

Managing Pressure and Reducing Stress in the Workplace

Policy and Guidance

September 2017

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POLICY

1.0 Policy Overview

- 1.1 This policy and guidance document is a framework to guide school management, employees and representatives in matters of stress management at work. It should be utilised alongside the schools adopted Improving Attendance Procedure and Guidance.

2.0 Employees Covered

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all school employees whose employment is under the purview of a Governing Body.

3.0 Definitions and Abbreviations

- References to school will be any school or academy adopting this policy/guidance.
- In the case of academies Chair of Governors means Director of the Board or equivalent, Governing Body is the Trust Board
- Trade Union Representatives means any representative of a trade union or any other staff representative
- SHRA is the Unity Partnership Senior Human Resources Adviser

4.0 Policy Statement

- 4.1 By adopting this policy and following this guidance school management demonstrate that they are committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees.
- 4.2 The school acknowledges the importance of identifying workplace stressors and aims to apply the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards as a means of reducing workplace stress, along with providing other suitable interventions.
- 4.3 In addition, the school acknowledges that employees may experience stressful situations in their personal life which may have an impact on their working life, and will take reasonable steps to support individuals to achieve a good quality of work-life balance. This includes providing access to advice and support to assist them in managing their own stress, whether or not the cause is work related.

5.0 Principles

- 5.1 This policy and associated guidance has been designed to support the commitment to establishing a culture in which stress is regarded as a serious issue rather than a personal weakness. Through good recruitment and selection practices, a supportive induction programme and on-going training, every effort will be made to establish and promote effective support strategies for all to minimise stress factors.

5.2 The guidance which supplements this policy provides detailed information as to how to identify stress, undertake and monitor stress risk assessments, devise appropriate plans to reduce stress, mitigate workplace stressors where possible, build resilience and support employees through stressful situations and monitor absence from a stress perspective and act accordingly.

6.0 Responsibilities

6.1 The School/Academy will:

- carry out stress risk assessments where necessary;
- form a strategy and action plan in light of a risk assessment, implement and monitor it;
- encourage a school culture that acknowledges stress as an important issue to be addressed rather than a personal weakness;
- support anyone manifesting signs of distress;
- ensure work related stressors are pro-actively managed;
- meaningfully consult staff (and any school based union appointed Health and Safety Representatives) on measures to manage stress;

6.2 **Management / Supervisors** must comply with the terms of this policy. They must take steps to ensure that their management practices and style do not contribute to occupational stress and identify and respond appropriately to stress issues within their team. This includes addressing potential stressors and taking action when they notice changes in staff behaviour or sickness absence patterns that may indicate a stress related problem. In addition, they must ensure that any managers that they are responsible for are meeting their management responsibilities in relation to stress. In the event of uncertainty, managers should seek advice from their Senior Human Resources Adviser and/or the Health and Safety Team

6.3 **Employees** are responsible for co-operating with managers in complying with the terms of this policy / guidance and where required attend appropriate training. They must take reasonable care for their own health, safety and wellbeing, and that of all other persons with whom they have contact with during their work activities.

All employees should be aware of the factors that may contribute to their stress and actions that they can take to improve their health and wellbeing. If employees have any concerns about work related stress, or have concerns about other team members, they must bring this to the attention of their manager or appropriate representative / officer. In addition, employees should complete any medical screening documentation, attend any health surveillance checks that are deemed necessary for their role, and consider opportunities for counselling via the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

6.4 **The Corporate Health and Safety Service** will advise managers and individuals on training requirements. The service will also undertake active and reactive monitoring including audits of services and departments to ensure compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and associated Regulations.

- 6.5 **Occupational Health** will support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their management on a planned return to work; referring to workplace counsellors or specialist agencies as required.
- 6.6 **The Unity Partnership Human Resources Advisory Service** will give guidance to schools on the stress policy. They will provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment, encourage referral to occupational health and the EAP, where appropriate, and advise managers and individuals on training requirements.
- 6.7 **Trade Unions (including Trade Union Safety Representatives)** will support both managers and employees in the implementation of this policy.

