



GILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Hall, School Road, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 4QR

Stress Management Policy and Procedure

Stress Management Policy

Introduction

Gillingham Town Council is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees.

We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff.

Councillors are provided with the Local Government Association's 'Councillor's workbook on stress management and personal resilience'. Councillors are encouraged to speak to the Mayor or Town Clerk if their Councillor duties are causing them stress.

Definition of Stress

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.

Causes of Stress in the Workplace

There are six main areas that can lead to work-related stress if they are not managed properly. These are: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change.

For example, individuals may say that they:

- are not able to cope with the demands of their jobs
- are unable to control the way they do their work
- do not receive enough information and support
- are having trouble with relationships at work, or are being bullied
- do not fully understand their role and responsibilities
- are not engaged when a business is undergoing change

Stress affects people differently – what stresses one person may not affect another. Factors like skills and experience, age or disability may all affect whether an individual can cope.

Signs of Stress

If individuals start acting differently it can be a sign they are stressed. Managers should look out for the signs of stress listed below and consider whether the stress could be linked to work pressure.

Acting early can reduce the impact of pressure and make it easier to reduce or remove the causes. If managers are worried that someone is showing some of these signs, they should encourage them to see their GP. These signs can be symptoms of other conditions. If there is something wrong at work, and this has caused the problem, managers should take action.

There may be signs of stress in a team, such as:

- arguments
- higher staff turnover
- more reports of stress
- more sickness absence
- decreased performance
- more complaints and grievances.

A change in the way someone acts can be a sign of stress, for example they may:

- take more time off
- arrive for work later
- be more twitchy or nervous
- a change in the way someone thinks or feels can also be a sign of stress, for example:
 - mood swings
 - being withdrawn
 - loss of motivation, commitment and confidence
 - increased emotional reactions – being more tearful, sensitive or aggressive.

Spotting Signs of Stress

If you are stressed you may notice changes in the way you think or feel, for example:

- feeling negative
- being indecisive
- feeling isolated
- feeling nervous
- being unable to concentrate.

You may act differently, for example:

- eat more or less than usual
- smoke, drink or take drugs 'to cope'
- have difficulty sleeping.

If you are feeling signs of stress at work, it is important to talk to someone, for example your manager. If you talk to them as soon as possible, it will give them the chance to help and stop the situation getting worse.

Responsibilities

Gillingham Town Council will:

- Identify all workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. This will be in the form of an annual confidential Working Conditions survey, facilitated by the Council's Occupational Health provider - see Appendix A.
- Act upon any recommendations made by the Occupational Health provider.
- Provide training for managers in good management practices.
- Provide confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by work.

Managers will:

- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking.
- Monitor holidays to ensure that staff 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 eg bereavement or separation.

The Town Clerk/Human Resources Committee will:

- Give guidance to managers on the stress policy.
- Help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Advise managers and individuals on training requirements.

- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to Occupational Health where appropriate.
- Support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their management on a planned return to work.
- Refer to Occupational Health or specialist agencies as required.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.

Employees should:

- Raise issues of concern with their line manager.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

Stress Management Procedure

The reporting of work-related stress will be taken seriously and not considered as a weakness.

Initial Discussions

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

Where the employee feels unable to approach their line manager, they may contact the Town Clerk or HR Committee Chairman.

Where the causes of stress are not directly work-related, the individual may find it helpful to have an informal discussion with their line manager as they might be able to agree some temporary adjustments to support the individual at a difficult time.

Next Steps

If informal measures are not effective and the stress is work-related, the individual will be referred to the Council's Occupational Health provider. The Occupational Health provider will make recommendations to the Council.

Action Plan

The Council will implement the recommendations made by the Occupational Health provider and monitor going forwards as appropriate.

Policy Review

This Policy and Procedure was reviewed by the Finance and Policy Committee on 20 November 2023 Minute no 614a and ratified by Full Council on 27 November 2023.

This policy will be reviewed annually or when there are changes to legislation, whichever is the sooner.

Signed by:
The Mayor of Gillingham

Date:

Working Conditions Survey

This survey has been commissioned on behalf of Gillingham Town Council. Its purpose is to allow the organisation to understand the level of risk to its workforce that may arise from working conditions. Having considered the results of the survey any necessary remedial action can be implemented.

Please answer the following questions as honestly and completely as possible and return the form, **sealed in the enclosed envelope**, to [Name] as soon as possible but at least by **[Date]** who will forward them to us, sealed, for consideration and analysis.

Please answer each of the following 35 questions by circling the option which most closely reflects your current opinion (please choose the response which best describes the situation within the workplace within the last 6-months)					
1. I am clear what is expected of me at work	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
2. I can decide when to take a break	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
3. Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
4. I know how to go about getting my job done	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
5. I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
6. I have unachievable deadlines	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
7. If work gets difficult my colleagues will help me	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
8. I am given supportive feedback on the work I do	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
9. I have to work very intensely	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
10. I have a say in my own work speed	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
11. I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
12. I have to neglect some tasks as I have too much to do	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
13. I am clear about the goals and objectives for my department	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
14. There is friction or anger between colleagues	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
15. I have a choice in deciding how I do my work	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
16. I am unable to take sufficient breaks	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
17. I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
18. I am pressured to work long hours	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
19. I have a choice in deciding what I do at work	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
20. I have to work very fast	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
21. I am subject to bullying at work	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
22. I have unrealistic time pressures	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
23. I can rely on my line manager to help me out with a work problem	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always

24. I get help and support I need from my colleagues	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
25. I have some say over the way I work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
26. I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
27. I receive the respect at work I deserve from my colleagues	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
28. Staff are always consulted about change at work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
29. I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me about work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
30. My work time can be flexible	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
31. My colleagues are willing to listen to my work-related problems	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
32. When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
33. I am supported through emotionally demanding work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
34. Relationships at work are strained	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
35. My line manager encourages me at work	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree

If you have any other information you would like to be considered which may allow the Town Council to understand the risk from work-related stress please include it here - it may be helpful for the Occupational Health Advisor to contact you to discuss this further