



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

Work Related Stress Policy and Procedure

Human Resources

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WORK RELATED STRESS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. The Council has a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its employees at work and recognises that their wellbeing is important to success.
2. The Council sets out this commitment in its Health and Safety Policy, which also details the responsibilities and arrangements for ensuring the health, safety and welfare at work of employees.
3. This commitment arises from the Council's duty of care to protect the health of employees (which in legislative terms includes psychological health and wellbeing as well as physical health and safety) and more generally, the recognition that a safe and healthy working environment contributes to the motivation, job satisfaction, performance, and creativity of all employees.
4. The Council is primarily concerned with stress arising from the working environment, but it also recognises that events occurring in an employee's personal life may also lead to stress and potentially impact on the individual's performance at work.

AIM OF THE POLICY

5. The Council will take measures which are reasonably practicable to preserve the mental health and wellbeing of employees while they are at work.
6. The Council recognises that work related stress could cause ill health, and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing stressors in the workplace, in line with the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) guidance and management standards. Further details and guidance on the standards are provided later in the policy.

DEFINITION OF STRESS

7. The HSE defines stress at work as:

'The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them'.
8. Stress arises when an individual perceives that they cannot cope with those demands. The point at which workplace pressures become excessive will, of course, vary with individual levels of tolerance and with levels of pressure in other areas of life at particular times.
9. Stress can affect anybody and in serious cases may be a causative factor of a physical or mental illness.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

10. There is no specific law on controlling stress at work, but broad health and safety law applies:
 - a) Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees.
 - b) Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 employers have a duty to assess the health and safety risks to which their employees are exposed whilst at work. Such an assessment should include an analysis of the risks to employees' health caused by stress at work.
 - c) Under the Equality Act 2010 employers have a duty not to discriminate against employees on account of a protected characteristic, including disability. This involves making reasonable adjustments to the workplace or to the way the work is done, if the existing working arrangements or physical features place the disabled person concerned at a substantial disadvantage. Ill health arising from, or exacerbated by, stress at work may constitute a disability under the Act.
11. It is important to remember that it is the employers who have responsibilities for compliance with these legal requirements and specific responsibilities for health and safety are defined in the corporate Health and Safety Policy. However, all employees have an individual responsibility to minimise the risk of any kind of harm to themselves and their colleagues and to co-operate with the Council in its efforts to manage work-related stress.
12. Case law has established that, unless the employer knows otherwise, it can be assumed that employees are mentally capable of withstanding reasonable pressure from work. Employers are not under a legal duty to prevent ill-health caused by stress due to problems outside work, e.g. financial or domestic worries. However, non-work pressures can make it difficult for employees to cope with work and, consequently, their performance at work might suffer. Therefore, being understanding to employees in this position is in the employer's best interest.
13. In operating the Work Related Stress Policy the Council will identify potential stressors in the workplace and, where necessary, conduct risk assessments in order to eliminate, reduce or control the risks from stress. This will be done in line with HSE guidance and management standards. The Standards address six key areas of work that, if properly managed, can help to reduce work related stress. These are,
 - Demands
 - Control
 - Support
 - Relationships
 - Role
 - Change
14. Further guidance on the standards is provided in the procedures for dealing with Work Related Stress which support this Policy and at **Appendix 1** and the Stress Management Competency Indicator Tool at **Appendix 4**.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

15. Symptoms of stress are largely preventable in many cases if sources of pressure at work are identified and appropriate action taken to reduce or control them and the risk of stress occurring may be reduced by employees adopting healthy lifestyles, adopting positive coping strategies, and seeking assistance and support at appropriate times.
16. The management of stress will be dealt with in a way that is non-discriminatory and in accordance with the Councils Workforce Strategy and policies;
 - a) employees will be dealt with consistently and fairly;
 - b) managers will aim to promote a positive and proactive approach rather than a punitive one;
 - c) managers will be sensitive and supportive, as far as is reasonably practicable, to those suffering the effects of stress;
 - d) the management of stress, including monitoring of stress-related information will be conducted with respect for individual confidentiality and in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations and Access to Medical Reports Acts;
 - e) open communication will be encouraged and promoted;
 - f) the Council's stress management approach will be monitored and reviewed to ensure that it continues to meet the Council's aims and complies with these principles. Employees and where appropriate, trade union representatives will be encouraged to be involved in this process;
 - g) managers will ensure that employees have the opportunity to acquire the skills and competencies to help them meet changing work demands through appropriate training and development;
 - h) information, resources and training will be provided to managers and employees on how to prevent, recognise, minimise and manage stress and mental health in the workplace.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

17. **Elected Members** have individual and collective responsibility for overseeing the general implementation of the Work Related Stress Policy via the Managing Director, the Chief Officers Executive (COE), Chief Officers Board (COB) and other Council Officers.
18. The **Managing Director** is responsible for ensuring that the Council recognises stress in the workplace as a health and safety issue, and for ensuring it is effectively managed across the Council through the implementation of the Council's Work Related Stress Policy and associated procedures.
19. **Chief Officers Executive (COE)** members are responsible for ensuring that the Council's Work Related Stress policy is given the necessary priority and support. In those areas under their control they must ensure that stress in the workplace is considered as a health and safety issue. They should also ensure that COB / Heads of Service are allowed sufficient resources and attend the training necessary to facilitate the implementation of the policy and procedures in full.