7.0 **Interpreting this Policy**

- 7.1 For advice and guidance on the interpretation of this policy, contact your Senior Human Resources Adviser.

GUIDANCE

8.0 Introduction

8.1 The purpose of this document is to:

- Acknowledge stress as an issue;
- Define stress;
- Advise on risk assessment and the causes of stress
- Identify support for individuals experiencing difficulties;
- Recommend management and individual strategies for minimising work related stress

9.0 Defining Stress

9.1 The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) formal definition of work related stress is 'The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work'.

9.2 The HSE make the distinction between pressure, which can be stimulating and motivating, and stress, which occurs when the pressure becomes too great and people feel they cannot cope. This excessive pressure can lead to stress and can have a negative effect on both physical and mental health.

9.3 Stress in the context of work can mean the pressures exercised on a person through the demands of the organisation, the job itself, or the ways a person carries out their job; or it can be physical stress in the sense of the effort required to carry out hard physical work. Stress indirectly related to work could also be caused by external factors, such as travelling conditions to and from work. Whilst it is perhaps misleading to define any level of stress as acceptable or productive, it is clear that one individual's reaction to pressure can be very different to another's. People tend to adapt and react in different ways depending on their life experiences, health, personal circumstances and personality. It is possible that a situation or set of circumstances could be stressful for one person but energising for another.

9.4 Stress involves a reaction to situational demands and may result in a physical and/or physiological response. Where these responses are short lived, there is no lasting harm. Where pressure is intense or continues for a long period, the effects of stress can be damaging (distress), leading to longer-term psychological problems and physical ill health. Equally there are situations where too little demand is made of employees and this can lead to boredom or feeling undervalued; these employees too can experience tension or stress.

9.5 Generally, stress occurs when an individual feels unable to cope with excessive pressures at work/and or at home. It is not a sign of weakness and it can be experienced by anyone as a result of a variety of causes.

9.6 Stress at work is not just a problem for the individual; it is an equally important issue for the employer. If excessive stress is unmanaged, employees will be unable to perform effectively and may have frequent short or long term sickness absence.

9.7 Not only can excessive stress damage the health of individuals, it can also affect their productivity and ability to function effectively at work. This in turn places additional pressures on managers. By raising awareness of the causes of stress and coping mechanisms to manage it we can help to prevent problems.

10.0 Exit interviews

10.1 Exit interviews provide an opportunity to engage in an open and honest dialogue about the employees' views on workload or stress inducers within the school and how they impact on staff.

11.0 Identifying stress in the workplace

11.1 To ensure a healthy and well managed workplace, the school requires its managers to be able to identify employees with symptoms of stress and deal with the issue quickly and sensitively. There is a legal requirement for an employer to actively respond where any employee displays symptoms of stress.

11.2 Symptoms of stress may include (list is not exhaustive):

- Changes in behaviour – an employee may become irritable, withdrawn, or be displaying uncharacteristic behaviour;
- Working excessively and/or not taking holidays;
- High levels of sickness absence;
- Sudden lack of concentration or commitment e.g. lateness;
- Change in their appearance;

12.0 Stress – associated symptoms

12.1 There are many symptoms that an individual can experience when stressed, and these will differ from person to person. Some may experience more than others and the symptoms can be present for other conditions. The lists below are by no means exhaustive.

Physical Symptoms	Mental Health Symptoms	Behavioural Symptoms
Headaches and migraines Sweating Palpitations Lethargy General aches and pains Muscular tension Colds and other respiratory infections	Irritability Depression Withdrawal Anxiety Tearfulness Poor concentration Forgetfulness Disturbed sleep and insomnia Low self esteem Post-traumatic stress	Heavy drinking Misuse of drugs Smoking Eating disorder Poor time keeping Increased sickness absence Accident prone Deterioration in personal relationships

Asthmatic attacks Raised cholesterol level Ulcers Digestive tract disorders Increased blood pressure Thyroid disorders Diabetes Menstrual disorders Heart disease Increased risk of cancer	disorder	
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13.0 Managers' responsibilities

13.1 All managers are responsible for supporting the wellbeing of their staff and ensuring that stress is dealt with accordingly. Communication is one of the most important factors of good management and can prevent or reduce stress experienced by employees.

