### Table of contents

**Policy Statement**  ................................................................. 4

1. Introduction  ................................................................. 4

2. Scope of the Policy  .......................................................... 5

3. Aims of the Policy  ............................................................ 5

4. The legal context  ............................................................. 6

5. Definition of stress  ........................................................... 6

6. Key objectives of the policy  ............................................... 6

7. Roles and responsibilities  ................................................ 6

  7.1. Senior Management Teams  .......................................... 6

  7.2. Managers  ..................................................................... 6

  7.3. All employees  ............................................................ 6

  7.4. Human Resources (HR) including Health & Safety and the Occupational Health Service  ...................... 6

  7.5. Trade Unions  ............................................................... 6

8. Identification of stress within the workplace  ....................... 6

  8.1. Action Pathway A  ....................................................... 6

  8.2. Action Pathway B  ....................................................... 6

  8.3. Action Pathway C  ....................................................... 6

9. Confidentiality  ..................................................................... 6

10. Monitoring and Review  ...................................................... 6

11. Further guidance  ............................................................. 6

**Procedures**  ........................................................................ 6

12. Managing Stress at Work : Procedure for Individuals  .......... 6

**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

12.1. Employee at work  ....................................................... 6

**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

12.2. Employee absent from work  ......................................... 6

**Error! Bookmark not defined.**


**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Agreed at CNG 23 June 2010
1. **Introduction**

Leeds City Council is committed to protecting the health, safety welfare and wellbeing of its employees. The Council recognises that workplace stress is a key health, safety and wellbeing issue and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

Stress can present a range of symptoms, often overlapping and interconnected. The workplace can be used as a setting to address this, whether by identifying and tackling any occupational factors or by providing opportunities for employees to address their personal issues and promote their general quality of life, without stigma, using resources such as the Employee Assistance Programme.

This policy and related procedures and guidance outlines the practical steps Leeds City Council will use to manage stress at work, and details the process regarding risk assessments. This policy both supports, and is supported by, the Council’s Employee Wellbeing Strategy.

2. **Scope of the Policy**

The Policy applies to all employees of Leeds City Council with the exception of:

- staff who are specifically covered by separate policies, for example (but not limited to) teachers employed in schools and staff of locally managed schools.

3. **Aims of the Policy**

The aims of this policy are:

- to set out the commitment of the Council to promote a safe and healthy working environment for its staff.
- to proactively tackle workplace stress by providing appropriate and effective tools to managers to identify and reduce workplace stressors,
- to provide employees with advice and techniques to help promote personal resilience to stress.
- to improve employee motivation, morale and wellbeing.
- to lower rates of sickness absence relating to stress and mental health issues.
• to signpost managers and employees to further support and information on stress related health matters.

4. The legal context

This policy and related procedures and guidance documents are primarily aimed at providing the Council with a framework to manage stress related issues and to improve the health and wellbeing of its employees.

However, the Council also has a duty to fulfil its legal obligations with regard to enabling safe systems of working and stress management. The Council has a general duty under the Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1974 to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health of its employees at work. This includes taking steps to ensure that stress related illnesses are not suffered as a result of their work.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) requires that organisations undertake suitable and sufficient risk assessments for stress and take appropriate action to address issues raised by risk assessments (Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999).

5. Definition of stress

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) 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 reasonable pressure, which can be a positive state if managed properly, and stress which is a natural but distressing reaction to demands or pressures that an individual cannot cope with. Adverse reactions to stress can be detrimental to both mental and physical health.

External factors can also impact on an individual’s ability to cope with stress in the workplace. Therefore stress can be caused by a combination of work and home factors. These factors are all called ‘stressors’.

6. Key objectives of the policy

This policy will:

• provide a framework of documents and guidance to enable identification of workplace stressors, completion of stress risk assessments, and associated action planning (using the Health and Safety Executive’s Management Standards approach in a proactive manner).

• support staff reporting stress as an issue and ensure proactive measures are taken to help prevent them experiencing ill health and absence due to stress.
• support managers and supervisors in providing good management practices, promoting an open culture, and providing strong leadership, in line with the Council’s Leadership and Management Standards

• require consultation and proactive work with Trade Union representatives to ensure effective communication and co-operation on the management of work related stress.

• be supported by an Employee Assistance Programme offering advice and confidential counselling for all staff and managers.

• be supported by an Occupational Health service that enables managers to take a confident and proactive approach to managing stress issues and to offer professional advice and support for individuals reporting symptoms of stress.

• ensure early intervention arrangements are a priority for staff who are reporting or exhibiting symptoms of stress.

• be underpinned by communications and training to line managers to ensure awareness and understanding of workplace stressors and related stress management procedures.

• recognise that diversity and individual needs means that all employees have a different reactions to dealing with stress and therefore solutions need to tailored to the individual

• require that staff are adequately trained to do their jobs and that appropriate review meetings and appraisals take place to consider this regularly.

• support the Council’s commitment that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated and that necessary policies and procedures are followed to deal with reported and suspected bullying and harassment cases.