20. **Chief Officers Board** members and **Heads of Service** are responsible for ensuring that the policy is given a high priority and is implemented as necessary in their Service Area. They should also ensure that managers attend the training necessary to enable them to implement and facilitate the policy and its procedures.
21. **Managers** are responsible for ensuring that appropriate and proportionate measures are in place to manage stress in the workplace, and that they publicise these appropriately to employees under their control. They must also:
 - a) as part of the appraisal process (PDR) consider the nature and complexity of work and ensure staff have received the necessary instruction and training and support to enable them to perform their duties effectively;
 - b) review workloads as part of day to day management to ensure that people are not overloaded;
 - c) where possible, enable employees to have a say about the way in which they do their work;
 - d) ensure that they provide staff with adequate information and support to enable them to carry out their work;
 - e) ensure that staff understand their role and responsibilities;
 - f) monitor working hours, overtime and leave arrangements to ensure that employees are not working excessive hours;
 - g) make sure staff receive regular communications and are involved when undergoing organisational changes;
 - h) be aware of the signs and symptoms of stress and attend stress management / awareness training, as appropriate;
 - i) ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within those work areas under their control;
 - j) be vigilant and offer support as appropriate to any members of their team known to be experiencing stressful situations outside work e.g. bereavement, relationship difficulties etc.;
 - k) undertake stress risk assessments with individuals / teams as required and implement any action required. The risk assessment should also be recorded and reviewed as specified in the procedure for Managing Work Related Stress.
22. The **Health and Safety Team** will:
 - a) liaise with HR and help in the development and implementation of stress risk management initiatives, as necessary;
 - b) inform and advise COE and COB of any significant changes or developments from the HSE in the field of stress at work;
 - c) audit the health and safety management system to ensure compliance with this Policy;
 - d) advise on training requirements.
23. **Human Resources** will:
 - a) assist managers, where required, with the completion of Stress Risk Assessments and Wellness Action Plans for individuals or groups of staff;
 - b) assist managers to monitor the effectiveness of measures to manage stress by providing sickness absence statistics;
 - c) act as point of contact and assist managers in arranging Occupational Health referrals and offering counselling;
 - d) provide guidance to managers on attendance management and performance capacity;
 - e) assist managers in supporting and helping employees return to work after a period of sickness absence, including the arrangement of phased returns, where appropriate;

- f) provide elected members and COE / COB with relevant sickness absence management information, including a breakdown of the number of days lost due to stress, both work and non-work related;
 - g) advise on training.
24. The Council recognises the important role the **Trades Unions** play in promoting health and safety in the workplace and will:
- a) consult with the Trades Unions on organisational change;
 - b) ensure the Trades Unions are consulted on the Work Related Stress Policy.
25. In order to promote mental wellbeing at work and manage stress effectively **Employees** involvement is essential. All employees have an individual responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act to minimise the risk of any kind of harm to themselves and their colleagues and to co-operate with the Council in its efforts to manage work-related stress.
26. Employees will:
- a) raise issues that they perceive are cause for concern with their manager;
 - b) speak to another service-based manager or their Trade Union representative, if they feel unable to speak to their manager;
 - c) attend any referrals to Occupational Health and other related services made on their behalf;
 - d) co-operate with management in the completion of individual risk assessments and accept any identified training or support.
 - e) ensure they research, access and engage in any activity/support (where appropriate) which may aid their recovery

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

27. To assist in addressing some of the issues related to stress, depression, and anxiety the Council provides a number of support mechanisms for employees including;
- a) The Occupational Health service which provides access to an Occupational Health Doctor and Nurse for employee referrals and advice on a number of health and well-being issues;
 - b) Access to a confidential, independent face to face Counselling service provided by an independent company;
 - c) Access to a Physiotherapy service provided by an independent company;
 - d) Flexible Working Hours Policy and other HR policies such as Time Off for Dependants and Urgent Domestic Reasons, Bereavement Leave etc.;
 - e) The Council has signed up to the MINDFUL EMPLOYER® Charter For Employers who are Positive about Mental Health;
 - f) An Employee Health and Wellbeing programme which aims to raise awareness around mental health issues and provide a range of health promotion initiatives throughout the year;
 - g) Employee Health and Wellbeing pages on the intranet with advice and guidance on a range of health issues including how to deal with stress.

EQUALITY STATEMENT

28. In applying this policy, managers will take into consideration the Council's Equality Scheme and will not unlawfully discriminate in respect of any of the protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010.
29. The provisions of this policy may be dis-applied or varied where this is reasonable in order to comply with the Act and/or to avoid discrimination in respect of any of the protected characteristics specified above.

ADVICE

30. Further advice on the policy and its application can be found in the accompanying procedure for Managing Work Related Stress. HR and the Health and Safety Team can also provide advice and guidance on queries including how to obtain the policy and procedure in alternative formats if needed.

PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING WORK RELATED STRESS

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

31. Stress is (currently) not considered to be a disease or diagnosable illness. However, exposure to excessive pressure can result in physiological, psychological, cognitive and emotional symptoms in individuals. Prolonged or extreme exposure to such symptoms is associated with chronic disease such as heart disease, back pain, gastrointestinal problems, anxiety or depression. In addition, individuals suffering from stress may turn to harmful behaviour such excessive drinking and/or drug taking which can in turn lead to chronic health problems such as cirrhosis of the liver.
32. Examples of the sorts of signs and symptoms which could be taken as indicators of stress in individuals are provided at **Appendix 2**. Some of the examples may not be indicative of stress if people always behave in the ways described. Managers are particularly looking for changes in the way employees behave that could be linked with excessive pressures. Managers should aim to identify issues as early as possible so that action can be taken before the pressure becomes a problem; by doing so it will be easier to reduce and eliminate the causes.
33. Managers also have a duty to be aware of signs of stress in Agency workers, Volunteers or anyone working and representing the Council and should conduct stress risk assessments, as outlined below, with them as required.