13.2 As a manager you should:

- Have regular one to one meetings with your employees to allow for open discussion about the work they are doing. These provide the opportunity for both to monitor workload, set objectives, identify any developmental needs and discuss any problems the employee may be experiencing. Wellbeing should feature as part of your regular dialogue with your staff.
- Hold regular team meetings to encourage sharing problems and ideas. These meetings provide the opportunity for employees to feel involved in school development and maintain an interest in the work they do.
- Ensure that you complete the **Team Stress Risk Assessment (Appendix 1)** It is good practice to complete these annually.

13.3 If you have a cause for concern, or an employee has reported that they are suffering from stress you should:

- Treat stressed employees in the same way as those with a physical health problem;
- Discuss the issue with the employee and demonstrate that you are concerned for their wellbeing;
- Ask the employee to complete the **Individual Stress Risk Assessment form (Appendix 2)** and then arrange to meet with them once completed to discuss and action the Stress Risk Assessment;
- If appropriate, refer to Occupational Health and offer access to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

- Where an employee has indicated that work may be a factor, it may be appropriate to temporarily modify work and review this decision at an agreed time;
- Be aware of the impact of stressed employees on other members of staff and manage as appropriate.
- If you are in any doubt about what actions to take, contact your Senior Human Resources Adviser.

14.0 HSE management standards

- 14.1 The HSE have developed management standards as the key to managing work-related stress risks.

These standards cover six key areas, and if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. The table below sets out the standards, covers the primary sources of stress at work and provides guidance on what you can do to help.

Main causes of stress	What can you do about it?
<p>Demands Employees often become overloaded if they cannot cope with the amount of work or type of work that they have been asked to do.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make sure employees understand what they have to do. - Meet any training needs. - Consider whether working flexibly would help the employee manage their demands.
<p>Control Employees can feel dissatisfied and perform poorly if they have no say over how and when they do their work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involve employees in the way their work is carried out. - Consult employees about decisions. - Build effective teams with responsibilities for outcomes. - Review performance to identify strengths and weaknesses.
<p>Support Levels of sickness absence often rise if employees feel they cannot talk to their manager about issues that are troubling them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give employees the opportunity to talk about their issues. - Be sympathetic and supportive. - Offer them access to available support, such as EAP or counselling.
<p>Relationships A failure to build strong and positive working relationships with your team can sometimes lead to poor performance and in some cases disciplinary and grievances.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have open communication with your employees. - Address any issues of underperformance. - Take any issues or concerns raised seriously and investigate them accordingly.
<p>Role Employees may feel anxious about their work if they don't know what is expected of them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure new employees complete the induction process. - Carry out regular team meetings and 1-1s.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be clear with the tasks and work that is expected of them. - Plan ahead so that employees are engaged in the work they are doing and are aware of any changes.
<p>Change Employees can become stressed when organisational change (large or small) is poorly managed and not communicated effectively in the organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keep employees informed about proposed changes and give them the opportunity to feedback their views. - Where employees are worried about changes, make them aware of the support systems in place such as the Employee Assistance Programme.

15.0 Management approach to communications

15.1 Managers are expected to support employees through stressful situations by opening up lines of communication to help identify the support they need. In some situations it may be difficult to communicate due to the cause of the stress, so it is essential that managers know and understand how to speak to the employee in these circumstances.

15.2 The best approach is a common sense approach; to create a culture of open communication in teams so that employees feel they can approach managers for help when they need it. By establishing a strong culture of open communication within a team, problems can be identified and addressed quicker.

15.3 You can improve the way you communicate with your staff by:

- **Listening first:** It's important to listen to what the employee has to say.
- **Being brief and clear:** make sure the employee understands what you are saying and provide extra information where necessary.
- **Making it personal:** Always use face to face communication whenever possible. Pay attention to body language. This will indicate how your message is being received. Also be mindful of how you may appear yourself.
- **Positive feedback:** regardless of the circumstances that are causing stress in an employee, always try to recognise and praise people for the things that are being done well. Praise and recognition may not change the circumstances, but they can help people to react less negatively towards them.

