



Policy No. 0802/193

THE PRINCESS ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL NHS Trust

A Policy for the Management of Stress

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1 Introduction

Work-related stress is a major cause of occupational ill health. Managing stress effectively can help The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust, their employees and their representatives proactively and reactively manage the issue of stress and minimise the impact of work-related stress within the NHS.

2 Purpose

The Trust will work to HSE MSWRS. These are corporate tools which enable The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust to address stress issues without substantial external assistance. Please refer to Appendix 1.

2.1 Legal Case

Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust recognises that it has a duty under The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to look after the health and well being of it's employees this includes both Physical and Mental Health.

Also has responsibility under the management of The Health and Safety at Work Regulation Act 1999 to monitor and asses the risk of stress related ill health arising from work activities and to introduce prevention and control measures.

Additional legislation to be considered is as follows

- The Working Times Regulation Act 1998.
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- The Protection from Harassment Act.
- The Employments Rights Act.

2.2 The Business Case: Tackling Stress Brings Business Benefits

Research has shown work-related stress to have adverse effects for organisations in terms of:

- Employee commitment to work
- Staff performance and productivity
- Staff turnover and intention to leave
- Attendance levels
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Customer satisfaction
- Reduces Sickness Absence
- Improves Efficiency
- Cost effective

2.3 The Moral/Ethical Case: Tackling Stress Prevents Ill Health

There is now convincing evidence that prolonged periods of stress, including work-related stress, have an adverse effect on health.

Research provides strong links between stress and:

- Physical effects such as heart disease, back pain, headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances or various minor illnesses.
- Psychological effects such as anxiety and depression.

3 Definitions

Definitions of terms used within the context of this document.

- **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 always has a negative effect and can be detrimental to health.

4. Duties

4.1 Corporate Responsibility

This is:

- The overall requirement for effective risk management in the trust meeting all statutory requirements and adhering to guidance issued in respect of risk lies with the Chief Executive. At an operational level responsibility is delegated to usually Director of Workforce.

4.2 Responsibility of Employees

These are:

- Minimises excessive pressures and demands on themselves and others by behaving responsibly and acting reasonably.
- Raising any concerns about excessive pressure both work related or from external factors with their line manager, Human resources, Occupational Health or Trade Union Representative.
- Recognising and managing external issues that may impact and take steps to minimise the impact on work by utilising the appropriate Trust policies.
- Ensuring that they identify where training and development needs or other appropriate support may be required in order to meet the demands of their job.
- Contributing positively to the appraisal process and to use it as a tool to communicate any concerns to their line manager.
- Accepting opportunities for counselling when recommended.

4.3 Responsibility of Managers

These are:

- Ensuring good communication between management and staff particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Carrying out appraisals and identifying issues that could be potential stressors that require action.
- Ensuring employees are sufficiently trained to discharge their duties effectively and efficiently.
- Ensuring employees are provided with meaningful development opportunities.
- Monitoring work loads to ensure that employees are not over worked.
- Monitoring contracted hours and over time/ bank hours worked to ensure that staff are not over worked.
- Monitoring annual leave to ensure that the individual leave entitlements are used equitably and within the leave year.
- Attending training as required.
- Ensuring that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction and in line with the Trust's policy.
- Providing support to any employee who is being subjected to abusive or aggressive communication from a member of the public.
- Offering support to an employee who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or divorce.
- Conducting return to work interviews for all appropriate staff and is their responsibility to establish if any stress related problems are responsible for their absenteeism.
- Encouraging an open discussion of 'sources of pressure' at team meetings.
- Following consultation with an employee and if appropriate arrange appointments with Occupational Health.
- Supporting individuals who have been off sick with stress and seek further advice from Human Resources and Occupational Health.

Managers have a critical role in offering support to employees and in facilitating support from elsewhere as necessary. Managers are not expected to take on the role as counsellors but will be expected to use good communication skills in addressing stress related issues.

4.4 Responsibility of Human Resources

These are:

- Advising managers in conjunction with Occupational Health on the management of stress.
- Assisting in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Advising managers and individuals on training opportunities and requirements.
- Providing advice and awareness training on stress to directors, managers and other employees.
- Providing support where appropriate to employees who are being subjected to abusive or aggressive communication from a member of the public or a colleague.
- Offering advice and support to line managers who need to conduct return to work interviews.

- Giving general guidance to managers on the Trusts management policy as and when required to do so.

4.5 Responsibility of Occupational Health

These are.