STRESS RISK ASSESSMENTS AND WELLNESS ACTION PLANS

34. A stress risk assessment and wellness action plan is similar to any other risk assessment. It is a process which highlights the hazards and risks associated with the operation of the Council in relation to the mental rather than the physical health of its employees.
35. Stress risk assessments and wellness action plans are particularly important as they may be called upon to provide documentary evidence to demonstrate that the Council has adopted good practice and has fully complied with the law.
36. It is important to use a structured approach to stress risk assessments and wellness action plans which includes:
 - a) look for possible signs and symptoms of stress
 - b) Identify stress hazards and estimate the risks
 - c) Evaluate the risks and record what needs to be done
 - d) Implement control measures to reduce the risk
 - e) Regularly review and revise the assessment and actions taken
37. The Council has a risk assessment process in place which should be used to undertake assessments at an appropriate level as highlighted below.

Service Group Level

38. COB / Heads of Service will ensure that the HSE management standards are considered as part of any change management proposals in conjunction with HR and that any potential areas which are identified are addressed. Any issues raised at this time should be then recorded on a Stress Risk Assessment and Wellness Action Plan, included at **Appendix 5**.

For an Individual

39. Any employee who feels they are suffering from stress which is affecting their performance at work should raise their concerns with their manager. If an employee feels that they can't raise the issue with their manager, they should approach another service based manager, their Trade Union Rep or HR.
40. Where a manager has concerns that a member of staff may be exhibiting possible signs of stress that is affecting their work performance, conduct or relationships with others, they should take immediate action and discuss these concerns with the individual. The manager has a responsibility for the health and safety of the staff they manage and must ensure that the individual does not put anyone, including themselves, at risk.

FIRST STAGE

INFORMATION DISCUSSION

41. The manager should try to have a private discussion with the member of staff about the concerns. This could be done at a regular 1-1 meeting but the manager should not delay the discussion unduly as it is important that the issues are discussed as early as possible.
42. If the employee has not raised the issues themselves and/or there is no medical advice to indicate there may be a problem this could be a very sensitive matter and it is quite likely the member of staff may become agitated or upset and may deny they have any issues. The employee should be advised that the purpose of the discussion is to identify any possible work issues that may be causing the problem and that if they wish they could discuss the problems with another service based manager / Trade Union rep. / HR.
43. The manager will need to enquire if the employee has any personal issues in order to find out if these may have an impact on the employee's ability to cope with work pressures i.e.: health problems, divorce, bereavement, debt etc. Guidance on dealing with non-work related issues is given below.

Dealing with non-work related stress

44. Be sympathetic and understanding - listen to the individual, be non-judgemental especially if the individual has sensitive personal problems. Allow appropriate time for the employee to discuss any problems they wish and allow them time to talk them through. This will help to clarify whether the person's problems are work-related or personal.
45. Be flexible – If an employee is suffering a personal or domestic problem outside of work consider offering them more flexible working hours on a short term basis. There may be an option for them to start work later or leave earlier which may be useful if they do not have access to the Council's flexi scheme. Agree how long any such arrangements will be in place for and review them. Make a written record of the arrangements.
46. Seek advice from HR – who will be able to offer advice on referring the employee to Occupational Health if you are concerned about their physical or mental health. HR can also advise on a range of policies and procedures which may be useful to the employee, such as Time Off for Dependants and

Urgent Domestic Reasons, Flexi time scheme etc. Further information on HR policies can also be found on the intranet.

47. Provide the employee with details of the Counselling Service - Employees can contact an independent, trained counsellor in confidence who can discuss issues such as workload, change in role, relationships with colleagues or managers as well as personal difficulties such as anxiety, marital problems, substance abuse etc. A mediation service is also available.
48. Sign post to other external agencies - A list of external agencies offering a range of help and support can be found on the intranet under Employee Support.

SECOND STAGE

CONDUCT A STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT AND WELLNESS ACTION PLAN

49. During this discussion if it becomes apparent that there are work related issues the manager should make the employee aware that a stress risk assessment and wellness action plan should be carried out and explain the process. Employees should complete the Employee Questionnaire included at **Appendix 3**, either on their own, or with assistance depending on their preference and how they are feeling. Managers should explain preferences rather than assuming. This is completed in order to be able to identify more clearly the areas at work which they are finding difficult. This will then be used to help undertake the stress risk assessment and wellness action plan at the next meeting.
50. HR / Health and Safety may be present at the meeting where the stress risk assessment and wellness action plan is completed if necessary. This meeting should be as informal as possible with the Manager aware that some of the issues will be difficult for the employee to discuss. The questionnaire completed by the employee should be used to initiate discussion, help to identify particular areas of concern for the employee and aid the completion of the stress risk assessment and wellness action plan.
51. The Stress Risk Assessment and Wellness Action Plan, included at **Appendix 5**, will be used to record any existing control measures and agreed outcomes for further action required. A copy of the completed stress risk assessment and wellness action plan should be issued to the employee and a copy kept on their personal file. The stress risk assessment and wellness action plan should be kept under regular review. An example of a completed form is included at **Appendix 6**.
52. If an employee is absent from work with a stress related illness, their manager should discuss the cause of the stress with the employee either during a sickness absence review meeting or return to work interview and follow the process above. Further advice on conducting a sickness absence interview or return to work interview can be found in the Absence Management Policy.

For a group or team

53. It is important to be aware that stress can occur within groups of workers, and not just individuals. Signs of stress to look out for in a group include:
 - a) Disputes and prolonged arguments in the group
 - b) Increase in staff turnover
 - c) Increase in complaints and staff grievances
 - d) Increased sickness absence

- e) Staff reporting stress problems
- f) Difficulty attracting new staff
- g) Poor performance
- h) Customer dissatisfaction or complaints

54. The manager should raise their general concerns with the group either at a team meeting or a separate meeting. Alternatively, members of a group / team may also take their concerns to management. The same approach as above should be adopted and the manager should offer to meet individuals on a one-one basis if they prefer. The manager should discuss a stress risk assessment and wellness action plan for the group and ask for a spokesperson(s) to complete the employee questionnaire on the group's behalf. Alternatively the stress risk assessment and wellness action plan could be carried out by another manager if the group / team would prefer.

MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK

55. Work-related stress and mental health often go hand in hand. The symptoms of stress and mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression are similar, for example, loss of appetite, fatigue and tearfulness can be symptoms of both.
56. Work-related stress may trigger existing mental health that the person may otherwise have successfully managed without letting it affect their work. For people with existing mental health, work-related stress may exaggerate their health. If work-related stress reaches a point where it has triggered existing mental health, it becomes hard to separate one from the other. Managers have a role in making reasonable adjustments and helping the person to manage impacts on work and individual performance.
57. Advice should be sought from the Occupational Health and HR when dealing with such cases. In addition, managers may find it useful to consult the following website www.mindfulemployer.net which includes 'A Line Manager's Resource'.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

58. An employee who is being bullied or harassed at work may experience work-related stress as a result. The Dignity and Respect at Work policy provides further information on how to manage such issues.

PERFORMANCE CAPABILITY

59. During the stress risk assessment process it may become evident that an employee has capability issues i.e.: they do not have the necessary skills to undertake their role to the required standard. The Capability Policy provides further information on how to deal with capability issues.

TRAINING

60. All managers are should undertake the Resilience for Managers training.
61. The Council also provides optional training for all employees on how to deal with personal stress. Further information is available from HR.

STRESS MANAGEMENT STANDARDS AND ADDITIONAL CONTROL MEASURES

HSE stress management standards are a tool which can be used to gauge stress levels and help pinpoint particular causes of stress as well as achievable solutions. They address six main areas of work that if properly managed can help to reduce work-related stress and form a useful reference to aid discussions as part of a Stress Risk Assessment following completion of the Employee Questionnaire.

	Employee should feel:	Questions you may want to ask:
Demands	• They are able to cope with the demands of their job • They are provided with achievable demands in relation to the hours they work • Their Skills and abilities are matched to the demands of their job • Concerns about their work environment are addressed.	• Does your workload feel achievable? Think about which tasks up the most time and how your service copes at busy times. • Do you feel the deadline are given are realistic? How often do you have conflicting deadlines? • Have you had the right training to carry out the core functions of your job? • What improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you've talked about? Think about you, your line manager and the organisation.
Control	• They are consulted over the way their work is organised and undertaken, through regular meetings, 1-1's, PDR's. • They have regular opportunities for discussion and input at the start of projects or new pieces of work. • They are encouraged to use their skills and initiatives to do their work. • They are consulted over things affecting their work. • They are encouraged to develop new skills and undertake new challenging pieces of work.	• Do you feel involved in how decisions about your job are made? Think about whether you feel listened to and trusted, how are you consulted and any opportunities for input? • Do you feel your skills are used to good effect? How could your existing skills be used more effectively? • Do you feel you have a say in how your work is organised and undertaken? • Do you feel as though you work location is a productive environment? Think about whether there are options for the employee to do some agile working, take themselves off to a quieter area for a short amount of time. If work location is to be looked at, are there any H&S implications such as lone working, evacuations etc.

		What improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about? Think about you, your line manager and organisation.
Support	- They receive information and support from other employees and their manager - The organisation has systems in place to enable and encourage managers to support their employees and for employees to support each other. - They know what support is available and how to access it. - They know how to access the resources they need. - They receive regular and constructive feedback.	- Do you feel that your organisation is a positive place to work and that you are valued? Think about the working environment, the support available and the opportunities to talk about support you may need? - Do you know who to talk to and where to go when you need support? Think about where you would go for help if you were experiencing an issue and whether you would feel comfortable doing so. - Do you feel there are enough opportunities to discuss any emerging issues or pressures? - What improvement or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about? Think about you, your line manager and the organisation. - Are there any early warning signs that we may notice when you start to experience poor mental health or stress? Examples may include changes in normal working patterns, withdrawing from colleagues, becoming snappy or short with people, looking flustered, leaving a room without speaking. - If we notice early warning signs that you are experiencing poor mental health or stress, what would you like us to do to help? Think about where you could go to talk discreetly, is there someone they would like you to contact – listening officer/ mental health first aider/ another colleague. - Think about their individual working style/ temperament – have the answers to the questions identified anything that they may need help and support to work through. Might they benefit from additional training?

Relationships	• They are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours such as bullying or harassment at work • The organisation promotes positive behaviours at work. • The organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour. • The organisation has systems in place to enable and encourages managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour. • The organisation has systems in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.	▪ Have you experienced or witnessed unacceptable behaviour at work? Do you feel satisfied with how was this dealt with. ▪ Do you feel that honest, open communication is encouraged in your organisation? ▪ Do you feel that you know where to go and what to do if you experience or witness unacceptable behaviour? Do you feel confident that steps will be taken to stop this behaviour? ▪ What improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues talked about? Think about you, your line manager and the organisation.
Role	• They understand their role and responsibilities. • The organisation provides information to enable them to understand their role and all of their responsibilities. • The requirements the organisation place on them are clear. • They are able to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities through the systems that the organisation has in place. •	▪ Do you feel clear on what your responsibilities are? ▪ Are you clear on what your performance objectives are and what success looks like for you, your area and the organisation? Do you feel that they are achievable? ▪ Do you feel you understand how work is structured in your services and in the wider organisation? Do you know who is doing what and why and how your role fits in? ▪ What improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about? Think about you, your line manager or the organisation.
Change	• They organisation engages with them frequently when undergoing change. • They are provided with timely information, enabling them to understand the reasons for proposed changes.	▪ Employees should feel • Do you feel that your organisation handles changes well? • Do you feel you are properly consulted when changes are made with affect you and your role? Do you feel the reasons for that change are explained? • Do you feel you are involved in the planning process when changes are made?

