INSTRUCTION 18

STRESS MANAGEMENT

References:

A. Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
B. Management of the Health and Safety at Work Regulations (as amended)
C. HS (G) 116 – Stress at work employees guide
D. The Management Standards

Introduction

18.1 Both Councils are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees and recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

Definition of stress

18.3 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.

18.4 In some cases, however, where pressures are particularly intense and prolonged, the effects can be far more damaging and long term. Stress has been associated with a number of serious ill health conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety and depression.

18.5 There is no easy way to predict what would cause harmful levels of stress as everyone responds differently. Much also depends on pressures outside of the work place and can be family, marriage and other interpersonal problem associated. Line managers will wish to be aware of such pressures affecting their staff in order to provide support and be aware of the possibility of stress.

Action to be taken to reduce stress

18.6 Eliminating pressure from work is not necessarily desirable or even possible within the Council environment, but controlling unnecessary and harmful levels of it will help keep staff healthy, maintain productivity and promote corporate spirit.

You've got mail!

18.7 Employees checking email outside working hours have been linked to higher levels of stress and pressure. Therefore both Councils do not expect employees to look at or reply to emails outside of normal working hours, it recommends that email notifications are turned off during non-work periods.

Responsibilities

18.8 The Councils will;

- Identify all workplace stressors by adopting the management standards approach so as to eliminate or control the risks from stress;
- Consult with Trade Union Representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress;

- Provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices;
- Provide confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors as far as reasonably practicable;
- Provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the Council's agreed stress management strategy.

18.9 Managers/supervisors will;

- Work within the guidelines of the Management Standards, identifying potential stressors, deciding who will be harmed, discussing the issues and practical solutions, recording the findings within an action plan, implement, monitor and review the action plan;
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes;
- Ensure that employees are fully trained to discharge their duties;
- Ensure that employees are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities;
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded;
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that employees are not overworking, monitor holidays to ensure that employees are taking their full entitlement;
- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety;
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction;
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation;
- Ensure employees with access to Display Screen Equipment complete the "stress awareness" training module, located on the Councils intranet, as part of their initial induction and then at least annually https://stedmundsbury.britsafelearning.com

18.10 Health and Safety Manager will;

- Give guidance to managers on the stress policy;
- Provide specialist advice and support managers in implementation of the Management Standards;
- Refer to workplace counsellors or specialist agencies as required;
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress;
- Inform the employer and the health and safety committee of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

18.11 Human Resources & Learning and Development will;

- Assist in monitoring the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics;
- Support individuals who have been off sick with stress and give advice to both them and management on a planned return to work;
- Advise and provide managers and individuals on training requirements;
- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to occupational workplace counsellors where appropriate.

18.12 Employees will:

- Raise issues of concern with their safety representative, line manager or occupational health;
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended;

- Complete the "stress awareness" training module, on the Councils' intranet https://stedmundsbury.britsafelearning.com as part of their initial induction and then at least annually.