- Providing advice and support to individuals who have self referred.
- Providing advice to managers on the effects of work on health and making recommendations in relation to an individual return to work following sickness.
- Referring staff where appropriate to the in house counselling service.
- Identifying organisational aspects of stress and assist in change management.
- Assisting with facilitating the establishment of stress awareness and stress management programmes.
- Providing specialist advice and awareness training on stress to directors, managers and all other employees in conjunction with Human Resources.

5 **Risk Assessment Process**

The trust has a generic Risk Assessment (appendix 1), which identifies the processes. These are the processes the trust follows.

Assessment of the risk of work related stress

The following stress risk assessment tool is provided in appendix 1. The guidance for managers is enclosed in appendix 2. This tool is to give guidance on how to work with staff and develop an action plan to control the negative stresses that individual members of staff may be exposed to. As a manager of the Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust you do have a legal responsibility to support staff in finding ways to reduce the causes of their work related stress. Further support and guidance can be obtained for you from your HR Manager or by contacting Occupational Health on 827015. In some of the more difficult cases it may be appropriate to arrange a case management meeting.

The original copy of the risk assessment must be entered into the individual's personal file and a copy sent to the Occupational Health Dept. All risk assessments will be monitored by Occupational Health and reported upon three monthly.

Symptoms and warning signs of stress

See appendix 3.

6 **Standards/Key Performance Indicators and Process for Monitoring Effectiveness**

The Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust monitors these processes through Occupational Health, Human Resources and the Health & Safety Manager by continuous auditing and questionnaires (stress indicator tool). The staff feed back questionnaires are taken annually and these results are then reported to the Stress Group and the Governance Risk Management Committee.

7 **Dissemination, Implementation and Access to this Document**

All policies are ratified by the JSCC, Nursing & Midwifery, Governance Risk Management Committee and the CMT. The policy is new to the trust and will be available electronically on public folders. The staff will be informed through global email.

The trust provides stress training in the induction week and on the two day course for Health & Safety Managers.

8 Review, Updating and Archiving of this Document

The policy will be reviewed bi-annually by the Stress Group. The Stress policy will be archived through the trust archive policy.

9 References

- 1 *Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Tackling stress: The Management Standards approach. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg406.pdf>. (Updated version March 2007)*
- 2 *NHSLA Risk Management Standards for Acute Trusts April 2007. Available at: www.nhs.uk*
- 3 *Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Securing Management Commitment. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/securing.pdf> (Updated version March 2007)*
- 4 *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*
- 5 *Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974*
- 6 *Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Policy Template. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/examplepolicy.pdf> (Updated version March 2007)*
- 7 *Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Working Together to Reduce Stress at work – a Guide for Employees 2004. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/misc686.pdf>*
- 8 *Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Steering Groups. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/steeringgroups.pdf> (Updated version March 2007)*
- 9 *Health & Safety Executive (HSE) HSE Indicator Tool for Work Related Stress. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/indicatortool.pdf> (Updated version March 2007)*
- 10 *Health & Safety Executive (HSE) HSE Analysis Tool. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/analysistool.xls> (Updated version March 2007)*
- 11 *Health & Safety Executive (HSE) How To Organise And Run Focus Groups. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/focusgroups.pdf> (Updated version March 2007)*
- 12 *Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Are You Doing Enough? Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/suggestions.pdf> (Updated version March 2007)*
- 13 *Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Action plan template. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/actionplan.pdf> (Updated version March 2007)*

APPENDIX 2

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS AT WORK: GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

Introduction

This document contains 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 the PAH Stress Policy in any area under their control.

Occupational Health Advice

Early and ongoing Occupational Health advice is usually of value in stress cases. Common questions to ask in OH referrals in stress cases should include:

- What is the nature of the employee's illness? Does the employee have a diagnosable medical condition and what is the effect of this condition on the individual?
- Is the person receiving the correct treatment for any existing medical condition?
- What is the prognosis?
- Is the individual medically fit to attend a meeting with their manager to discuss the causes of their absence and how a return to work can be achieved?

When referring an employee to Occupational Health in relation to stress, ensure that the referral covers details of issues in the workplace that may be a cause of stress.

Stress Risk Assessment

In the first instance, the manager and individual employee should investigate the causes of stress together. If this is not possible (e.g. individual refuses to talk to their manager) the manager should contact HR to identify an alternative party, e.g. HR, Occupational Health, another manager, etc.

The Stress Risk Assessment approach is designed to facilitate a way forward; it is not a blaming opportunity but rather a chance to reflect upon the situation and the circumstances around it, which should enable a move forward to a satisfactory outcome.