16.0 Stress risk assessments

16.1 When an employee is experiencing stress, managers should request that they complete and return the Individual Stress Risk Assessment form. **Appendix 2**

16.2 You should then arrange a meeting with the employee (**letter of invitation available Appendix 3**) to discuss their comments. Before the meeting, you should look at the

responses that have been provided and begin to complete the Stress Risk Assessment – Review and Action Plan. **Appendix 4**

16.3 The Individual Stress Risk Assessment will give you the information you need to open up a conversation regarding what the employee feels is causing them stress. The forms are designed to help both employees and managers to identify what the stressors are and what action can be taken to help alleviate any issues. There is also opportunity to develop a review plan.

16.4 For further guidance on the process for conducting stress risk assessments, refer to **Appendix 5**.

17.0 Managing an employee who becomes tearful and upset

17.1 At some point, it is likely that, as a manager, you may be faced with an employee who becomes tearful or upset. If this happens, try to stay calm, reassure them and remain positive. You should:

- Tell them it's OK to be upset and that you are there to listen to them.
- Offer them some space, somewhere private where they can compose themselves. A walk or five minute break away from the working environment may help.
- You could offer to take some time away from the office with them, by going for a coffee or a short walk. They may wish to go alone, but if they are very distressed it would be best not to leave them alone. You may also nominate someone else to go with them.
- Be respectful towards what the employee would like to do. Once they have recovered sufficiently they may want to carry on working, take a break or possibly go home.
- Reassure them that they feel valued and you support them, as they may feel embarrassed by what has happened.
- Never just ignore a person even if you are worried how they may take your intervention. Doing nothing could make the situation worse.
- Be sensitive to the level of information that an employee can cope with; when someone is emotional they may not be able to think clearly and take in information.

18.0 Supporting Distressed or Suicidal Employees

18.1 It is important to note that managers are not trained mental health professionals and are not expected to replace the professional support which is available to individuals. However, you may be able to support an employee in immediate distress by facilitating an opportunity for an employee to talk about their feelings. The best support you can offer is to listen and signpost the employee to appropriate support.

18.2 If you notice behaviours which are cause for concern, you should:

- Sensitively invite the employee to a meeting in order to talk privately.
- Advise the person that threats of suicide or self-harm are taken seriously and that you will need to refer them to someone who is more appropriately qualified to provide assistance. Do not attempt to counsel the person or make judgement – refer the matter to the appropriately qualified agency such as the employee's GP, NHS Direct or Occupational Health.
- Employees who are experiencing high levels of distress should be referred to their GP who is the most appropriate point of support. An out of hour's service should be contacted in the event of the GP surgery being closed.
- There may be occasions where you may need to act without an employee's consent, in the interests of health and safety. An ambulance should be called for an employee displaying suicidal behaviour. The police must be called in the event of voiced intent to physically harm another.
- You should seek advice from the Human Resources Advisory Service in situations which require you to support a very distressed employee.
- You should take steps to preserve your own mental health when working with very distressed individuals. You should speak to your own line manager in order to identify any support which you as an individual may need.

18.3 With all of the above it is helpful if the employee is present when making referrals/calls.

18.4 If the employee is distressed, or withdraws from the conversation, it is important that you or a colleague remain with them or take them to a friend or relative and that they are not left alone.

18.5 Contact should always be maintained with an employee – as outlined in the Improving Attendance procedure whenever they are absent from work.

