



AGENDA ITEM 6

CENTRAL SCOTLAND VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Subject: STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY
Meeting: CENTRAL SCOTLAND VALUATION JOINT BOARD
Date: 20th NOVEMBER 2015
Author: JANE WANDLESS, ASSISTANT ASSESSOR

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As part of the ongoing review of Human Resources and Health & Safety Policies it was identified that the Board lacked a policy to manage stress in the workplace. This report seeks approval from the Board of the proposed Stress Management Policy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The Policy was developed in conjunction with the Human Resources team at Clackmannanshire Council and closely follows the policy adopted by Clackmannanshire Council. As part of the process of developing the report we have consulted with our staff via our Staff Consultation Forum. They have proposed no amendments to the draft policy.

3.0 STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

A copy of the proposed Stress Management Policy is attached as Appendix 1 of this report.

RECOMMENDATION

I recommend that the Board approves the proposed 'Stress Management Policy'.

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Assistant Assessor

Appendix 1 – Stress Management Policy.

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

Introduction

Central Scotland Valuation Joint Board (CSVJB) recognises work related pressure and stress as an important health and safety issue.

CSVJB is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of its employees by introducing and promoting policies to encourage healthier lifestyles and to fulfilling its health and safety duties by reducing the causes of work related pressure and stress.

This will be achieved by working with employees to minimise stress in the workplace and through working with individuals affected by stress- whether work related or of a personal nature - to mitigate the adverse effects of stress.

CSVJB's goals and values set out the commitment to treat all employees and customers with dignity and respect. The policy on stress management incorporates and reflects this in terms of focussing and promoting effective management practice and ensuring high standards of health and safety

CSVJB recognises that stress can have an adverse effect on employee well being which can lead to reduced performance or ill health. This will in turn have an impact on CSVJB's ability to deliver services and achieve its goals.

CSVJB is committed to reducing stress so far as is reasonably practicable, by encouraging a supportive environment where excessive pressures on an individual are addressed thereby enhancing performance.

CSVJB acknowledges the role of managers in achieving this objective and undertakes to make available information and guidance concerning stress awareness and the management of stress so they can fulfil their responsibilities towards the employees for whom they are accountable.

Stress and Pressure

The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as:

'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. It arises when they worry they can't cope'

This definition makes an important distinction between pressure and stress. Pressure can be a positive state, which can motivate people to perform at their maximum capacity while stress can be detrimental to health and can undermine performance.

Stress can be caused by excessive pressure in an individual's personal life e.g. domestic crisis, financial pressures, conflicting demands between work and home, as well as demands placed on them at work.

It should be recognised that people react to issues differently and assumptions should not be made about a person's ability to cope under pressure whether work related or otherwise.

Examples Of Where Stress Can Occur in the Workplace:

- Pressures pile on top of each other and are prolonged
- Inadequate level of knowledge and skills, training or resources for the job

- Type of job or work environment such as dealing with the public who may be in distress or needing help or poor physical conditions such as excessive heat, noise, humidity, bad lighting or lack of space
- Excessive, conflicting, inconsistent or inflexible work demands
- Working long hours
- Working long hours without taking appropriate breaks e.g. working through lunch
- Uncertainty or inability to exert any control over work objectives, job or career prospects
- Work schedules are perceived as inflexible and over demanding
- Prolonged conflict such as where an individual is facing bullying and harassment, or lack of social integration with managers/colleagues
- Lack of leadership support or recognition
- Inadequate or unreliable equipment
- Lack of assertiveness and poor time-management skills
- Inadequate feedback from managers/colleagues

The source of stress may be from outside the workplace. Staff who are experiencing stress caused by home, family or financial pressures may find it difficult to separate these from their working life and are consequently not able to deal with work matters efficiently and effectively.

Managers have a duty to assess the impact of workload allocations and top-down instructions and subordinates are responsible for keeping managers informed of any issues which could impact on their performance.

CSVJB is committed to reducing stress so far as is practicable but it is accepted that some degree of pressure occurs in most jobs. Each job brings its own set of tasks, responsibilities and day-to-day challenges. These challenges provide structure, improve motivation and are the key to a sense of achievement and job satisfaction.