This approach is not intended to address the medical aspects of stress which should be addressed through Occupational Health. However, this approach can address the personal and organisational issues that have led to the individual's perceptions of stress.

Instructions on how to use the Stress Risk Assessment form are given below.

Stage 1

The first stage of the process is for the employee to complete the first three columns of the Stress Action Plan form. The employee should not complete this stage with their line manager, but could either do it alone or preferably with the support of another person (e.g. HR, Occupational Health, etc.) to ensure they are being specific enough on the issues outlined below.

- **Employee's Perceptions of Stressors**

The employee should write down their perceptions/feelings about the situation (e.g. no one listens to me, can't cope with workload, no one interested, no support, etc.). Simple statements such as 'I feel stressed' are not adequate enough to enable this approach to be successful.

- **Evidence of Perceptions**

The employee should provide evidence of their perceptions with specific examples of how they have arrived at that belief (e.g. examples of why they feel no one listens to them).

- **The Future**

The employee should then write down the five most significant issues in their work situation that they like to see addressed (using examples from the evidence column) and how they would like these issues to be resolved, so they can return to the workplace and their job.

The aim of the 'wish list' is to find out what the employee wants and to use this information as a negotiating tool with their manager. The benefit is that although their wishes cannot be guaranteed, in most cases many can be achieved. Approaching it in this manner means the employee plays a major part in identifying the issues they wish to see resolved, with the additional benefit that they are directly enabling some or all of the problems to be resolved. From the managers' point of view, it provides valuable information that allows them to assist the employee in a positive way.

Stage 2

- **Agreeing Specific Actions**

Stage 2 should involve a meeting with the individual employee and their manager. HR representation may be required. The purpose of this meeting is to allow open and constructive communication between the two parties and allow the employee to share their views in an open and positive way. However, once the employee has shared their information, an opportunity must be given for the manager to respond.

If a person has an underlying medical condition recognised by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), PAH is legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments to work arrangements. 'Reasonable adjustments' might include actions such as temporary or permanent changes in responsibilities/tasks, flexible working arrangements, allowing time-off for medical appointments related to their disability, etc.

A referral to Occupational Health will usually be necessary to determine if an individual's medical condition falls under the DDA. However, even if a person does not fall under the DDA,

managers should still be willing to make reasonable adjustments if it means an employee can remain or return to work.

- **Documenting Actions and Review**

The manager should then document the actions agreed and the reasons for any inaction on the suggestions made by the employee. The manager and employee should then agree review dates (at the most one month after the creation of the Stress Risk Assessment), to discuss and review progress against the actions agreed.

STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT

Completion Mandatory:

NAME:

DEPT:

Completion optional, but compliance will enable the Trust to monitor trends of work related stress:

Gender:

Ethnic Origin:

Age Group:

Job Title:

This form should not be used without reference to the guidance contained in the guidance document 'Management of stress at work'.

Part 1 – To be completed by the employee

PERCEPTIONS	EVIDENCE OF PERCEPTIONS	The future	
Perceptions and feelings about the current situation.	Examples and specific instances of why the feelings and perceptions exist.	The most significant issues that the individual wishes to be addressed	Individual's proposals about how each of these issues should be addressed

Part 2 – To be completed by the employee's line manager

Summary of actions proposed by employee	Actions to be taken by management	Explanations of reason for any inaction	Review date for each action and details of progress at that date

Employee's signature:	Date:	Manager's signature	Date:
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Appendix 3

There is a clear link between poor work organisation and subsequent ill health. The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them should be identified early and its cause investigated to try and control the issues before they cause stress related ill health and absence.

People vary in how much stress they can experience before it has an affect on their health. Stress can have a negative affect both physically and emotionally. Some general signs to look out for in the work place which may mean someone is stressed include the following:

- Fatigue
- Mood swings
- Skin problems
- Altered work performance
- Low self-esteem
- Anxiety
- Poor concentration
- Poor memory
- Headaches

Possible causes of work related stress include the following:

- Feeling like you have too much or too little to do
- Work that feels too difficult or too easy
- Little freedom or flexibility of work
- Lack of clarity about where you fit into the work place
- Conflicting work demands
- Feeling that there is little scope for your role to develop
- Lack of communication or involvement in decision making within the organisation
- Trying to balance working and home life demands

Relationships at work which do not feel supportive

Appendix 1

Stress at Work - Assessment Tool

Completion Mandatory:

NAME:

DEPT:

Completion optional, but compliance will enable the Trust to monitor trends of work related stress:

Gender:

Ethnic Origin:

Age Group:

Job Title:

This risk assessment form accompanies the guidance document 'Management of Stress at Work' (Appendix 2) The content of this risk assessment is based on the main sources of work-related stress identified by the Health and Safety Executive.