• promote the Council’s work-life balance policies and promote healthy lifestyles initiatives to help to reduce stress.

• be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure the effectiveness of this policy, procedures and supporting guidance.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1. Senior Management Teams

• Senior Management Teams are responsible at strategic level for reducing the risk of exposing staff to unreasonable levels of pressure at work.

• At local level, Chief Officers and Heads of Service must ensure all reasonable steps are taken to provide a healthy and safe working environment for their staff.

• Senior Management Teams will be made aware of, and be asked to provide direction on, whether additional interventions are required within the Directorate, for example, following high sickness absence due to stress or issues raised via the staff survey.

Agreed at CNG 23 June 2010
Senior Management Teams will be responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy within their service areas.

7.2. Managers

- Managers, in consultation with staff, have a responsibility for proactively identifying and managing risks at local level and for ensuring that working practices are designed to reduce the likelihood of individuals or teams being affected by work related stress.

- Managers are responsible for conducting and implementing stress assessments at local level.

- Good management practice, as defined by the Council’s Leadership and Management Standards, can help minimise workplace stressors at local level. Examples include ensuring good communication between management and staff (especially when organisational or procedural changes are taking place), and ensuring staff are fully trained to carry out their duties and understand (through appraisals and regular communication) what is expected of them.

- Managers should be aware of signs of stress and try to identify, wherever possible, when teams or individuals are becoming adversely affected by work related pressures and act proactively to consider appropriate solutions using the tools provided in the policy.

- The flowcharts in this procedure demonstrate the processes that need to be followed in the management of work–related stress for individuals (see Section 2). In addition the associated guidance to this policy provides advice on the behaviours and actions expected of managers in proactively tackling stress.

7.3. All employees

- All employees have a responsibility in helping to create a healthy and positive working environment.

- All employees have a responsibility to inform the Council, via their manager, if they feel they are adversely affected by work related stressors or are experiencing personal stressors that they feel may be impacting on their work. If staff feel unable to raise concerns via their immediate line manager, they should approach their manager’s manager or a trade union representative, or seek advice from their HR section.

- Employees should ensure that all annual leave and lunch breaks to which they are entitled to are taken and avoid working excessive overtime or flexitime. Employees are also encouraged to seek advice and support from the Council’s Employee Assistance Provider.

- Employees should take reasonable steps to assist in managing their own stress, and to address stressors outside the workplace.

- Employees are also encouraged to inform their manager if they have reason to believe that a colleague is adversely affected by stress.
7.4. **Human Resources (HR) including Health & Safety and the Occupational Health Service**

- HR are responsible for supporting line managers to interpret and apply policy and relevant procedures and to provide support and guidance to enable them to effectively tackle stress-related issues.
- HR and Occupational Health will support line managers to enable them to achieve what is required of them in managing stress at work, through the provision of advice, training and briefings. They will also offer advice and guidance to managers to help resolve specific issues fairly and sensitively and will work closely with both managers and trade unions to achieve positive outcomes.
- HR and line managers will ensure effective support mechanisms are in place for staff experiencing stress, such as the Employee Assistance Programme, and will signpost staff and managers towards appropriate support.
- Health and Safety officers are responsible for identifying initiatives and obligations coming from the HSE, and advising HR colleagues of these; they and will work closely with trade union safety representatives to facilitate safe and healthy work environments for all staff.
- Health and Safety officers will advise managers on appropriate tools to help manage stress in the workplace, in line with HSE guidance.
- HR will facilitate the biennial Staff Survey and ensure results are communicated to services and trade unions to assist in the identification and action planning in relation to stress at work.
- HR are responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and conducting policy reviews at regular intervals in consultation with trade unions.

7.5. **Trade Unions**

- The Council values the role and the support provided by the Trade Unions. Trade Unions are able to contribute to discussions around stress management and raise issues in Council forums such as the Attendance Management Forum, the Health and Safety Committee and the Joint Consultative Committees.

8. **Identification of stress within the workplace**

In order to effectively control work-place stress the Council needs to ascertain whether stress exists, and to what extent, in the workplace.

Where possible, this will be a proactive process, ie the assessment and action planning will take place at group level to minimise potential stressors before issues arise (pathway A).

Secondly, existing information can often help identify and target service areas where stress may be becoming an issue (pathway B).
Thirdly, individuals may report symptoms of stress, whether they are at work or absent from work (pathway C).

The Stress Identification Assessment and Action Plan form is designed to be used for all pathways, and at either team and individual level.

8.1. Action Pathway A

Rather than waiting for a problem to arise, managers should consider the potential increase of workplace stress when conducting a general risk assessment (for example, when planning organisational change such as a major restructure or location change).

This forms part of general good management practice. When planning work related activity and identifying improvements, managers should identify potential issues which may cause stress, and the actions that would help minimise potential those issues.

8.2. Action Pathway B

There are a number of existing tools and indicators that can provide managers with information about the perceived levels of work related stress within the workplace. These can help identify potential hotspot areas which should be looked at more closely.

