



Symphony Learning
TRUST

Stress Management Policy

Adopted by Symphony Learning Trust on	February 2021
Next Review Due	Change of Regulations

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For the purposes of this policy the Head Teacher/Head of School will be referred to as 'Head Teacher' and school/academy will be referred to as 'school'.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Trust is committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of employees. The Trust recognises that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stress.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 Employers have legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure the health safety and wellbeing at work of their employees. This includes minimising the risk of stress-related illness or injury to employees. The Trust has a legal duty to identify and assess risks to an employee's health, safety and wellbeing. Where risks are identified, appropriate preventative and protective measures must be taken to remove or reduce the risks.
- 1.4 Further Human Resources (HR) advice may need to be sought regarding employee absence due to work related stress.

2.0 Symptoms of stress and the effects in the workplace

- 2.1 Stress can cause changes in those experiencing it. In some cases there are clear signs that people are experiencing stress at work and if these can be identified early, action can be taken before the pressure becomes a problem. This may make it easier to reduce and eliminate the causes. Stress can show itself in many different ways - a stress reaction can affect a person's physical health, emotional wellbeing and behaviour. The list below identifies some of the key symptoms:

Physical	Emotional	Behavioural
High blood pressure	Anxiety	Over eating and under eating
Insomnia	Depression	Excessive use of alcohol and cigarettes
Fatigue/Dizziness	Lack of a sense of humour	Drug abuse

Headaches	Mood swings	Poor time keeping
Digestive disorders	Excessively angry/aggressiveness	Obsessive erratic behaviour
Slouched posture	Poor concentration	Forgetfulness
Bloodshot eyes	Apathy	Indecisiveness
Sweating	Being tearful	Neglect of appearance
Chest pain/Sensation of heart racing	Loss of confidence	Withdrawing from social contact and support networks
Shallow breathing	Negative thoughts	Not taking breaks at work
Nervous sensations/tense muscles		Not participating in hobbies and pastimes
Loss of appetite		Loss of motivation

2.2 Failing to manage stress can have adverse effects on a school. It can lead to underperformance in individuals and within teams. The effects can include:

- Errors in work
- Poor decision making
- Lack of creativity
- Job dissatisfaction
- Reduced productivity
- Poor quality of work
- Absenteeism

As well as sickness absence costs, other financial costs can be significant. Possible costs can include:

- Loss of customers
- Ill health retirements
- Litigation
- Employment tribunals

3.0 Managing stress in the workplace

3.1 Assisting employees who are experiencing stress

3.1.1 Knowing when to assist an employee isn't always obvious. Everybody has different thresholds for pressure and stress. What is stressful to one person may not be the same for another. A stress reaction is often triggered by the perception of fear, threat or pressure. An individual's perception will vary from one person to the next.

3.1.2 There are some common situations which can arise in the workplace, which may indicate that support is required. Such circumstances are:

- An employee may inform their line manager that they are feeling stressed.
- An employee may have uncharacteristic sickness absences that state or implies a stress reaction.
- An employee may be signed off work by their GP and their fit note identifies stress as the cause. (A fit note could also state anxiety and depression, which can be the effect of experiencing stress over a significant period of time).

3.1.3 In some circumstances, an employee may not recognise how stressed they are. It is their colleagues who spot uncharacteristic behaviour or signs and symptoms. In these situations, line managers may wish to talk to the employee to see if support is required. Initiating a discussion may be difficult, if the employee is anxious or distressed. This can be overcome by explaining the purpose of the meeting. Inform the employee that you would like to discuss their wellbeing. Be supportive and empathetic so that the problems can be tackled in a positive way. Ask about possible causes and explore together some options for addressing the issues. Make notes of your meeting together and ensure that you both agree with the accuracy of the account. If the employee is unable to discuss how they feel, or they are unable to identify the cause, suggest other people to talk to. This could include a sympathetic family member, a colleague, their trade union representative, their doctor, or the Employee Wellbeing and Counselling Service.

3.1.4 If there are concerns about the employees' level of attendance, capability to perform their role, or professional conduct, it is recommended that the school seek HR advice.

