

GILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY



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Document Control

Publication Date	August 2019
Policy Owner	Full Council
Date of Review and Adoption	August 2020
Minute Number	Full Council – 27 th August 2019, minute no. 087
Related Legislation / Applicable Section of Legislation	Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 Equality Act 2010 Employment Rights Act 1996 The Human Rights Act 1998
Policy Author	Town Clerk - <i>Based on the Dorset Council Stress Management Policy</i>
Applies to	All Gillingham Town Council employees and members
Version Number	1
Next Review Date	August 2020
Notes	<i>Based on the Dorset Council Stress Management Policy</i>

STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 Gillingham Town Council recognises its duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees.

1.2 Gillingham Town Council is committed to reducing the incidence and impact of work-related stress within the council by addressing the causes of stress in the workplace and providing an appropriate level of support to employees.

1.3 This policy takes in to account the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and appropriate Regulations under the Act, together with the requirement under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to undertake risk assessments, as appropriate, to identify any workplace issues or hazards that may have an impact on an employee.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all Gillingham Town Council employees.

2.2 Stress is defined as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them' (Health & Safety Executive).

2.3 Work-related stress is defined as that which is typically caused by factors emanating from work practices/environments.

2.4 Gillingham Town Council recognises that stress-related illnesses are rarely the result of work issues alone and that there are often other contributory factors over which the council has no control or influence, but which nevertheless may affect performance/attendance at work.

2.5 This policy does not sit in isolation and depending upon the nature and effect of the stress should be read in conjunction with other relevant people management policies.

2.6 Issues relating to stress may emerge when matters are being progressed through other HR policies. In such cases, referral to the stress management policy and procedure should be made.

3. Key principles

3.1 The aim of the policy is to ensure that when issues of work-related stress are identified, appropriate action is taken at an early stage, with employees and managers arriving at joint solutions.

3.2 Gillingham Town Council will provide advice and guidance for managers to assist them in identifying the causes and signs of stress and how to respond by following the stress management policy and procedure.

3.3 All employees should be aware of their responsibilities for ensuring their own health, safety and wellbeing as far as is reasonably practicable. Gillingham Town Council will ensure that employees have access to appropriate guidance across the range of issues related to the management of stress at work.

3.4 All incidences of work-related stress will be managed in accordance with the stress management policy and procedure.

4. Equality and Diversity

4.1 The policy will at all times be applied in accordance with Gillingham Town Council's Equality and Diversity policy.

Gillingham Town Council will not tolerate discrimination, victimisation, bullying or harassment because of:

- age
- disability
- gender identity
- marital or civil partnership status
- pregnancy or maternity
- race, nationality or ethnic origin
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- caring responsibilities
- criminal background
- trade union activity or political beliefs
- or on any other grounds

5. Monitoring/review

5.1 Gillingham Town Council will monitor the well-being of its workforce through a range of indicators including levels of sickness absence and reported reasons for sickness absence. This policy will be reviewed annually by the council.

6. Stress Management Procedure

6.1 Gillingham Town Council recognises that excessive levels of stress can have a negative effect on mental and physical health. The council is therefore committed to actively addressing the causes of stress in the workplace and to providing appropriate support to employees.

6.2 Where pressures have been identified on particular posts which may lead to increased levels of stress, managers will ensure that suitable support is put in place, as far as is reasonably practicable.

6.3 Gillingham Town Council will not consider the reporting of work-related stress by employees as a weakness.

7. Stage 1 - Informal Discussions

7.1 Concerns relating to stress may be raised either by an employee or their line manager. The use of an informal approach is often regarded as the best option in the first instance.

7.2 Managers are responsible for monitoring workloads and any consequent pressure through the normal supervision process and should discuss any concerns with the employee at the earliest opportunity.

7.3 Similarly, if a member of staff is experiencing symptoms of stress, they are encouraged to discuss this with their line manager at an early stage, particularly if they feel the issues are work-related.

7.4 Where the causes of stress are not directly work-related, the individual may also find it helpful to have an informal discussion with their line manager, so the line manager is aware of the pressures they are experiencing outside of work. They may be able to agree some temporary adjustments to support the employee at a difficult time.

7.5 Where the employee feels unable to approach their line manager, they may contact:

- a more senior line manager
- the committee chairman responsible for staff welfare

7.6 Informal discussions will often result in an agreed way forward but to be effective, solutions must be mutually acceptable. Employees should therefore be invited to contribute solutions which are suitable for them and the service.

7.7 A timescale for implementing any agreed actions should be put in place and a note made of the proposals. Arrangements can then be made between the manager and employee to review at regular intervals the effect of any measures in reducing the employee's stress levels.

7.8 If informal measures are not effective and the stress is work-related, a more structured stress risk assessment and action plan will be required as outlined in stage 2 of this procedure. (See section 8 below).