Issue	Yes/No	Suggestions for further actions	Further actions planned		
			Action	By whom	By when
<p>Are there possible issues with <i>excessive job demands</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People unable to take leave entitlement? • People regularly working longer than their contracted hours? • People regularly working longer than 48 hours per week? • Individuals working noticeably longer hours than others doing the same/similar jobs? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold more regular team meetings or individual work reviews to discuss and anticipate workload. • Develop personal work plans to ensure staff know what their job involves. • Provide training to help staff prioritise, or information on how to seek help if they have conflicting priorities. • Develop a system to notify employees of unplanned tight deadlines and any exceptional need to work long hours. • Identify reasons for tight deadlines appearing and seek to resolve issues • Ensure the job description matches the work being carried out. • Ensure the person specification matches the requirements of the job. • Introduce flexibility in work arrangements to enable individuals to cope with domestic commitments. 			
<p>Are there possible issues with <i>lack of control over work</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do individuals have any control over the timing and/or pace of work? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree systems that enable staff to have a say over the way their work is organised and undertaken. • Hold regular discussions at the planning stages of projects to talk about outputs and methods of working. 			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do others often change deadlines? • Is all work allocated by the line manager? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about how decisions are made – is there scope for more involvement? • Hold work reviews to monitor ongoing workload. 			
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Issue	Yes/No	Suggestions for further actions	Further actions planned		
			Action	By whom	By when
<p>Are there possible issues with <i>lack of support</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals raising concerns about a lack of management support? • Appraisals and work reviews are not taking place as planned? • Absence due to stress taken seriously and handled in line with PAH sickness absence procedures? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold regular team meetings and/or one-to-ones to talk about emerging issues. • Seek examples of how staff would like to, or have received good support from managers or colleagues. • Ask how individuals would like to access managerial support. • Ensure appraisals to identify training needs are carried out regularly. • Disseminate information on other areas of support (counselling, work-life balance, etc.) • Talk about the ways the organisation could provide support for someone who is experiencing problems outside work. 			
<p>Are there possible issues with relationships within the team?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have there been any complaints of bullying or harassment during the past year? • Have there been any incidents of unacceptable behaviour? • Does the team work cohesively and supportively in dealing with day-to-day work? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree standards with employees for acceptable behaviour at work. • Ensure employees are aware of confidential routes by which they can report unacceptable behaviour. • Provide training to help staff deal with difficult situations. • Ensure employees are aware of where they can access Bullying and Harassment procedures and Grievance procedures. • Ensure people are aware of grievance and disciplinary procedures • Identify ways to celebrate success. • Explore team building exercises 			

Issue	Yes/No	Suggestions for further actions	Further actions planned		
			Action	By whom	By when
<p>Are there possible issues with <i>role ambiguity or confusion</i>?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals mentioning conflicting goals? • Individuals not prioritising correctly? • Induction for new employees not being completed? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use appraisals and one-to-one meetings to help individuals clarify their roles and priorities, and to discuss any possible role conflicts. • Communicate key team objectives and targets. • Agree standards of performance for jobs and individual tasks. • Develop personal work plans that are aligned to the outputs of the unit. • Revise job descriptions to ensure core priorities of the post are clear. • Ensure existing team members understand the role and responsibilities of any new team members. • Ensure new employees receive an adequate induction into their role and objectives, and the team's role. 			
<p>Are there possible issues with managing change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section/team/unit has been through a period of significant change. • Section/team/unit is about to go through a period of significant change. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure employees are aware of why change is happening and the key steps of the change. • Ensure individuals directly affected are involved in the change process. • Ensure regular and clear communication with those indirectly affected. • Agree methods of communication/update. • Ensure employees are aware of the impact of change on their jobs, terms and conditions, etc. • Have an 'open door' policy to help individuals that have concerns. • Review work plans and objectives after change to ensure they are valid and clear. • Ensure receive relevant training for new changed/roles 			

Assessor's name (please print):	Assessor's signature:	Date assessment completed:
The Line Manager should sign below to show that the assessment is a correct and reasonable reflection of the hazards and of the control measures and actions required.		
Line Manager's name (please print):	Line Manager's signature:	Date received: