



Stress Management Policy	
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Southside Housing Association is committed to reducing and where possible eliminating stress for its employees. Although stress in itself is not an illness, it can be a contributory factor in many conditions and can cause both physical and mental illnesses. Stress on its own can also result in poor mental health of employees even if the effects are not severe enough to result in a medical diagnosis. Southside Housing Association recognises the need to promote a culture of good mental and physical health in its duty of care under the requirement of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Stress in the workplace is not new. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) introduced Stress Management Standards a number of years ago and implemented tools to accompany them which have developed over the years. The management standards cover six key areas:-

- Demands
- Support
- Change
- Control
- Role
- Relationships

2.2 Full descriptions of the standards and typical behaviours which can be a sign of stress are available from the HSE website <https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/overview.htm>

2.3 It is important to distinguish the difference between stress and pressure. In most work situations some pressure is healthy, but stress is when a person experiences too much pressure and the effect of the pressure becomes negative.

3.0 POLICY AIMS

3.1 This policy aims to:

- Promote a culture of mental and physical wellbeing
- Increase awareness of stress
- Provide managers with a clear process to use should an employee report that they are experiencing symptoms of stress
- Provide details of the proactive measures Southside Housing Association will implement to help reduce and, where possible, eliminate stress and its causes

4.0 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Although there is no specific legislation on stress the following are relevant through case law.

- *Health & Safety at Work Act 1974:*

Under section 2 (1), employers have a duty to 'ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare at work of all...employees'

- *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999:*

Requires that employers make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the H&S of its employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work and this includes stress.

5.0 DEFINITIONS

5.1 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.

6.0 LINE MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Line managers play a key role in managing stress within the workplace. It is vital to the success of a stress policy that managers have a thorough understanding of what stress is, what the causes and early signs are.

6.2 The line manager's responsibilities include:

- Attending stress awareness training
- To be aware of the signs of stress and intervene where necessary
- Promote the organisations culture of a physically and mentally healthy organisation
- To manage staff effectively to minimise them experiencing stress
- Where issues of stress arise, intervene as early as possible

- To ensure that an individual stress risk assessment is conducted with their staff as required
- Ensure staff contribute to the organisation's stress questionnaires when necessary
- To take steps to assist employees maintain a state of good mental health e.g. encourage rest breaks, fresh air, and holidays.

7.0 EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- To raise any concerns they may have regarding stress at the earliest opportunity
- To participate in Southside Housing Association's measures to assist in reducing or eliminating stress
- To be aware of the HSE Risk Management standards and the signs of stress
- To raise any concerns they may have for their colleagues in regard to stress with a manager

8.0 MANAGING STRESS

Proactive Measures

8.1 To support the organisation's commitment in reducing the risk of stress occurring, Southside Housing Association will ensure that the following initiatives will be implemented and adopted.

- **Managers training**
Southside Housing Association provides stress awareness training for all staff, not only managers.
- **Analysing Information**
Commitment will be given that Southside Housing Association will review appropriate data e.g. absence, employee concerns, employee questionnaires to identify areas where stress is or could be a risk.
- **Individual Risk Assessments**
Individual Stress risk assessments will be conducted as required.
- **Promoting the Wellbeing of Employees**
Southside Housing Association 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

- 8.2 Stress is a very 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

- 8.3 The following details the process that will be used by Southside Housing Association 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 5 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.
- ⇒ When completed 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 Southside Housing Association's 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 Southside Housing Association's 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

- 8.4 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

- 8.5 The details of the referral service available to employees is displayed on the staff noticeboard or further information can be sought from HR Manager.

9.0 General Data Protection Regulations

- 9.1 Southside Housing Association will ensure that employees experiencing stress are dealt with sensitively and in confidence.
- 9.2 The organisation will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in the Association's privacy notice.

Additional Sources of Information

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/workplace-mental-health/work-and-stress>



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