3.2 Conducting a stress risk assessment

3.2.1 When an employee feels that work is the cause of stress a head teacher / line manager must act. A stress risk assessment is a tool that is used to identify the causes of stress and reduce the risk to the individual.

3.2.2 A model stress risk assessment has been developed and can be found in Appendix 2, it is important that this document is made specific to address the needs of the individual. The model risk assessment is based on the HSE Management Standards which cover the primary sources of stress at work. These are:

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

3.2.3 If the head teacher/ line manager and employee are struggling to pin point what is causing the stress, the HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool can be used to help identify the stressors. See Appendix 1. Following this, the risk assessment can then be developed to identify how the risk to the individual will be reduced.

3.2.4 The head teacher / line manager and employee should work through a stress risk assessment together. Being able to work together on the issues will help to sustain a good working relationship and good levels of understanding and communication.

3.2.5 If the head teacher / line manager is contributing to the employees stress or if there is a poor working relationship between the head teacher / line manager and the employee it may not be appropriate for them to conduct the risk assessment. In these situations, an alternative member of the management team could conduct the risk assessment, alternatively a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Advisor can be contacted for support. An employee may request that a colleague or trade union representative attends the stress risk assessment meetings for support.

3.2.6 As the cause of a stress reaction will vary according to individuals, it is important to address the cause rather than evaluating whether the reason is justified. For example, an employee may have the same workload as other team members. However, recovery from recent surgery or a breakdown in a personal relationship, may temporarily affect their ability to manage their normal job role. Working with their concerns and finding positive solutions to address the matter will encourage a successful recovery from stress. Being judgemental may exacerbate their stress reaction and is likely to cause deterioration in relationships with line management. If you have concerns that the matter may not be temporary, you may wish to take advice from HR.

3.2.7 It is often a misconception that all of the action points will be the responsibility of the head teacher / line manager to facilitate. Whilst this may be the case for some of

the risk assessment, the employee needs to engage in the process of managing their stress reaction too. Examples of action points for an employee may include counselling, attending training and learning new skills. The person responsible for each action point should be identified on the risk assessment.

3.2.8 It is important that the risk assessment is reviewed regularly to ensure it is kept current and relevant to the employee's needs. It may be beneficial to review the risk assessment during supervision meetings and involve the employee.

3.2.9 In all instances, employees experiencing stress should be made aware of the [Employee Wellbeing Service](#). This is a confidential counselling and wellbeing support service. To contact the service telephone 0116 3057386, or email counsellingandwellbeing@leics.gov.uk.

3.3 When an employee is absent from work due to stress

3.3.1 If the employee's attendance or performance is affected due to their stress then HR advice should be consulted.

3.4 Risk assessing teams using stress surveys

3.4.1 If several employees within the school are experiencing work place stress this may indicate a wider issue that needs to be addressed proactively. It would be recommended that a stress survey is conducted by all staff to help identify a pattern or common stressors.

3.4.2 When Identifying stress in teams, factors that may indicate stress is present include:

- Arguments
- Higher staff turnover
- More reports of stress
- More sickness absence
- Decreased performance
- More complaints and grievances

3.4.3 The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service recommend that the head teacher / business manager distribute the [HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool](#) to all employees in their team. The survey consists of 35 items that ask about 'working conditions' known to be potential causes of work related stress. (See Appendix 1). These working conditions correspond to the six stressors of the HSE Management Standards. The employee answers according to how they feel about these aspects of their work. All responses can then be compiled into an [Excel-based analysis tool, on the HSE website](#). The HSE provide information on how to proceed, if the results reveal that work related stress exists.

3.4.4 A Stress Risk Assessment should then be conducted to identify general stressors experienced by the team. Suitable and sufficient control measures must then be selected to reduce the likelihood and consequences of the identified stressors.

3.5 Traumatic incidents involving employees

3.5.1 If an employee is involved in a serious incident at work, or is witness to such an event, it is important that this is recognised and acted upon at an early stage. Stress reactions are very common in these circumstances.

3.5.2 Providing debriefing opportunities are a good course of action. Often these are arranged informally. Employees may gather as a staff group to reflect and discuss what has happened. It is good practice for a head teacher / line manager to arrange a group meeting to provide accurate, up to date information on what has occurred. It is also an opportunity to assess the wellbeing of the staff, and to notify them of sources of support. There are occasions when you may not be permitted to share information with your staff team. In these circumstances, take advice from Human Resources and other professional on how to address your staff team.

3.5.3 There may be some employees whose experience of the incident is more profound than that of others. In these instances, a more formal type of support may be required.

3.5.4 As well as individual counselling, the Employee Wellbeing Service can provide group debriefing sessions to employees who have been involved in a traumatic incident.

3.6 When the matter is not work related

3.6.1 It is not always possible to stop pressures in our personal lives from affecting our work. A stress reaction, anxiety and depression present physical, emotional and behavioural changes that are not always easy to control. There may be occasions when the symptoms of stress caused by pressure in our personal lives, manifest themselves in the workplace.

3.6.2 Head teachers / line managers have no direct responsibility to make improvements to an employee's personal situation.

3.6.3 However, it is good practice to provide a supporting role to employees who are distressed or finding work difficult to manage. Examples could include:

- Allowing them to adjust their working hours work where reasonable.
- Giving them some time to talk and be listened to
- Providing them with details of the Employee Wellbeing Service

- 3.6.4 If their circumstances are affecting their ability to work, a stress risk assessment around the job role may be appropriate. See section 3.2.
- 3.6.5 A manager must act, regardless of whether the origin of stress is work or personal when;
- The behaviour of an employee creates a risk to the safety of colleagues and service users
 - The employee's ability to operate machinery or drive a vehicle is impaired
 - If the behaviour of an employee's family member creates a risk to colleagues, service users and the employee
 - The employee suggests that they will commit suicide or an act of serious self-harm that could endanger their life and that of others
- 3.6.6 In all of these circumstances, seek support from Human Resources, the Employee Wellbeing Service and/or your Health, Safety and Wellbeing Advisor.

4.0 Further Information and Contacts

4.1 **Employee Wellbeing Service** - a counselling and wellbeing support service for employees of Leicestershire County Council. LCC's Employee Wellbeing Advisers are:

Oonagh Martin
Telephone: 0116 305 7504
Email: Oonagh.Martin@leics.gov.uk

Alison Earl
Telephone: 0116 305 6178
Email: alison.earl@leics.gov.uk

Linda Williams
Telephone: 0116 305 6078
Email: linda.p.williams@leics.gov.uk

Amy Bell
Telephone: 0116 305 5178
Email: Amy.Bell@leics.gov.uk

Employee Wellbeing Service
Email: counsellingandwellbeing@leics.gov.uk

4.2 Unions

Unison
Telephone: 0116 305 6153
Email: unison@leics.gov.uk

NASUWT
Telephone: 0115 976 7180
Email: rc-eastmids@mail.nasuwt.org.uk

NAHT
Telephone: 0300 30 30333
Email: info@naht.org.uk

NUT
Telephone: 0116 275 6658
Email: secretary@leicestershire.nut.org.uk

GMB
Telephone: 0116 251 0922

4.3 **Health and Safety Executive** - [HSE: Stress](#)

4.4 **The Samaritans** - Telephone: 116 123

4.5 **MIND** - Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems –
Telephone : 0300 123 3393

Appendix 1

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/indicatortool.pdf>

Appendix 2

STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE and ACTION SHEET

Name of employee.....

Job/Role.....

Date of Assessment.....

Persons involved in the Assessment

.....

The questions are based on the HSE Management Standards and look at the key areas of work that contribute to and can help reduce work related stress. The questions are part of supportive process to assist managers in the: Identification of hazards, deciding who might be affected; evaluating the risks and frequency and recording your findings and proposed actions. This process can also be used to assist in the identification of individual stress management measures.