It must be recognised that the ability to deal with challenges is not limitless and that stress is the physical, emotional and behavioural response to an inappropriate level of pressure.

The cost to CSVJB can be measured in terms of absenteeism, poor motivation and high staff turnover. This can contribute to rising stress levels for other colleagues who can be required to take on additional work to cover for absent employees leading to a vicious circle.

CSVJB recognises that:

- Anyone can suffer from stress
- Stress is not an illness but the natural adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure and demands imposed on them
- That ill-health can often be due to problems outside work which may then affect the employees performance at work
- Individuals who are suffering from stress for whatever reason, must have support and access to help
- Stress over a significant time period can contribute to physical and mental ill-health

What We Will Do

Managers have a duty to assess the impact of workload allocations and top-down instructions and subordinates are responsible for keeping managers informed of any issues which could impact on their performance. In addition:

- We will identify workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress

- We will regularly review all risk assessments
- We will provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in the management of stress
- We will monitor stress
- We will provide confidential counselling for staff affected by stress

Monitoring Stress

Taking action to reduce stress can result in better health, reduced sickness absence, increased performance and output, better working relationships and lower staff turnover.

The Management Team will monitor stress levels within CSVJB by looking at:

- Long and short term sickness absence levels relating to stress
- Stress related ill-health retirement
- Staff turnover rates
- Accident statistics
- Feedback from exit interviews
- Staff surveys

Raising Awareness

CSVJB recognises the need to ensure that all employees are aware of the Policy.

Scope of The Policy

- This policy applies to all CSVJB employees.
- CSVJB will provide support to line managers in taking a pro-active approach to tackling stress within their own team.

How Will The Policy Be Applied

The following key roles are central to the application of the policy:

The Role of The Employee

Employees have a responsibility for their own health and safety and should be encouraged to raise any matters of concern relating to health and safety, including perceived stress at work to their line manager.

Employees should also take advantage of supportive measures such as employee counselling if appropriate.

The Role of Line Managers

- Managers have a right to manage but this should include the promotion and maintenance of supportive systems of management and behaviour at work.
- Managers should also recognise that situations may arise where employees' personal lives outside work can affect their ability to deal with pressure.
- Managers should respect confidentiality and work life balance and should be aware that excessive intrusion may lead to increased stress levels.

The Role of the Management Team

The Management Team will work with the Occupational Health Provider Service colleagues and Staff Consultation Forum to initiate, encourage and support activities that promote good health and a healthy lifestyle. They will also publicise and support the use of measures such as the Employee Counselling Service.

Procedure

Stress affects everyone differently and while it is not possible to issue guidelines which allow for every circumstance the following offers a guide:

- When an employee feels under pressure and they are having difficulty coping they should raise the issue with their line manager
- Once the issue has been raised the matter will be discussed and appropriate solutions sought and agreed upon
- Managers should listen sympathetically and take the issue seriously

Review

The Stress Management Policy will be formally reviewed every three years but will also be subject to continual review and amendment.

Appendix 1 Health and Safety Guidelines

What Does The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Expect Us To Do As An Employer?

The HSE expects us to conduct risk assessments for work-related stress, just as they would for other health and safety hazards (set out in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999)

What Are The HSE Management Standards For Work Related Stress

The HSE has launched Management Standards For Work Related Stress. These are not new regulations. They are benchmarks against which employers will be expected to measure themselves. The Standards highlight the six key aspects of work which experts have decided can contribute to stress if not managed properly. These are:

- Demands – workload, work patterns and the work environment
- Control – the amount of say staff have in how they do their work
- Support – encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the Council and colleagues
- Relationships – positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- Role – the understanding by employees and the avoidance of conflicting roles
- Change – the organisation and management of large and small change within the organisation

These Standards are the key to the control of adverse pressures and stress at work and will help us measure our performance in managing work related stress.

Policy Name	Stress Management Policy
Policy Lead	Assistant Assessor
Equality Impact Assessment	
Full EQIA required	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
* In no please provide rationale Policy applies equally to all CSVJB employees and does not negatively impact on any group which falls within any of the 9 protected characteristics	
Date Full EQAI complete	N/A
Date Approved	
Review Date	