	• They are consulted on changes and provided with opportunities for them to influence proposals. • They are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their job and if necessary they are given training to support any changes in their job.	• What improvements or support could be put in place to help with any of the issues you have talked about? Think about you, your line manager and the organisation.
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Useful Links:

Physiotherapy – Imagine Physiotherapy – 01325 787077

Counselling – Therapy Centre Services – 0800 193 2019.

Intranet – Staff Support and Wellbeing Pages

Intranet – Training Pages

Team Building / Development – contact HR

APPENDIX 2

POSSIBLE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS
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Physiological	Cognitive	Behavioural	Emotional
▪ Headaches and migraines ▪ Gastrointestinal e.g. indigestion, nausea, constipation, diarrhea ▪ Unexplained rapid weight loss or gain ▪ Back pain ▪ Cardiovascular symptoms e.g. chest pain, palpitations, breathlessness ▪ Edginess/inability to relax ▪ Depressed immune system e.g. frequent infections, allergies ▪ Tiredness	▪ Difficulty concentrating ▪ Poor memory ▪ Persistent negative thoughts ▪ Excessive worry ▪ Making mistakes ▪ Not seeing the bigger picture ▪ Poor judgement ▪ Inability to make decisions/hasty decisions	▪ Unsociability / anti-social behaviour ▪ Increased accidents ▪ Erratic behaviour ▪ Lying ▪ Change in appearance e.g. dishevelled, lack of care in personal hygiene ▪ Change in eating patterns e.g. over eating/missing meals ▪ Health damaging behaviour e.g. excessive smoking/drinking/drug taking ▪ Reduced work productivity ▪ Taking work home ▪ Working longer hours ▪ Not taking leave	▪ Low mood ▪ Irritable ▪ Mood swings ▪ Lack of motivation and enthusiasm ▪ Reduced self esteem ▪ Feelings of futility, cynicism, suspicion, alienation ▪ Loss of confidence ▪ Anxiety ▪ Tearfulness


DARLINGTON
Borough Council

EMPLOYEE QUESTIONNAIRE

Many people still get confused about pressure and stress, yet there's a great deal of difference between the two. We all experience pressure on a daily basis, and need it to motivate us and enable us to perform at our best – ask any athlete. However, if we experience too much pressure without the opportunity to recover, we feel unable to cope and stress is the result.

HSE defines stress as, ***'An adverse reaction a person has to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed upon them.'***

- This checklist recognises the fact that whilst tackling personal stress is an individual's responsibility; the Council has a responsibility to help reduce any stress factors which may arise during the employment of a member of staff.
- It would be helpful if you could complete and return this questionnaire to your manager so that you can discuss the issues raised and it can be used to develop an action plan to deal with them.
- Don't worry if you don't want to/don't manage to complete the questionnaire as your manager will talk you through it at the meeting if you would prefer.
- If you are in any doubt or want anything explained beforehand please talk to either your Manager, Trade Union Representative or HR.
- As a result of this meeting your Manager will work with you to produce an action plan that will help, where possible to address the issues that you raise.

Name:	
Service:	
Section:	

Please answer the following questions by indicating the extent to which you feel that the following factors influenced your current feelings.

Section 1: Demands This includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.	Is this a major cause of stress?	Is this a contributory cause of stress?	Is this an issue for you in the workplace but not a factor in your current stress?	This is not an issue for you.
a) Demands are placed upon me from a variety of sources which are difficult to achieve.				
b) I have unachievable deadlines.				
c) I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do.				
d) I am unable to take sufficient breaks.				
e) I am pressured to work long hours.				
f) I have to work very fast.				
g) I have unrealistic time pressures.				
Comments Do you have any comments you would like you make in relation to your answers?				

Section 2: Control How Much say does a person have in the way they do their work.	Is this a major cause of stress?	Is this a contributory cause of stress?	Is this an issue for you in the workplace but not a factor in your current stress?	This is not an issue for you.
a) I cannot decide when to take a break.				
b) I do not have a say in my own work speed.				
c) I have no choice in deciding how I do my work.				
d) I do not have a choice in deciding what work I do.				
e) I do not have any say over the way I work.				
f) My working time is not flexible.				
g) I have no say in where I work.				
Comments Do you have any comments you would like you make in relation to your answers?				

Section 3: Managers Support Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the council& management.	Is this a major cause of stress?	Is this a contributory cause of stress?	Is this an issue for you in the workplace but not a factor in your current stress?	This is not an issue for you.
a) I am not given supportive feedback on the work I do.				
b) I cannot rely on my manager to help me out with a work problem.				
c) I cannot talk to my manager about something that has upset or annoyed me about work.				
d) I am not supported through emotionally demanding work.				
e) My Manager does not encourage me at work.				
Comments Do you have any comments you would like you make in relation to your answers?				

Section 4: Peer Support includes the encouragement provided by colleagues.	Is this a major cause of stress?	Is this a contributory cause of stress?	Is this an issue for you in the workplace but not a factor in your current stress?	This is not an issue for you.
a) If work gets difficult, my colleagues do not help me.				
b) I do not get help and the support I need from colleagues.				
c) I do not receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues.				
d) My colleagues are not willing to listen to my work-related problems.				
Comments Do you have any comments you would like you make in relation to your answers?				

Section 5: Relationships Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.	Is this a major cause of stress?	Is this a contributory cause of stress?	Is this an issue for you in the workplace but not a factor in your current stress?	This is not an issue for you.
a) I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour.				
b) There is friction or anger between colleagues.				
c) I am subject to bullying at work.				
d) Relationships at work are strained.				
Comments Do you have any comments you would like you make in relation to your answers?				

Section 6: Role	Is this a major cause of stress?	Is this a contributory cause of stress?	Is this an issue for you in the workplace but not a factor in your current stress?	This is not an issue for you.
a) I am not clear what is expected of me at work.				
b) I do not know how to go about getting my job done.				
c) I am not clear what my duties and responsibilities are.				
d) I am not clear about the goals and objectives for my Service.				
e) I do not understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the Service.				
Comments Do you have any comments you would like you make in relation to your answers?				

Section 7: Change	Is this a major cause of stress?	Is this a contributory cause of stress?	Is this an issue for you in the workplace but not a factor in your current stress?	This is not an issue for you.
a) I do not have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work.				
b) Staff are not always consulted about change at work.				
c) When changes are made at work, I am not clear how they will work out in practice.				
Comments Do you have any comments you would like you make in relation to your answers?				

Section 8: External pressure Including health and disability issues, as well as any problematic life events or circumstances that may be affecting ability to cope.	Is this a major cause of stress?	Is this a contributory cause of stress?	Is this an issue for you in the workplace but not a factor in your current stress?	This is not an issue for you.
a) Relationship problems				
b) Financial issues				
c) Bereavement				
d) Other external pressures				
Comments Do you have any comments you would like you make in relation to your answers?				

It would now be useful if you could think about the following questions, this information will be used in developing your Stress Risk Assessment and Wellness Action Plan.

What do you think your Manager could proactively do to help you stay mentally healthy at work?
(for example regular feedback and catch-ups, explaining wider organisational issues, investigating flexible working)

Are there elements of your individual working style or temperament that it is worth your manager being aware of?

(for example a preference for more face to face or more email contact, a need for quiet reflection time before or after meetings, having a written plan of work, tendency to have high/ low energy levels at a particular time of day, tendency to over-work a task etc)

Is there anything else you would like to share or discuss?

APPENDIX 4**Stress management competency indicator tool****How effective are you at preventing and reducing stress in your staff?****Use the following questionnaire to assess your behaviour**

The 'Stress management competency indicator tool' in this document is designed to allow you to assess whether the behaviours identified as effective for preventing and reducing stress at work are part of your management repertoire or not. The aim is to help you to reflect upon your own behaviour and management style.

The next four pages look in turn at four behavioural areas identified as being important for managers to prevent and reduce stress in their staff. You are asked to consider a range of specific manager behaviours and put a tick in the column that most closely represents your level of agreement with each statement. You can then use the instructions at the end of each table to calculate your score on the behavioural area covered by that table. (NB the term 'team members' is used to refer to people who report directly to you/who you manage.)

The overall assessment process on page 6 allows you to use the scores from the questionnaire to assess your effectiveness in preventing and reducing stress in your staff. It allows you to identify whether any of the areas are Development Needs for you, or whether you are Reasonable or Effective in each area.

Some tips and ideas on how you can use your assessment to improve your effectiveness in preventing and reducing stress at work, through your management behaviour, are provided on page 7. Finally, page 8 provides a summary of the competencies required to prevent and reduce stress at work.

Area 1

RESPECTFUL AND RESPONSIBLE; MANAGING EMOTIONS AND HAVING INTEGRITY

Behaviour / Competency	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Integrity					
I am a good role model					
I treat my team members with respect					
I am honest					
I do what I say I will do					
I never speak about team members behind their backs					
Managing Emotions					
I act calmly in pressured situations					
I take a consistent approach to managing					
My moods are predictable					
I don't pass on my stress to my team					
I approach deadlines calmly					
I welcome suggestions for improvements from my team					
Considerate Approach					
I allow my team to plan their workloads					
The deadlines I create are realistic					
I give more positive than negative feedback					
I deal with problems myself rather than relying on others					
I allow my team to approach their work in their own way					
I show a consideration for my teams work life balance					
Note down the total number of ticks in each column					
Now multiply each column total by the number indicated to calculate your column score	X 1 =	X 2 =	X 3 =	X 4 =	X 5 =
Add the column scores together and note the total score (Max score is 85)					
Now divide your total score by 85 and multiply by 100	(...../85) x 100 =				

Area 2 MANAGING AND COMMUNICATING EXISTING AND FUTURE WORK

Behaviour / Competency	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Proactive Work Management					
I clearly communicate job objectives to my team					
I develop action plans					
I monitor my teams workload on an ongoing basis					
I encourage my team to review how they organise their work					
When necessary, I stop additional work being taken on by my team					
I work proactively					
I see projects / tasks through to delivery					
I review processes to see if work can be improved					
I prioritise future workloads					
Problem Solving					
I deal rationally with problems					
I follow up problems on behalf of my team					
I deal with problems as soon as they arise					
I am decisive when decision making					
Participative / Empowering					
I give employees the right level of job responsibility					
I correctly judge when to consult the team and when to make a decision					
I keep my team informed of what is happening in the organisation					
I act as a mentor to my team					
I delegate work equally					
I help team members to develop in their role					
I encourage participation from the whole team					
I provide regular team meetings					
I give the right level of direction to my team members					
Note down the total number of ticks in each column					

Now multiply each column total by the number indicated to calculate your column score	X 1 =	X 2 =	X 3 =	X 4 =	X 5 =
Add the column scores together and note the total score (Max score is 110)					
Now divide your total score by 110 and multiply by 100	$(\dots/110) \times 100 =$				

Page 3

Area 3
MANAGING THE INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE TEAM

Behaviour / Competency	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Personally Accessible					
I prefer to speak to my team personally than use e-mail					
I provide regular opportunities for my team to speak one to one					
I return my teams calls / e-mails promptly					
I am available to talk when needed					
Sociable					
I bring in treats for my team					
I socialise with the team					
I am willing to have a laugh at work					
Empathetic Engagement					
I encourage individuals' input in discussions					
I listen when a team member asks for help					
I make an effort to find out what motivates my team members at work					
I try to see things from my team members' point of view					
I take an interest in my team's life outside of work					
I regularly ask my team members 'How are you?'					
I treat all team members with equal importance					
I check everyone is OK rather than just assuming					
Note down the total number of ticks in each column					
Now multiply each column total by the number indicated to calculate your column score	X 1 =	X 2 =	X 3 =	X 4 =	X 5 =
Add the column scores together and note the total score (Max score is 75)					
Now divide your total score by 75 and multiply by 100	(...../75) x 100 =				

Area 4 REASONING / MANAGING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

The final set of behaviours/competencies refer to how you manage difficult situations in your team such as bullying or employee conflicts. If you haven't experienced situations such as these, it may not be useful for you to complete this section. However, please do remember to refer back to this section and to the 'Management competencies for preventing and reducing stress' framework (page 33) if the need to manage a difficult situation arises.

