

WORK RELATED STRESS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Tayside Contracts values the contribution of its employees and recognises that their health and wellbeing is essential to the delivery and maintenance of quality services to the community.

Tayside Contracts recognises its duty of care to its employees and its legal obligation to provide a safe working environment under the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999).

Work-related stress is an important issue and Tayside Contracts is aware of the potential impact it can have on the health and wellbeing of employees. This policy outlines Tayside Contracts' approach to the management of work related stress and the process for supporting employees who are suffering from it.

Whilst this policy relates specifically to stress at work, it is not always possible to separate the effects of work related stress and non-work related stress. Tayside Contracts is committed to dealing sympathetically with employees whose personal or other circumstances may be causing them to experience stress to a degree where it is negatively impacting on their physical and/or mental wellbeing and on their ability to cope with work.

WORK RELATED STRESS – DEFINITION

Tayside Contracts has adopted the Health and Safety Executive's definition of stress, which is that stress is 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them'.

The way a person reacts to pressure is unique to that individual. Pressure is not necessarily a negative thing and some degree of pressure is expected in all types of work. However, excessive pressure can be detrimental and result in an individual experiencing stress.

Stress itself is not an illness. However, the effects of stress, if experienced for a prolonged period, can have an impact on physical and mental health, work performance, motivation and morale.

SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all Tayside Contracts employees.

All employees and managers have a responsibility to themselves and others to minimise the risk of work-related stress, by behaving responsibly, acting reasonably and reporting any concerns.

PRINCIPLES

Tayside Contracts recognises that a mentally and physically healthy workforce and a healthy working environment are essential to achieving low levels of absence and to the delivery and maintenance of quality services to the community. Tayside Contracts is committed to promoting health and wellbeing at work.

Tayside Contracts has adopted this policy because it recognises the importance and significance of work related stress and does not consider that the Management of Sickness Absence Policy provides sufficient detail on how to identify, manage and control work related stress.

MANAGEMENT OF WORK RELATED STRESS

All Risk Assessments conducted for all Tayside Contracts generic activities should give consideration to stress, as required by the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999). Where it is identified that there may be a significant risk of stress control measures will be put in place.

Acting early to manage work related stress can reduce the impact of pressures on the employee and make it easier to remove or reduce the causes of stress. Managers must be alert for indications and signs of stress in employees and teams and if they have any concerns that an employee or team is demonstrating signs of stress they should discuss this with the employee or team in question as soon as possible.

If the manager is worried that stress or a stress issue is having a negative impact on an employee they should encourage them to seek help or support from their GP. If the manager has reason to believe that something at work has caused the stress they must take action by meeting with the employee in order to identify/agree the stressor/potential stressor and to determine how this can be addressed. This meeting should be convened as a 'Health Concern' meeting, in accordance with the Sickness Absence Management Policy.

Recognising signs of stress in employees facilitates action being taken to stop, lower and manage stress in the workplace. However, signs of stress vary greatly from individual to individual and what may be a sign of stress in one person may not be in another. While there are some common signs of stress in individuals and teams, the strongest indicator is a change in behaviour that has no other obvious explanation.

Common signs of stress in teams:

- Arguments
- Higher levels of turnover
- Increased reports of stress
- Increased sickness absence
- Decreases in levels of performance

Common signs of stress in individuals:

- Increased time off work, through sickness absence, unpaid time off, or other absences

- Arriving late or leaving early
- Mood swings
- Loss of motivation, commitment or confidence
- Emotional outbursts – tearful, irritable, sensitive etc.
- Being withdrawn, or ‘on edge’

Employees also have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and that of others who might be affected by their actions. Employees are therefore encouraged to discuss any stress related issues with their supervisor or manager.

Management Standards

The Health and Safety Executive has identified six key areas of work design that it considers to be the main potential causes of work related stress, which are also known as the Management Standards. Their Standards and their definitions 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

Tayside Contracts is committed to managing these six areas and all jobs and activities are designed with these in mind. By managing these areas effectively and by cultivating a supportive environment where stress issues can be identified, discussed and addressed, Tayside Contracts is taking steps to identify, assess and control work related stress.

EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

Tayside Contracts cares about its employees and a key objective of the Work Related Stress Policy is to support employees, with the aim of assisting them to cope with the situations and pressures that are causing them to experience stress. In order to do so consideration will be given to any reasonably practicable options for additional support. This could include the development of individual stress action plans (template attached at Appendix 2).

