Managers

- Conduct and implement recommendations of risks assessments within their jurisdiction.
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure staffs are fully trained to carry their duties.
- Ensure staffs are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and 'overtime' to ensure that staff are not overworking.
 - Monitor holidays to ensure that staffs are taking their full entitlement.

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- 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 a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

Occupational health and safety staff

- Provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress.
- Train and support managers in implementing stress risk assessments.
- Support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their management on a planned return to work.
- Refer to specialist agencies as required.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.
- Inform the Trustees of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

Human resources

- Give guidance to staff on the stress policy.
- Help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Advise individuals on training requirements.
- Provide continuing support to individuals in a changing environment and encourage regular supervisions where appropriate.

Employees

- Raise issues of concern with the Chief Executive or line manager.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.
- Staffs must be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress.
- Chief Executive must be able to consult with members on the issue of stress including conducting any workplace surveys.
- Staffs must be meaningfully involved in the risk assessment process.
- Chief Executive or Line manager should conduct joint inspections of the workplace at least every 3 months to ensure that environmental stressors are properly controlled.

The work that our employees carry out is widely recognised to be stressful and demanding. As good reading and guidance, the model Stress at Work Policy can be found in Doug Nicholls highly

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acclaimed book *Employment Practice and Policies in Youth, Community and Play Work*. This book is a must for all employees and also employers of workers in our field.

The second thing the Marsh Community will do is to carry out a stress survey. We will look at how it can be promoted, how we can get returns of the survey, evaluating the results and follow up action. We can no longer just accept that it's a stressful occupation and there is nothing that can be done or that it's the individual that's the problem or weak, nobody else suffers from stress.

Stress may affect individuals differently, but that is not the same as saying that the individual is the one that is the problem or weak. Some employers see counselling, as the be all and end all of tackling stress but this is totally unacceptable. Would we accept workers continually being injured from defective equipment and managers saying its okay there's a first aid kit, of course we wouldn't. Whilst counselling may be helpful in dealing with the effects of stress, it does not necessarily deal with the causes.

Causes of stress are numerous and can include: bullying, harassment, threats of violence, verbal abuse, work organisation, uncertainty about job role, uncertainty over future, high demands, lack of control over work and poor management of change. According to statistics in the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publication Working on Stress:

- 50% of Workers Operate at high speed or to tight deadlines for at least a quarter of their day.
- 9% of Workers have little or no control over their work.
- Around 10% report they have been subjected to intimidation at work.
- Stress is the second most reported work related health problem, affecting 28% of workers.

(All statistics from HSE Publication Working on Stress (Misc 440.4))

At one time in the not too distant past stress was portrayed as a management illness, caused by the pressures they had to work under, thankfully it is now accepted that stress has no demarcation lines and can affect anyone.

If you are being bullied or harassed you need to keep a log recording dates, times, what happened and any witnesses. If possible you should talk to the bully and explain that their actions are unwanted and that if they continue you will be involving the senior management. The reason for talking to the perpetrator(s) is so they can be in no doubt how you feel about what they are doing. If you are unable, for whatever reason to talk to them, then talk to your line manager or Centre Manager and explain what is happening and what you would like done. I am not saying that what you would like done, is in all cases possible, but you will receive advice regarding what is and is not possible, the options open to you and the steps that will be taken. Marsh Community Centre has Policies regarding Bullying and Harassment and Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures. Please refer to these. In a lot of cases Bullying or Harassment can be classed as gross misconduct, which can lead to dismissal. Again the sooner the problem of bullying and / or harassment is raised the sooner we can try to sort it out.

If you are suffering from stress as a result of some other issue, again the sooner we address the issue the better. Together we can tackle stress and the causes of stress.

Don't suffer in silence get in touch at an early stage. We cannot guarantee success but we can be proud of our record on tackling stress and the causes of stress.

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Further reading:

Employment Practice and Policies in Youth, Community and Play Work. Doug Nicholls.

www.mind.org.uk