

## Management of Stress in the Workplace – an Employee’s Guide.

### Introduction

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) defines Work-related Stress as “*the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them*” (see Section 4) However, HSE also makes a clear distinction between stress and pressure, recognising that pressure does not always lead to stress and is often motivational, providing the positive drive to achieve objectives at work.

HSE emphasises, in its publication HSG218 Managing the causes of Work-related Stress <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/hsg218.htm> , the importance of good management practice in reducing stress in the workplace. It identifies the key 6 factors influencing stress levels as being:

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

The University of Glasgow has reflected this in its Policy for Managing Stress in the Workplace which can be found at [http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media\\_177383\\_en.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_177383_en.pdf)

The policy outlines the University’s commitment to the management of workplace stress, as well as identifying the responsibilities of employees and managers in implementing the policy. As an employee, it is important that you contribute by:

- Letting your manager, or one of the support services available, know of concerns you have over your own wellbeing if you feel that you are stressed by your work activity or environment, or if you are aware that a colleague/colleagues may be experiencing workplace stress. Support Services available to employees include:
  - Human Resources
  - Occupational Health/ Psychological Services
  - Counselling through the Employee Assistance Programme. Information at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/health/staffcounselling/>
  - Chaplaincy Services
  - Safety and Environmental Protection Service (SEPS)
  - Trades Union Safety Representatives

More information on each of these can be found in the Policy on Managing Stress in the Workplace as well as on the University website.

- Helping the University meet its duty as an employer by carrying out any role you may have been assigned through the Policy and attending suitable training as requested. Information on relevant training courses is available through the Staff Development Service.
- Reporting any incidents that you believe may be linked to workplace stress through the reporting and recording systems. The University incident reporting procedure can be found at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/seps/accidentemergencies/incidentreporting/#d.en.142366>

## Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is how employers assess the potential risks posed by their work activities to the health and/or safety of their employees. It is a legal requirement and applies to both physical and mental health, and therefore to workplace stress. There are a few different ways we use to assess the risk from stress at work:

### Organisational Level Risk Assessment

- This is conducted as part of the bi-annual staff attitude survey by means of the HSE Stress Indicator Tool 35 question set. This is used by senior management to establish organisational trends and to develop a University Stress Management Action Plan, in consultation with the Trades Union Safety Representatives, which identifies the proposed measures to help address issues raised and suitable timescales for achievement. The question set can be found at Appendix 2 of the Policy.

Risk assessment at local level is the responsibility of the line manager of the particular unit.

### Local Risk Assessment – Proactive

- This is risk assessing activities to identify their potential to be stressful for those staff involved in delivering them. This could include, for instance, staff providing front-line services to demanding customers or under demanding conditions; employees working to strict timescales; employees involved in the delivery of critical services where failure to meet objectives will have significant impacts on colleagues, their service/ school/ research institute or individual students;
- It could include recognising and risk-assessing forthcoming planned changes that could impact on pressures on staff

You may be asked by your line manager to assist in local risk assessments and to attend suitable training to help you with this.

### Local Risk Assessment – Responsive

- This type of assessment would be carried out under circumstances where you let your manager know that you are experiencing stress symptoms. This may be because of an external factor or work-related, but either way it may be possible to adopt temporary or long-term measures to help you back to work if you are off sick, or alternatively to help you remain at work if you are currently finding that difficult.
- This could be achieved possibly by introducing some adjustments to your normal work patterns/ activities provided such adjustments can reasonably be accommodated within the service delivery requirements. Your manager may also refer you to Occupational Health for advice or contact some of the other support services such as the Disability Service, Human Resources or Equality and Diversity Officer as appropriate.
- If the matter is thought to be work-related and likely to be more than a temporary situation, your line manager will work with you to establish the best way to prevent a recurrence. This could be through, for example, providing you with development

opportunities that will help you to respond more confidently and robustly to the stressor(s); through team-building exercises where the team dynamic is thought to be a factor or maybe through mediation where an isolated working relationship is thought to be the issue.

- If a group of employees are all experiencing the same stressful situation, a team or section etc, it may be helpful to ask the group to complete the 35 question set used within the staff attitude survey to help identify the key stressors. This process is most productive when the employees concerned are also happy for the results to be shared and discussed within the team in a supportive focus group in order to identify shared concerns and potential solutions.
- Local Trades Unions Safety Representatives may also be consulted during the process.

### **Ways you can let us know if you are feeling stressed**

If you are finding aspects of your work stressful, you should ideally discuss this with your manager as soon as possible. Your manager may well refer you to Occupational Health for their advice on the best way to support you. This is particularly the case if you have already been off work as a result – see the following section on sickness absence for more information.

If you don't feel able to discuss the matter with your line manager in the first instance, you might like to first meet with your local HR Manager for advice and support.

- P&DR interviews and reviews look at how employees are managing with their objectives. They can also be an opportunity to let your line manager know if you are having difficulties with workload demands, unfamiliar roles or working relationships so that you can agree suitable ways of considering these issues which, if left unaddressed, can become stressful. However, it is important to raise concerns as soon as possible, rather than waiting for your next P&DR review if it is some time away.
- You may also wish to consult your local Safety Representative or Trade Union Representative but, like Occupational Health, the support they can offer may be limited if you haven't already or don't wish to discuss this with your line manager.

### **Sickness Absence due to Work-Related Stress**

- If you are or have been off sick with a stress related condition, particularly if you believe it is linked in any way to your work, it is helpful if you feel able to discuss this with your manager, so that they can make sure you have access to the available internal and/or independent support services, such as the Employee Assistance Programme which provides short term counselling services <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/health/staffcounselling/>, Occupational Health and the Chaplaincy Service.
- If you attend Occupational Health, and you feel workplace stress is a contributory factor to your ill health, it is important that you tell the Occupational Health Physician or Occupational Health Nurse who sees you. Feedback will be provided to your manager on how best to support you to address the issue. This will include advice on the best way to help you return to work and continue at work. This feedback will be shared with you before it is sent to your manager.

## **Role of the University of Glasgow Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee (HSWC)**

- The HSWC is a statutory committee of the University Court. Its role is to review the measures in place to ensure good management of health and safety within the University.
- Its membership includes a partnership of management, student and employee representatives, along with specialist advisors from SEPS, Occupational Health and Radiation Protection Services.
- The HSWC meets four times a year, and on each occasion receives statistical reports on work-related ill health and accidents. These include quarterly reports on Occupational Health referral which provide the numbers and causes of referrals, broken down no further than College Level. This helps the University to prioritise its activities to address any developing trends that the statistics may indicate.
- The HSWC also assists in the development and review of policies relating to health, safety and wellbeing, including the Policy on the Management of Stress in the Workplace, and monitors the progress of University's Stress Management Action Plan.
- The minutes of the HSWC are submitted to the University Court.