Health Concerns meetings should be held with an employee if there is a change in their behaviour or attitude towards work as these can be an indicator of work-related stress, which, if addressed, can stop or lower and manage the employee’s experience of work related stress.

Adjustments to an employee's working hours or pattern, or to their work location may help employees to deal with any changes to, or problems with, their personal circumstances that, if ignored, could impact on their ability to cope with the normal pressures and demands of work. Any such adjustments could be made on a temporary or permanent basis, but can only be made if these will not impact adversely on other employees.

Through the Occupational Health service provision employees can have access to counselling services if there is likely to be a delay in them receiving treatment from the NHS and if this treatment is likely to prevent an employee being absent from work due to stress, or is likely to allow them to return to work sooner.

Protecting Employees

In addition to its legal obligation to provide a safe working environment Tayside Contracts has a duty of care to its employees and an obligation to ensure that every employee is capable of carrying out the duties and tasks required of them and that these duties and tasks are not detrimental to their physical or mental health.

This is done by providing a framework of employment and health and safety policies, safe working arrangements and safe systems of work. Effective communication is encouraged throughout Tayside Contracts, information and training is provided to ensure employees are fully competent in their roles and have opportunities to develop. The Tay Review process is managed in order to ensure that employees are given regular, structured feedback on their performance and that workloads are reasonable and managed effectively.

Manager's will conduct individual stress risk assessments (template attached at Appendix 2) where this is considered necessary and assessments will also be carried out for any employee on request, or on the advice of a medical professional (i.e. Occupational Health, the employee's GP or similar).

Work Life Balance

Tayside Contracts is committed to creating and maintaining a work environment and culture that allows all employees to achieve a reasonable balance between their work and personal lives. A poor work life balance can have a significant impact on a person's lifestyle that may prove detrimental to their mental health in the longer term.

Achieving a good work life balance can increase a person's resilience or resistance to the physical or mental ill health problems that can develop due to work-related stress.

Tayside Contracts encourages a positive work life balance by:

- Encouraging an open and honest culture, where employees feel able to speak up if they believe that tasks are unreasonable/demands are too great, without fear of repercussion.
- Adopting a culture of working smarter, not longer.
- Recognising that, where operationally viable, flexible working patterns (e.g. condensed hours, earlier/later start/finish times, etc) and telecommuting (e.g. working from home, participating in meetings via electronic systems, etc) are a cornerstone for work life balance.
- Ensuring that all jobs are manageable for the employee's skill level and contractual hours – and by providing training or reviewing work arrangements when there is any mismatch.

- Ensuring employees take their annual leave and encouraging them to take their breaks, ideally away from the normal workspace.
- Allowing employees to attend counselling sessions during work time (subject to same provisions as all other medical appointments).
- Providing training for managers to spot signs of stress/poor work life balance
- Carrying out generic risk assessments and undertaking regular reviews of these assessments to identify any practices, policies and/or culture that may be detrimental to a healthy work life balance.
- Conducting specific risk assessments when areas of concern are identified through ongoing monitoring of stress issues.

Occupational Health

Tayside Contracts works with an independent occupational health provider to support our employees and to raise awareness of health issues and support health and wellbeing events and initiatives. In addition to giving professional advice on health issues and providing health assessments, the Occupational Health Provider can:

- Provide specialist advice on identifying and managing stress.
- Support employees who are suffering from or have been absent from work due to stress by advising on their fitness for work, any reasonable adjustments that are required for employees or to help plan a return to work.
- Promote mental wellbeing in the workplace.
- Advise of any trends or specific concerns regarding stress at work.

Any employee who is absent from work for a stress related reason, or reports concerns about stress they are experiencing and the effect it is having on them at work is likely to be referred to Occupational Health for advice.

Sources of Information and Support

There is a wide variety of support and information available. Please refer to Appendix 1 for contact details of some sources.

RELATED POLICIES

The Work Related Stress Policy links to the following policies which can be accessed on the Intranet, or requested from your line manager or from the HR Admin Team:

- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Sickness Absence Management Policy
- Time off for Dependents Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Performance at Work Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Tay Review Policy

POLICY REVIEW

The Work Related Stress Policy will be reviewed at three yearly intervals, or as required by legislative changes.

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

Tayside Contracts respects the privacy of our employees, any personal data processed during the application of this policy will be in line with Data Protection Legislation. Further information on how we may process personal data for the purpose of applying this policy can be found in our Privacy Notice.