Behaviour / Competency	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Managing Conflict					
I act as a mediator in conflict situations					
I deal with squabbles in the team before they become arguments					
I deal objectively with employee conflicts					
I deal with conflicts head on					
I try and resolve issues rather than act to keep the peace					
Use of Organisational Resources					
I seek advice from other managers when necessary					
I use HR as a resource to help deal with problems					
I seek help from occupational health when necessary					
Taking responsibility for resolving issues					
I follow up team conflicts after resolution					
I support employees through incidents of abuse					
I make it clear I will take ultimate responsibility if things go wrong					
I address bullying					
Note down the total number of ticks in each column					
Now multiply each column total by the number indicated to calculate your column score	X 1 =	X 2 =	X 3 =	X 4 =	X 5 =
Add the column scores together and note the total score (Max score is 60)					
Now divide your total score by 60 and multiply by 100	(...../60) x 100 =				

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

You have now calculated a percentage score for each of the four behavioural areas (or three behavioural areas if you are not measuring your ability to manage difficult situations) that have been identified as important for preventing and reducing stress at work. In order to interpret what these scores mean, use the following guidelines:

75% or below = Development Need: This is an area in which you would benefit from some development. Please refer to back to the questionnaire to explore which of the behaviours you could consider using more often in the future in order to be more effective at preventing and reducing stress in your team.

76% to 89% = Reasonable: You show a good awareness of the behaviours needed for effectively preventing and reducing stress in others. It may be helpful to refer back to the questionnaire to see if there are any behaviours you could add to your repertoire in this area to increase your effectiveness in managing stress in others.

90% and above = Effective: You demonstrate the behaviours that have been shown to be effective in preventing and reducing stress in your team.

Your 'Stress management competence' profile:

Fill in each of the right hand columns. In the effectiveness column, add 'Development Need', 'Reasonable' or 'Effective' using the guidance above.

Competency	Percentage	Effectiveness
Respectful and responsible; Managing emotions and having integrity		
Managing and communicating existing and future work		
Managing the individual within the team		
Reasoning / Managing difficult situations		

WHAT DO I DO NEXT?

In order to improve your effectiveness at preventing and reducing stress at work, we suggest the following steps:

1. Look for the behavioural area in which you received the lowest score and focus on this as top priority. If you have identified several Development Needs or areas that you would like to move into the 'Effective' zone, take them one at a time – you don't have to change everything at once!
2. Look back at the questionnaire to explore what behaviours are relevant to this area. On the following page is also a summary of the four behavioural areas, and outlines of the key behaviours in each. Identify the ones that you indicated you do least and consider what you need to do in order to show these behaviours more often. It may simply be a matter of being more aware of how you are behaving at the moment and making small shifts to add the relevant additional (or alternative) behaviours to your repertoire.
3. You may find it helpful to check out with your team whether they would find it helpful for you to show more of these particular behaviours and how that would be different from what you do at the moment. You could ask them to give you feedback on how you are doing.
4. If you feel that it will be difficult for you to make these behavioural changes on your own, consider seeking support. For example, informal coaching or support from your own manager and/or from the HR department might be helpful; you might find it helpful to get some formal coaching or mentoring; and/or you might want to attend a training course to develop the relevant skills.
5. Finally, in addition to the information provided on the Health and Safety Executive website, you may find the following useful for gaining more information about managing stress and mental health at work:
 - SHIFT Line Manager's Resource: for practical guidance on managing and supporting people with mental health problems in the workplace: www.shift.org.uk
 - Mental Health Foundation and Mind websites: for information about mental health issues: www.mentalhealth.org.uk and www.mind.org.uk
 - Information and resources may also be available through your employer, for example from: Occupational Health, Employee Assistance Programme/Welfare Service and Human Resources.

SUMMARY OF THE 'MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES FOR PREVENTING AND REDUCING STRESS AT WORK' FRAMEWORK

Competency	Sub-Competency
Respectful and responsible: Managing emotions and having integrity	Integrity <i>Being respectful and honest to employees</i>
	Managing emotions <i>Behaving consistently and calming around the team</i>
	Considerate approach <i>Being thoughtful in managing others and delegating</i>
Managing and communicating existing and future work	Proactive work management <i>Monitoring and reviewing existing work, allowing future prioritisation and planning</i>
	Problem solving <i>Dealing with problems promptly, rationally and responsibly</i>
	Participative / empowering <i>Listening to, meeting and consulting with the team, providing direction, autonomy and development opportunities to individuals</i>
Managing the individual within the team	Personally accessible <i>Available to talk to personally</i>
	Sociable <i>Relaxed approach, such as socialising and using humour</i>
	Empathetic engagement <i>Seeking to understand each individual in the team in terms of their health and satisfaction, motivation, point of view and life outside work</i>
Reasoning / Managing difficult situations	Managing conflict <i>Dealing with conflicts decisively, promptly and objectively</i>
	Use of organisational resources <i>Seeking advice when necessary from managers, HR and Occupational Health</i>
	Taking responsibility for resolving issues <i>Having a supportive and responsible approach to issues and incidents in the team</i>

Group:	Division / Section:	Who may be affected?
Employee / Manager(s) Involved:		Other persons involved in the risk assessment:
Date first completed:		First due review date:

Background Information	

Risk Rating without further Control Measures	Severity	Likelihood	Initial Risk Rating

