

STRESS POLICY

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Lister recognises as an employer, that it has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that its working environment for all employees is healthy and safe. We also recognise that our duty of care extends to mental health as well as physical health at work. We understand it is our requirement to assess how reasonably foreseeable harm is to employees, but also, that there is an onus on employees to make Lister aware that they are suffering from stress.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Through our policy we are committed to providing a supportive working environment that maintains and promotes the health and well-being of all our employees. This includes the organisational environment through effective and sensitive management; enabling individuals to cope successfully with the demands and pressures of work, and providing support for employees whose health and well-being are affected by stress.

3.0 DEFINITION

3.1 The Health and Safety Executive defines work-related stress as “people’s natural reaction to excessive pressure – it isn’t a disease. But if stress is excessive and goes on for some time, it can lead to mental and physical ill health.” Pressures can also arise from an individual’s personal life as well as from work. People vary in their capacity and ability to cope with different types of pressure. Some individuals will recognise that their health is affected and will seek help; others will not recognise or acknowledge that they are stressed, although it may be apparent to their manager and work colleagues. In itself, stress is not an illness, however, there is evidence that stress can lead to mental and physical ill health.

4.0 SOURCES OF STRESS

4.1 Stress may arise from various sources e.g. in the workplace or away from work. Whilst we have no control over the latter, we are committed to identifying the sources of stress in the workplace and trying to eliminate them. Workplace stress may arise from the following:

- a. Poor physical conditions: noise, poor ventilation, lighting or equipment.
- b. Job design: under use of skills, conflicting demands and inconsistent management, unclear setting of objectives.
- c. Work relationships: bullying or other harassment, poor management communication.
- d. Work organisation and conditions: job insecurity/threat of redundancy, excessive workload, lack of participation in decision making, rigid hierarchy, lack of transparency in procedures, lack of support, reluctance to take/not taking holidays, sick leave, etc.

5.0 SIGNALS

5.1 The effects of stress may be physical, psychological, behavioural or a combination. Many effects are a short term response to pressure which disappears once the source of pressure has been removed. If pressure continues it can result in the individual experiencing anxiety, anger and frustration, irritability, intolerance and over indulgence in alcohol or tobacco.

5.2 Physically stress may manifest itself by sleep disturbance resulting in tiredness, tenseness, nausea and dizziness, headaches, weight loss/gain and in extreme circumstances, by chest pains, raised blood pressure and heart disease. Mentally it may show itself by indecision, lack of concentration, memory loss, lack of judgement, loss of motivation and impairment of perception.

6.0 POLICY AIMS

- 6.1
- a. To involve staff in a problem solving approach to tackle stress.
 - b. To manage stress through effective and sensitive management.
 - c. To develop working practices that will reduce the factors which may lead to stress in the workplace.
 - d. To develop procedures to manage problems that do occur and to support individuals who are stressed.
 - e. To increase awareness of stress and methods to combat it.
 - f. To assist employees in managing pressure in themselves and others.
 - g. To monitor procedures and outcomes, and to assess the effectiveness of the policy.

7.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 To help combat stress and achieve a well managed work environment, there will be preventative measures in place at all levels:

7.2 *Employee Level*

- a. All employees will be made aware of the stress policy.
- b. A culture of consultation, participation and open communication will be promoted.
- c. Effective systems are in place for employees dealing with e.g. interpersonal conflict, bullying, racial and sexual harassment, through appropriate steps given in our harassment policy.
- d. A comprehensive Health and Safety policy is in place.
- e. Employees will be encouraged to attend stress awareness and stress management courses, so they are better able to handle the pressures they may encounter.
- f. Employees will be reminded that they have a duty, while at work, to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and therefore they have a responsibility to make management aware of pressures they are encountering at work.
- g. Employees will be encouraged to address potential work problems at an early stage by reporting pressures that they are encountering at work by:
 - i. asking for support from their Line Manager.
 - ii. discussion with the Health and Safety Officer.
 - iii. contacting the Employee Counselling Service for support on their Freephone number 0800 435 768.

Employees will also be encouraged to address personal/non-work issues through any of these sources.

7.3 Management Level

- a. Take account of potential sources of pressure on employees when planning changes to work organisation and conditions of employment.
- b. To provide clear job descriptions which are regularly reviewed.
- c. Give warning of urgent/important tasks and monitor the frequency/duration.
- d. Provide clear objectives.
- e. Be competent and consistent.
- f. Encourage good two-way communication and employee involvement.
- g. Carry out a suitable and sufficient work-related stress risk assessment.
- h. Implement controls which are required as a result of the risk assessment e.g. provide training, information, and where necessary, refer the employee for further help to external counselling services e.g. Employee Counselling Service.
- i. Allow staff to contribute ideas and have some influence over decision-making, especially regarding their own work, and provide good management support, appropriate training and staff development.

8.0 MONITORING STRESS LEVELS

8.1 Stress complaints will be taken seriously, investigated, and resolved if possible. Commitment will be given to ensure problems are not ignored. To help with this commitment the Conditions of Service, and Health and Safety manual will be addressed. In addition to these policies, Lister will carry out a work-related stress risk assessment. This is a part of our Health and Safety procedures. All employees will be invited to take part in the risk assessment and will have responsibility to ensure preventative measures to control risks are adhered to. The significant findings of these risk assessments will be written down. Naturally, these preventative measures will be evaluated periodically for effectiveness.

9.0 REVIEW

9.1 The policy shall be reviewed periodically.

10.0 SUPPORTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Conditions of Service
Equal Opportunities
Discipline and Grievance
Health and Safety

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