Should you have any queries or require further clarification regarding any aspects of this policy or related policies please contact, HR Services on 01382 812721 or employment.policies@tayside-contracts.co.uk

If you would like this document translated into another language or in another format such as audio or large print then please contact Angie Thompson, Equalities and Communications Manager on 01382 834165 or angie.thompson@tayside-contracts.co.uk

Sources of Information and Support

Appendix 1

Name	Website	Contact Number	Email
Breathing Space	www.breathingspace.scot	0800 838 587	
Living Life		0800 328 9655	
SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health)	www.samh.org.uk	0141 530 1000	enquire@samh.org.uk
Samaritans	www.samaritans.org	116 123	jo@samaritans.org
NHS 24	www.nhs24.com	111	
NSPCC Helpline	www.nspcc.org.uk	0800 800 5000	help@nspcc.org.uk
Living Life to the Full	www.lltff.com		
Prevent Suicide – NE Scotland App	http://preventsuicideapp.com/		
Steps for Stress	www.stepsforstress.org		
Health and Safety Executive	www.hse.gov.uk		
ACAS	www.acas.org.uk		

INDIVIDUAL STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Use this form to document the problems/issues identified by the employee, the existing workplace control measures in place to deal with potential causes of stress and any additional workplace control measures that can be implemented to assist the employee. The last column is to document how it is anticipated the existing or additional controls will assist the employee by avoiding the exposure to or reducing the causes of stress.

Note: not all sections will be relevant for every employee/situation

Employee Name:		Manager Name:	
Date completed:		Date due for review:	
Demands – consider issues such as workload (including the associated timescales, intensity and consistency), ability (including training requirements/availability) work patterns, communications (including how employees can raise concerns and whether they are informed of business needs etc.) and the work environment (including noise, heat and equipment issues)			
Problems identified:	Existing controls:	Additional controls:	Anticipated impact:
Control – consider how much say the person has in the way they do their work, including how involved the employee is in what work they do and when and how they do it, whether the employee is encouraged or required to use their initiative, the degree of supervision and whether the employee feels this is the correct balance, whether the employee has the requisite skills and abilities and whether there is the opportunity to develop new skills.			
Problems identified:	Existing controls:	Additional controls:	Anticipated impact:

Support – consider the amount and type of encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues, including on work and non-work issues, how well employees feel they are listened to and whether the employee feels that their work-life balance is considered.

Problems identified:	Existing controls:	Additional controls:	Anticipated impact:
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Relationships – consider how well positive working is promoted to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour, including relationships within the team, Section and Unit, whether there are any bullying harassment issues, how aware the employee is of policies in place to provide support to them/allow them to raise issues and whether the employee believes the organisation cares about them.

Problems identified:	Existing controls:	Additional controls:	Anticipated impact:
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Role – consider how well people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles, including whether there are clear plans of work and how these are agreed/managed, how well the employee understands the role of others, their team, Section and Unit within Tayside Contracts and how well priorities are managed/dictated.

Problems identified:	Existing controls:	Additional controls:	Anticipated impact:
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Change – consider how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation, including whether employees feel they are adequately communicated with/consulted during periods of change and whether employees understand the rationale for change .

Problems identified:	Existing controls:	Additional controls:	Anticipated impact:
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External/Non Work-Related Factors – consider other events in the employee’s life, including their mental health, other health issues (theirs or a family member’s), bereavement, financial situation and any other significant life events that may be occurring.

Problems identified:	Existing controls:	Additional controls:	Anticipated impact:
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Additional Comments:

INDIVIDUAL STRESS ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Use this form to document the problems/issues identified by the employee, the existing and additional control measures in place to deal with these issues and the person responsible for implementing the control measure (employee, line manager, Section heads etc.). The last columns are to document the target date for the control measure being applied (in some cases this will be 'ongoing') and a date to review the effectiveness of the control measure.

In some cases this Action Plan will be completed as a result of an Individual Stress Risk Assessment, in which case this will summarise the findings of the Risk Assessment, as well as documenting the responsible person for implementing the control measure and setting dates for review.

In other cases it may be that a full Risk Assessment is not necessary and an Action Plan can be developed in isolation.

Employee Name:		Manager Name:	
Date completed:		Date due for review:	
Problem identified:	Existing controls: Additional controls:	Responsible person:	Target date: Review date:
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Additional Comments:				