Employee Overview

Question	Yes	No	Possible Actions	Agreed Action/s
<p>1. Role Definition:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is role clearly defined? • Are duties and responsibilities clear? • Is it clear how to perform role? <p>Is role clearly linked to goals and objectives for the department?</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure expected duties and responsibilities are not excessive and demands not unreasonable • Clarify goals, objectives and success criteria for the job/role - ensuring no ambiguity • Give regular clear feedback on performance 	
<p>2. Control:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do individuals have a say in how to do and plan their work? • Can employee set own work speed? • Can employee decide when to take a break? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where practicable, enable staff to exert autonomy within role • Encourage delegation and empowerment of others • Encourage training to support delegation (to individual and team) 	
<p>3. Work Pressures – High:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are unrealistic deadlines set? • Is employee required to work long hours? • Is employee given work from different commissioning groups with conflicting priorities? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer support in prioritising tasks and cut out unnecessary work and bureaucracy • Try to give warning of urgent jobs • Assist in the scheduling of work to ensure adequate and appropriate resources • Ensure job demands are matched in terms of quantity, complexity and intensity to individuals skills and abilities • Support staff when undertaking new and unfamiliar tasks • Meet regularly to review workload • Avoid encouraging staff to work long hours, take work home or build excessive flexi. • Encourage staff to take annual leave allowance 	
<p>4 Work Pressures – Low:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the work boring, monotonous or unchallenging? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where reasonably practicable, rotate boring and repetitive jobs • Where possible increase the variety of tasks – through projects, shadowing etc 	

<p>5 Relationships at Work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is employee subject to personal harassment – verbal and/or behaviour? • Are relationships at work strained? • Is there a high probability of friction and anger between colleagues? • Is bullying an issue? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage team working • Encourage team members to give open and honest feedback to each other • Demonstrate and encourage appreciation of others • Promote an atmosphere of mutual respect • Ensure all staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour at work will not be tolerated. • Refer to the Dignity at Work Policy and attend the training to support this policy • Seek the support of HR if an allegation of harassment or bullying is made 	
<p>6 Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If work demands increase or are outside an individuals' ability to cope are colleagues/manager available to help and support? • Is employee given the opportunity of supportive feedback on the work they do? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how to raise concerns and call on support • Attend a Stress Management Workshop • Encourage/enhance team working /support. • Discuss workflow and support mechanisms at regular team meetings • Encourage open communication with colleagues and line management. 	
<p>7 Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are employees consulted / updated about changes at work that affect them? • Are employees clear about how change will affect them in practice? • Is there adequate consultation about workplace issues / changes? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure clear and appropriate communication on proposed changes • Ensure individuals understand the reasons for change and the likely timescales • Ensure adequate consultation wherever possible and provide opportunities for comment and input. • Give support to individuals during the change process 	
<p>8 Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is additional training required to support individuals in undertaking job/role? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training as required • Ensure PDRs are properly conducted and followed up. • Ensure changes to role are supported with relevant training as necessary. 	

<p>9 Physical Demands and Work Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does role involve excessive physical demands such as heavy lifting, standing for long periods of time, repetitive movements, hand held vibration tools etc? • Is the work environment adequate / comfortable – Temp/humidity, lighting, noise, welfare facilities etc? • Is there a risk to physical safety and emotional/mental wellbeing from service users, members of the public etc? • Is there a risk to physical safety and emotional/mental wellbeing due to lone working? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a H&S Risk Assessment • Remove excessive and unreasonable demands • Check what Health Surveillance support can be provided by Occupational Health • Encourage suggestions on how to improve work environment – and give these due consideration. • Undertake an H and S risk assessment to manage potential risk from service users and/or public. • Undertake an H and S risk assessment if employee is a lone worker. 	
<p>10 Other Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any other issues / stressors that need to be taken account of – e.g. difficulties at home, unexpected life changes, traumatic incidents, etc? • Are there any on-going/long term physical or mental health conditions that may be a contributing factor? • Has GP/Occupational Health identified any issues for consideration ? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support individuals where possible • Offer to support them through referring to Wellbeing Adviser/Counsellor. • Seek advice from HR on supporting employees with long term health conditions • Seek advice from Occupational Health on any identified medical issues for consideration 	