These may include:

- Results of the biennial Staff Survey
- Levels and patterns of sickness absence
- Turnover rates
- Increase in grievance/disciplinary cases
- Reduced productivity or lower customer satisfaction standards
- Feedback from appraisals
- Feedback from exit interviews

Each of these can provide some useful indications, although care should be taken not to use isolated information which may not accurately reflect the situation.

The setting up of small focus groups would be useful to help explore problems identified and to begin the process of developing appropriate solutions.

8.3. Action Pathway C

The attached procedures are also designed to assist managers in managing stress at individual level (see Section 2).

This policy and procedures provides a formal assessment and action planning tool (in line with HSE Management Standards). The assessment proforma is designed that it can be used at both team and individual level.
### Summary of Action Pathways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management aware of forthcoming organisational changes eg restructure, location changes, new technology, resourcing issues etc</td>
<td>Concerns arising from existing data e.g. Staff Survey results, higher absence levels, etc</td>
<td>Individual exhibiting symptoms of stress to management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Down Arrow]</td>
<td>![Down Arrow]</td>
<td>![Down Arrow]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential for increased stress identified as part of general risk assessment</td>
<td>Is further exploration of issues required and most appropriate method? Eg team meeting, small focus group</td>
<td>Manager and individual meet to explore issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Down Arrow]</td>
<td>![Down Arrow]</td>
<td>![Down Arrow]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of issues and appropriate solutions</td>
<td>Identification of issues and appropriate solutions</td>
<td>Identification of issues and appropriate solutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Down Arrow]</td>
<td>![Down Arrow]</td>
<td>![Down Arrow]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of the stress assessment and action plan</td>
<td>Completion of the stress assessment and action plan</td>
<td>Completion of the stress assessment and action plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 9. Confidentiality

The Occupational Health service and the Council’s Employee Assistance Provider (Care First) adhere to strict confidentiality statements.

### 10. Monitoring and Review

This policy and associated procedures will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose.

In addition, data relating to absences citing stress, anxiety and depression will be submitted to, and reviewed by, Health & Safety Committees and the Attendance Management Forum on a regular basis.

### 11. Further guidance

Guidance, and signposting to additional resources, is available on the Council’s intranet.

If you are unable to access this information through the intranet, please contact your local Human Resources team, or speak to your trade union representative.
12. Managing Stress at Work: Procedure for Individuals
12.1 Employee at work:

Manager is concerned about employees performance / conduct

Manager is made aware that an employee is reporting symptoms of stress

Manager establishes Whether this may be stress related

Manager meets with employee and completes the Stress Identification Assessment and Action Plan

Where stress issues are identified, employee and manager agree actions and ownerships and record on the proforma

Manager contacts HR, Occupational Health or Care First as required

Is additional advice Required?

Yes

Manager and employee meet to amend or add actions to the assessment

No

Manager reviews progress with employee at agreed intervals

Is stress problem resolved?

Yes

No further action under this process

No

Manager contacts Occupational Health to discuss Referral to Occupational Health or Care First and considers additional amendments to assessment / action plan

Version3, May 2010
Managing Stress at Work: Procedure for Individuals

12.2 Employee absent from work:

Manager receives fit note citing 'stress' as the cause of absence

Manager contacts employee as soon as possible to discuss absence and seeks to arrange a meeting to discuss stress matters

Manager and employee complete stress assessment and consider potential actions
Manager may discuss possible referral to Occupational Health & offers Care First support

Manager contacts Occupational Health to discuss referral

Occupational Health advises manager on more appropriate pathways e.g. HR etc.

Is a referral appropriate?

No

Line manager stays in regular contact and manages the absence under the Managing Attendance Policy

Is employee fit to return?

No

Manager arranges a RTW meeting. The stress assessment is reviewed and actions clarified

Yes

Manager completes referral documentation including stress assessment documentation

Procedure can now be transferred to 'Employee at Work' flow chart

Manager is made aware the employee is reporting symptoms of stress
### 13. Stress Identification Assessment and Action Plan

This assessment is a GROUP / INDIVIDUAL stress assessment and plan (delete as appropriate)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Service Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Assessment:</td>
<td>Name of Assessor/s:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Areas discussed</th>
<th>Areas of concern / risks identified</th>
<th>Actions to be taken</th>
<th>Timescales and whom by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td>Areas discussed</td>
<td>Areas of concern / risks identified</td>
<td>Actions to be taken</td>
<td>Timescales and whom by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Factors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Managing Stress in the Workplace: Policy and Procedures

#### Table: Areas discussed, Areas of concern / risks identified, Actions to be taken, Timescales and whom by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Areas discussed</th>
<th>Areas of concern / risks identified</th>
<th>Actions to be taken</th>
<th>Timescales and whom by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Other Issues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- For individual assessments, this should be stored as a confidential document with the employee records, in line with normal retention guidelines.

Signature of Employee: ____________________________

Signature of Manager: ____________________________

Date of review meeting: ____________________________

Version 3, May 2010