



Stress Management Policy

Introduction

Yorkhill Housing Association is committed to reducing and where possible eliminating stress for its employees. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them. Stress is not an illness; however, it can be a contributory factor to many conditions and can cause both physical and mental illnesses.

Stress can result in poor mental health of employees even if the effects are not severe enough to result in a medical diagnosis. Yorkhill Housing Association recognises the need to promote a culture of good mental and physical health in its duty of care under the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Background

Employers have a legal duty to create a safe working environment for their employees. The HSE set stress management standards which focus on six main areas of work design which can affect individual stress levels.

The management standards are:

- Demands
- Support
- Change
- Control
- Role
- Relationships

Full descriptions of the standards and typical behaviours which can be a sign of stress are available from the HSE website at the following link - [Work-related stress and how to manage it - HSE](#).

It is important to distinguish the difference between stress and pressure. In most work situations some pressure is healthy, but stress is when an employee experiences too much pressure, and the effect of the pressure becomes negative.

Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

- Promote a culture of mental and physical wellbeing for all employees
- Increase awareness of stress and what contributes to this
- Provide managers with a clear process to use should an employee report that they are experiencing symptoms of stress whether this is work related or personal
- Provide details of the proactive measures Yorkhill Housing Association will implement to help reduce and, where possible, eliminate stress and its causes

Legal Framework

Although there is no specific legislation on stress the following pieces of legislation are relevant.

- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Equality Act 2010

Definitions

The following are definitions which will be applied in the context of this policy

- **Stress** - the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them
- **Proactive measures** - aims to prevent the harm caused by stress by taking action before it occurs
- **Reactive measures** - actions which will respond to any stress related situation to minimise harm once it has occurred and assist in preventing it occurring again.

Line Manager Responsibilities

Line managers play a key role in promoting a positive workplace environment. It is vital to the success of a stress policy that managers have a thorough understanding of what stress is, what the causes and early signs are so they can work to reduce this within their teams

The line manager's responsibilities include:

- Attending stress awareness training
- To be aware of the signs of stress and intervene where necessary
- Promote the organisation's culture of a physically and mentally healthy organisation
- To manage employees effectively to minimise them experiencing stress
- To ensure employees within their teams are trained to carry out their duties and provided with development opportunities
- To monitor workload, working hours and holidays of employees within their teams
- Where issues of stress arise, intervene as early as possible
- To ensure that a stress risk assessment is conducted with their staff on a routine basis
- Ensure staff contribute to the organisation's stress questionnaires when necessary
- To take steps to assist employees to maintain a state of good mental health e.g. encourage rest breaks, fresh air, and holidays.

Employee Responsibilities

- To raise any concerns, they may have regarding stress at the earliest opportunity
- To participate in Yorkhill Housing Association measures to assist in reducing or eliminating stress
- To be aware of the HSE Risk Management standards and the signs of stress
- To raise any concerns, they may have for their colleagues in regard to stress with a manager

Managing Stress

Proactive Measures

To support the organisation's commitment to reduce the risk of stress occurring, Yorkhill Housing Association will ensure that the following initiatives are implemented and adopted.

Managers training - all line managers will attend stress awareness training and subsequent refreshers at appropriate intervals. Training will also be provided that is supportive of promoting a culture of mental and physical wellbeing across the organisation.

Stress Risk Assessments - stress risk assessments will be carried out among employees on a periodic basis to help inform the team/department risk assessment. This will assist in identifying any 'at risk' areas within the organisation.

Analysing Information - Commitment will be given to review appropriate data e.g. absence, employee concerns, exit questionnaires to help identify areas where stress is or could be a risk.

Promoting the Wellbeing of Employees The following initiatives will be in place to promote a culture of physical and mental wellbeing:

- ⇒ Provide stress awareness sessions for employees
- ⇒ Ensure that employees take any allocated breaks
- ⇒ Manage employee holiday entitlement in order that leave is taken throughout the year at reasonable intervals.
- ⇒ Promote the benefits of physical activity for both physical and mental health.
- ⇒ Ensure that employees are not working excessive hours on a regular and prolonged basis.
- ⇒ Provide opportunities for employees to be active throughout their working day where possible and appropriate.
- ⇒ Offering stress management initiatives (Mindfulness sessions);
- ⇒ Making provision for counselling through an ongoing contract with the CRISIS service (self-referral if preferred); and
- ⇒ Referring to occupational health services.

Reactive Measures

Stress is very individualised and, as a result, it is unfortunate that even with the above measures being put in place some employees may nonetheless find themselves experiencing a stressful period in their lives. This may be caused by work or personal circumstances, or a combination of both.

• Managing Individual Stress Concerns

Yorkhill Housing Association will use the process below if an employee raises concerns of stress.

- ⇒ Manager becomes aware that an employee is experiencing stress
- ⇒ The manager should arrange to meet with the employee within 3 days to discuss the issues
- ⇒ The line manager will give the employee a stress questionnaire to complete and agrees when the employee should return the questionnaire by.
- ⇒ The employee completes the questionnaire and returns this to the line manager
- ⇒ A second meeting is arranged to discuss the questionnaire, identify ways of managing the issues, and any support or interim arrangements that may assist the employee
- ⇒ If appropriate the employee may be referred to an occupational health specialist, for counselling or to any other appropriate service
- ⇒ During this meeting an action plan will be developed to summarise discussions and lay out actions that will be taken by the organisation, line manager and employee
- ⇒ If the employee is absent as a result of stress the absence will continue to be managed in line with *the* absence management procedures, as well as providing the employee with the questionnaire to complete.

If the employee's line manager is a contributing factor to the employee's stress, another appropriate manager e.g. a manager one level above will conduct the meetings.

If it is identified that the stress is being caused by another employee and the employee raises a grievance, then appropriate investigations may be required in line with *the* grievance policy.

If through discussions with an employee a line manager becomes aware of a stress risk, they will raise this in the appropriate way to ensure it is addressed at an organisational level. This will be done while maintaining the employee's confidentiality.

- **Occupational Health**

If deemed appropriate an employee may be referred to an occupational health specialist to help identify any actions that could be taken to assist the employee.

- **Counselling Service**

The details of the service available to employees are displayed on the staff notice boards / intranet or can be sought from the employee's line manager.

General Data Protection Regulations

Yorkhill Housing Association will ensure that employees experiencing stress are dealt with sensitively and in confidence.

The organisation will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own policy Data Protection Policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in Yorkhill Housing Association employee privacy notice.

This policy does not form part of your contract of employment, therefore may be updated or withdrawn at any time. If this happens it will be communicated to you accordingly.