18.6 **Immediate useful contacts:**

- **The employee's GP** (as their primary carer) is the most appropriate person to contact. Details of them may be available on the HR record or you can search for their contact number available via the [NHS website](#)
- Oldham's NHS Integrated Care Centre is located on New Radcliffe Street in Oldham and can be contacted on **0161 621 3400** between 8am and 8pm where they can provide face to face assessments by a Nurse Practitioner who can refer the individual to other services if necessary.
- NHS Direct can be contacted on **111**
- The Schools Employee Assistance Programme and/or Occupational Health Provider
- The School's HR Advisory Team

19.0 Supporting an employee after a traumatic incident

- Employees who may have experienced a traumatic incident, may be vulnerable to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- When you become aware that an incident has occurred, you should establish and record the details of the incident and assign a Supporting Manager to make appropriate arrangements.
- Some incidents (dependent upon the nature) may need to be reported to the Health and Safety Service.
- The Supporting Manager should provide immediate opportunity for the employee to discuss the incident, outline their wishes and be provided with support contact details. Discussions should be recorded.
- The Supporting Manager should ensure the employee's colleagues are made aware of the circumstances, subject to the degree of confidentiality agreed with the employee.
- The Supporting Manager should continue to provide support to the employee at regular intervals – at a minimum after 1 and 4 weeks. Discussions should be recorded.
- Advice should be sought from the HR Advisory Service if the employee experiences difficulties which become unmanageable.
- A referral to the Occupational Health Service may be required in complex cases to ascertain medical advice for recommended support.

20.0 Employee responsibilities

- You must inform your manager of any work related stress or difficulties that may cause stress as soon as is possible. You are expected to participate in discussions in determining solutions to any issues.
- If you are experiencing stress that is not work related, you are encouraged to discuss this with your manager so that any appropriate support, assistance or flexibility can be offered to help reduce your stress.
- If you are experiencing stress and feel that your manager is a contributing factor, you are advised to seek support from another manager, colleague or the HR Advisory Service.
- You will be required to complete an Individual Stress Risk Assessment, **Appendix 2** and then attend a meeting with your line manager (or a designated manager, if appropriate) and as a result of discussions, an action plan will be developed and reviewed.
- You must be aware of your own health and wellbeing and seek advice and support if required.
- You are expected to be supportive of your colleagues who may be experiencing stress.

21.0 Building resilience to stress

21.1 Rather than simply living with stress, learning how to effectively manage stress levels and build emotional resilience can help you feel and perform better on a daily basis.

21.2 Proven ways to manage and cope with stress in your everyday lives:

Exercise

Even small increases in physical activity levels can trigger brain chemicals that improve your mood, wellbeing and stress levels. Find an activity you enjoy and make it part of your life. This can act as a prevention and treatment for anxiety as well as lead to improved body image, self-esteem, self-worth and promote good sleep.

Relax

Learning relaxation techniques can help you calm feelings of anxiety. Practices like yoga, meditation and massage will relax your breathing and help you manage the way you feel about stressful experiences. Meditation, in particular, is tremendously beneficial for managing stress and building mental resilience.

Know yourself and take control

Make a note of when you feel anxious, what happens and the potential triggers. By acknowledging these you are arming yourself with tips to deal with these triggers, you will be better prepared in anxiety- inducing situations. In empowering yourself with a feeling of control over your own situation you can help reduce stress.

Healthy eating

Eat lots of fruit and vegetables and try to avoid too much sugar. Very sweet foods can cause an initial sugar 'rush,' followed by a sharp dip in blood sugar levels which can give you anxious feelings. Caffeine can also increase anxiety levels so try to avoid drinking too much tea or coffee.

Avoid alcohol or drink in moderation

It is very common for people to drink alcohol when they feel nervous to numb their anxiety, however, the effect that alcohol has on how you feel is only temporary. When it wears off you feel worse, potentially more anxious, and your brain will be less able to deal with stress naturally.

Connect with people

Spend time with your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours and develop these relationships. Building stronger, broader social connections in your life can increase your feelings of happiness and self-worth.

Helping others

Helping and supporting other people is good for our mental wellbeing. Try volunteering to give something back. This can give you a sense of purpose and make you feel happier and more satisfied about life.

Keep learning

Learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence.

Be mindful

Be more aware of the present moment, including your feelings and thoughts, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness", and it can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

Faith / spirituality

If you are religious or spiritual, it can help you feel connected to something bigger than yourself. It can provide a way of coping with everyday stress. Being part of a Church or other faith group can be a valuable support network.