Key risks identified (HSE Management Standards)	Control Measures already in place	Further Control Measures Required	Action by Who	Action by When

Risk Rating with further Control Measures	Severity	Likelihood	Revised Risk Rating

Date of Review	Summary of Updates / Changes	Updated Severity	Updated Likelihood	Updated Risk Rating	Next Review Due

APPENDIX 6**Example Stress Risk Assessment and Wellness Action Plan**

Group:	Division / Section:	Who may be affected? Ann Smith
Employee / Manager(s) Involved: Ann Smith, Dave Clark		Other persons involved in the risk assessment: HR Adviser / H&S Adviser
Date first completed: 03/02/20		First due review date: 03/03/20

Background Information

Ann feels that there is too much work to complete in the timescales, other teams are taking too long to deal with information and then they aren't giving warning about possible delays and she is struggling to meet deadlines so is working long hours. The whole team are finding it hard and sickness is up which is having a further impact.

Ann feels neglected by her manager and an offer of support has come too late. She feels isolated in the team and they give no regard for her feelings.

Ann has a number of days off sick in the last few months, due to colds/flu and generally feeling run down.

Risk Rating without further Control Measures	Severity	Likelihood	Initial Risk Rating

Key risks identified (HSE Management Standards)	Control Measures already in place	Further Control Measures Required	Action by Who	Action by When
Demands – Ann feels as though she has a lot of demands placed upon from lots of different services which results her feeling that she needs to neglect important task and therefore works long hours to complete workload.	Regular 1-1 and team meetings and day to day management. PDR's are held with the team and responsibilities and objectives discussed and agreed. Monitoring of staff working hours (flexi sheet) to ensure not excessive. Holiday cards are checked to ensure holidays are taken.			
Control – Ann feels she can't decide when to take a break or choose of how to plan her daily work routine.	Regular 1-1 and team meetings and day to day management. PDR's agree objectives and timescales. Monitor flexi time.			
Management Support – Ann feels as though her manager is unapproachable and dismissive and provides no support of guidance.	Regular 1-1's and team meetings, discuss work plans, priorities and any ongoing issues.			

Peer Support / Relationships – Ann feels isolated in the team, they don't include her and make snide remarks.	Regular team meetings. Dignity and Respect at Work Policy and AC10 module.			
Role – Ann doesn't know what her manager expects, she is regularly asked to take on unrelated tasks.	PDR's, 1-1's and day to day management. Job descriptions and Induction training for all new staff.			

Risk Rating with further Control Measures	Severity	Likelihood	Revised Risk Rating

Date of Review	Summary of Updates / Changes	Updated Severity	Updated Likelihood	Updated Risk Rating	Next Review Due

APPENDIX 7**Stress Risk Assessment Process****1. Identify the risk of stress in the workplace / who might be harmed?**

Is it an Individual or a Team.

2. Identify Hazards

A hazard is anything with the potential to cause harm.

When identifying hazards in the completion of stress risk assessments refer to:

- a) The HSE's Management Standards i.e. Demands; Control; Support; Relationships; Role and Change;
- b) Completed Employee Questionnaire.

3. Evaluate the Risk

The risk should be evaluated before and after further control measures are put in place.

A judgement about the severity (consequence) of the hazard, without further control measures in place, should be entered on the risk assessment form as a value using the severity rating below:

Severity (Consequence)	Value
Fluctuating productivity/performance	1
Sickness absence/attendance issues	2
Long term sickness absence	3
Physiological distress resulting in short term mental incapacity and long term sickness absence	4
Major physiological distress resulting in long term mental incapacity/illness	5
Individual fatality e.g. suicide or multiple fatalities as a result of actions of individual employee	6

The next part of the evaluation is a judgement about the likelihood of the hazard causing harm. A value should be entered in the likelihood columns of the risk assessment form using the likelihood rating below:

Likelihood	Value
Very unlikely	1
Unlikely	2
May happen	3
Likely	4
Very likely	5
Certain or imminent	6

The final stage of evaluation is to use the Risk Assessment Matrix below, to plot the risk rating i.e. High, Medium or Low.

Risk Assessment Matrix							
		Likelihood Rating					
Severity (consequence) Rating	Description	1	2	3	4	5	6
		Very Unlikely	Unlikely	May happen	Likely	Very likely	Certain or imminent
1	Fluctuating productivity/ performance	LOW					
2	Sickness absence/ attendance issues						
3	Long term sickness absence	MEDIUM		HIGH			
4	Physiological distress resulting in short term mental illness & long term sickness absence						
5	Major physiological distress/ long term mental incapacity/illness	HIGH					
6	Individual fatality e.g. suicide or multiple fatalities as a result of action from individual						

4. Document the control measures already in place on the risk assessment form i.e. monthly 1-1's, team meetings.
5. Then identify further control measures that can be implemented to reduce the risk of ill health i.e. fortnightly 1-1's, training.
6. For each further control measure, detail a date and person responsible for the action.
7. Evaluate the Risk again.
The level of risk should then be re-evaluated, taking into account the affect the implementation of the further control measures will have had in reducing the risk.

Severity (consequence) x Likelihood = Risk Rating

8. Residual Risk

This is the portion of risk remaining after further controls measures have been implemented. There will be an amount of risk remaining even after further control measures have been implemented, however this needs to be at an acceptable level.

Low – no further improvements are necessary, provided control measures are in place and maintained. Continuous improvements should be sought during review.

Medium Risk – although risk is tolerable when control measures have been implemented, further risk reduction measures are needed.

High Risk – Further risk reduction measures **MUST** be undertaken.

9. Record findings and communicate completed risk assessment with individual/team.

It is important that the risk assessment is completed by the manager with employee/team concerned and that the actions and timescales are agreed by all parties.

10. Monitor the implementation of the control measures and carryout regular review of risk assessment.