

Stress Management

Introduction

Ore Valley Housing Association (OVHA) is committed to reducing and where possible eliminating stress for its employees. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define 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. OVHA 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 OVHA 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.

Managing Stress

Responsibilities for employer and employees can be found in the [Roles and Responsibilities Guidance](#)

Proactive Measures

To support the organisation's commitment in reducing the risk of stress occurring, the Ore Valley Group will ensure that the following initiatives will be implemented and adopted.

Managers training

The Ore Valley Group will ensure that all line managers attend stress awareness training and subsequent refreshers at appropriate intervals.

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Stress Risk Assessments

The Ore Valley Group will commit to conducting a [stress risk assessment](#) among staff on a periodic basis to help inform the team risk assessment. This will assist in identifying any 'at risk' areas within the organisation. Stress risk assessments will be carried out among employees on a **(insert frequency)** 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 that the Ore Valley Group will review appropriate data e.g. absence, employee concerns, employee questionnaires to identify areas where stress is or could be a risk.

Promoting the Wellbeing of Employees

The Ore Valley Group is committed to facilitating a culture of promoting physical and mental health in the following ways:

- Provide stress awareness sessions for staff.
- Ensure that staff take any allocated breaks.
- Manage staff 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 staff 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.

Reactive Measures

Stress is a much-individualised condition 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

The following details the process that will be used by the Ore Valley Group should an employee raise concerns of stress.

- Manager becomes aware that an employee is experiencing stress
- The manager should arrange to meet with the staff member within 3 days to discuss the issues.
- The line manager will give the employee a stress questionnaire to complete (Appendix 1).
- 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's recovery.

- If appropriate the employee may be referred to an occupational health specialist, Counselling or any other appropriate service.
- By the end of the meeting an action plan will be completed to summarise discussions and what actions 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 Ore Valley Groups' absence management procedures, as well as providing the employee with the questionnaire to complete.

NB: 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 then appropriate investigations may be required in line with the Ore Valley Groups 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 in the employee's recovery.

Counselling Service

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

General Data Protection Regulations

OVHA 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 GDPR Policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in OVHA employee privacy notice.

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