22.0 Useful Contacts

Employees who are experiencing stress should in the first instance speak to your line manager. Below, is a list of other useful contacts:

- HR Advisory Service – 770 8138, 8139, 3969, 4996
- Employee Assistance Programme – 0800 111 6387
- NHS Direct – 111
- NHS website
- Oldham's NHS Integrated Care Centre – 0161 621 3400
- AEP – Association of Educational Psychologists – 0161 770 3290
- GMB – 0161 770 8499
- UNISON – 0161 770 4008
- Unite – 0161 770 1943/1944
- NEU – 0161 785 4674 or 07553 375282
- NASUWT – 0161 770 1966
- NAHT – 07976 919338

Team Stress Risk Assessment Form - action and review plan

This form is to be completed by the line manager with input from members of the team. It is recommended that the input should be discussed as part of a dedicated team meeting. The final plan should be agreed by all members of the team. Any actions should be assigned as appropriate and a review planned within a suitable timeframe.

Team	
School	
Manager's Name	
Date of Team SRA meeting	

Work Factor	Possible Risks	Strategy / Control Measures

Review Form

Date of Review meeting	
------------------------	--

Work Factor	Possible Risks	Strategy / Control Measures

Individual Stress Risk Assessment

Please complete this form to the best of your ability, answering the questions as honestly as you can. This information will be used to aid discussions about your stress related illness and identify any areas where support and/or adjustments are required.

The nature and duration of support / adjustments made will be dependent on the needs of the school and must be agreed to by all parties. All information will be treated as confidential.

Name	
Role	
School	
Manager's Name	

- | | Always | Sometimes | Never |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I have achievable deadlines | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I am involved in change at work and understand how this will work in practice. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I am able to pace my work so it is manageable | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I am given supportive feedback on the work I do | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I am clear about what my duties and responsibilities are | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I am able to balance different work requirements well | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Staff are always consulted about change at work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I am clear about the goals and objectives for my team | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. There are good working relationships in my team | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. I have a choice in deciding how I do my work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. I am able to take sufficient breaks | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. I can rely on my line manager to help me work out a problem | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. I have realistic time pressures | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 14. I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the school/organisation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. I get the help and support I need from colleagues | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. I receive the respect I deserve from people I work with | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Relationships at work are good | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. My colleagues are willing to listen to my work related problem | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. I am able to complete my work within my contracted hours | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. I am supported through emotionally demanding work (if applicable) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. My line manager encourages me at work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. I understand why change is necessary at work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Is there anything within your personal life that may be contributing to your level of stress which you wish to discuss?

Do you have any suggestions for your manager to consider as to how they can support you in coping with your stress? These may be short or long term levels of support.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Dear

Re: Improving Your Wellbeing – Stress Risk Assessment

As you may know, we have a policy in place to ensure we address any wellbeing issues at the earliest opportunity. We also have a duty of care to ensure that we provide the right support, at the right time, to any employee to support their wellbeing. .

I would like to work with you to try to identify any areas of stress, whether home or work related, and to look at ways that we may be able to help reduce the impact both on you and the school.

Therefore, you are invited to a meeting with me/nominated manager so that we can complete a stress risk assessment. I have booked the meeting for TIME, at VENUE on DATE. If you wish, you are also invited to bring along a colleague or TU representative for support.

Before the meeting, I would ask that you complete the enclosed checklist and return it to me as soon as possible. This checklist will inform our discussion and ensure that we are focusing on the relevant areas and what support might be required to assist you at this time.

If you have any specific thoughts about what support you may need, please include this on the checklist. The information shared in the checklist and at the meeting will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Please be reassured that this is an informal meeting which will give you the opportunity to outline any concerns and for us to explore together how we can best support you.

Finally, if you have any concerns or questions about the checklist or the meeting, please let me know.

Yours sincerely

Stress Risk Assessment Form - Action and Review Plan

This form must be completed by the line manager, in the presence of the employee. The employee should have completed the Individual Stress Risk Assessment prior to this meeting and this should be used to form the basis of this assessment form and action plan.