8. Stage 2 - Stress Risk Assessment and Stress Action Plan

8.1 An employee and/or their line manager may be signposted to stage 2 of the stress management procedure:

- if attempts to resolve issues in relation to work related stress through informal discussions as outlined at section 2 above have been unsuccessful;
- if the employee is absent from work due to work related stress or has just returned to work following a period of absence for work-related stress;
- where issues relating to work-related stress have emerged through the application of an alternative HR policy.

8.2 Stage 2 of the stress management procedure starts with the completion of a stress risk assessment questionnaire followed by the development of a stress action plan.

8.3 Wherever possible, it is recommended that a stress risk assessment and stress action plan are completed while the employee is still at work, ideally before an individual is considering taking sickness absence due to work-related issues.

8.4 If the employee is already absent, the line manager (or alternative senior manager) should contact them by letter or email within 2 weeks of becoming aware of a work-related stress issue. The manager should suggest completing a stress risk assessment and ask the employee to contact them, or an alternative manager where appropriate, to discuss this and help identify any adjustments or actions that may help the employee return to work.

8.5 Where it is recognised/agreed that the stress is not work related, it may not be appropriate to complete the stress risk assessment. The employee can, of course, seek further advice and guidance from their line manager about work or personal factors contributing to their stress and access additional support. This may also include:

- Talking therapies, such as counselling or cognitive behaviour therapy
- Occupational Health service

9. Stress Risk Assessment

9.1 A stress risk assessment is a step by step approach designed to identify what is contributing to an individual's stress in the work environment. The stress risk assessment used by the council has been developed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and is in questionnaire format, to be completed by the employee.

9.2 The individual employee should complete the stress risk assessment questionnaire and returned it to their line manager, unless the plan is being developed by an alternative manager, for example where the line manager may be perceived as contributing to the work-related stress, who will analyse the responses and provide feedback to the employee. This includes a summary of key outcomes compared against nationally recognised research and data.

10. Stress Action Plan

10.1 Once a stress risk assessment has been completed and the feedback received, the employee and line manager (or alternative manager where appropriate) will need to develop a stress action plan to address any identified causes of stress in the workplace. A form is provided at Appendix 1 for this purpose.

10.2 The analysis will have identified any significant areas for further discussion and/or action through the stress risk assessment to help the manager and employee with this process.

10.3 The stress action plan should contain:

- a summary of the key issues identified by the stress risk assessment
- an outline of agreed actions (control measures) that may help to manage the causes of stress in the workplace for the employee
- timescales for implementation of the actions and review of the effectiveness of the plan.

10.4 If a stress action plan cannot be agreed, the manager should seek advice from their own line manager, the Finance Sub-committee and/or Ellis Whittam to ensure that all reasonable steps have been taken.

10.5 If a stress action plan is agreed but following review and monitoring, the issues remain unresolved, the manager should inform their line manager and contact Ellis Whittam for further support and advice.

Signed by
The Mayor of Gillingham: _____ Date: _____

Stress Risk Assessment

A stress risk assessment is a step by step approach designed to identify what is contributing to an individual’s stress in the work environment. The questionnaire below has been developed by the Health and Safety Executive and is based on research, identifying a number of potential stressors in a workplace.

These outcomes should be used as part of a further discussion with your line manager (or other senior manager where appropriate) and contribute to the completion of a stress action plan, addressing the issues raised.

All information will otherwise be treated as confidential.

Please write clearly and check all boxes below are completed.

Name of employee:	
Job Title:	
Workplace:	
Contact email:	
Contact telephone no.:	
Name of manager:	
Contact email of manager:	
Date of completion:	

Please note, additional notes or comments cannot be incorporated in to the results.

Any unanswered questions will be completed as 'sometimes' or 'neutral' as appropriate.

		Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1	I am clear what is expected of me at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
2	I feel responsible for what I do at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
3	Different people at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
4	I know how to go about getting my job done	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
5	I am subject to personal harassment from customers/clients in the form of unkind words and behaviours	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
6	I have unachievable deadlines	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
7	If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
8	I am given supportive feedback on the work I do	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
9	I have to work very intensively for more than 50% of my working time	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
10	I have a say in my own work speed	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
11	I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
12	I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
13	I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department/team	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
14	There is friction or anger between colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
15	I have a choice in deciding how I do my work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
16	I am unable to take sufficient breaks	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
17	I understand how my work fits in to the overall aim of the service	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
18 I am pressured to work long hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
19 I have a choice in deciding what I do at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
20 I have to work at a pace that can feel out of control	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
21 I feel bullied by colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
22 I have unrealistic time pressures	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
23 I can rely on my manager to help me out with a work problem	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
24 I get help and support I need from colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
25 I have some say over the way I work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
26 I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about changes at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
27 I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
28 Staff are always consulted about change at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
29 I can talk to my manager about something that has upset or annoyed me at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
30 My working time can be flexible	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree
31 My colleagues are available to listen to my work related problems	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Strongly disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Agree	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 Strongly agree

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
32	When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
33	I am supported through emotionally demanding work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
34	Relationships at work are strained	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
35	The management team encourage me at work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

Thank you for completing the questionnaire