Manager instructions:

Please complete all the relevant areas, ensuring that you cross-reference with the Individual Stress Risk Assessment, focusing your discussions on those areas where the employee has marked 'Never' or 'Sometimes'. If the employee has not completed the Individual Stress Risk Assessment form prior to the Stress Risk Assessment meeting, please discuss this with them and ask if they can complete it at the start of the meeting to help inform your discussion. Guidance is available on the intranet to support this process. The nature and duration of support / adjustments made will be dependent on the needs of the school and must be agreed to by all parties. All information will be treated as confidential.

Employee Name	
Role	
School	
Manager's Name	
Date of SRA meeting	

Demands		Change	
Please indicate those areas which you are to focus on by marking the relevant box:		Please indicate those areas which you are to focus on by marking the relevant box:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. I have achievable deadlines	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. I am involved in change at work and understand how this will work in practice
<input type="checkbox"/>	11. I am able to take sufficient breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. Staff are always consulted about change at work
<input type="checkbox"/>	13. I have realistic time pressures	<input type="checkbox"/>	22. I understand why change is necessary at work
<input type="checkbox"/>	19. I am able to complete my work within my contracted hours		
	20. I am supported through emotionally demanding work (if applicable)		

Please summarise the outcome of your discussions:		Please summarise the outcome of your discussions:	
What measures/actions need to be put in place?		What measures/actions need to be put in place?	
When will this be reviewed?		When will this be reviewed?	
Control		Support	
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. I am able to pace my work so it is manageable	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. I am given supportive feedback on the work I do
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. I am able to balance different work requirements well	<input type="checkbox"/>	12. I can rely on my line manager to help me work out a problem
<input type="checkbox"/>	10. I have choice in deciding how I do my work	<input type="checkbox"/>	15. I get the help and support I need from colleagues
		<input type="checkbox"/>	18. My colleagues are willing to listen to my work related problem
		<input type="checkbox"/>	21. My line manager encourages me at work
Please summarise the outcome of your discussions:		Please summarise the outcome of your discussions:	

What measures/actions need to be put in place?		What measures/actions need to be put in place?	
When will this be reviewed?		When will this be reviewed?	
Roles		Relationships	
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. I am clear about what my duties and responsibilities are	<input type="checkbox"/>	9. There are good working relationships within the team
<input type="checkbox"/>	8. I am clear about the goals and objectives for my team	<input type="checkbox"/>	16. I receive the respect I deserve from people I work with
<input type="checkbox"/>	14. I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	17. Relationships at work are good
Please summarise the outcome of your discussions:		Please summarise the outcome of your discussions:	
What measures/actions need to be put in place?		What measures/actions need to be put in place?	
When will this be reviewed?		When will this be reviewed?	

Is there anything that the employee wishes to discuss within their personal life that may be impacting on their levels of stress?

Does the employee have any suggestions for consideration as to how they can be supported in coping with their stress? These may be short or long term levels of support.

Employee Comments:

Signed:

Manager Comments:

Signed:

Guidance for Managers Carrying out a Stress Risk Assessment

No-one should be considered immune from the effects of stress and no job is totally stress-free. If the pressure of a situation is greater than an individual's ability to cope then their wellbeing may be affected. Most people have periods of vulnerability at certain times in their lives e.g. following a crisis in their private life, during organisational change or even when returning to work after a period of absence. The effect of stress can sometimes lead to mental and/or physical illness and absence from work, which sometimes can be avoidable. The stress risk assessment process is designed to support employees and provide the opportunity for them to improve their wellbeing and return to full productivity and/or attendance at work in the shortest possible time.

We all have a responsibility to maintain a positive workplace, but it is an important part of a manager's job to encourage staff and colleagues to discuss matters openly, including feelings of stress, without this being seen as a sign of weakness or failure.

Duty of Care

As an organisation we have a duty of care to support the wellbeing of our employees and our stress risk assessment is designed to support you to speak to your staff, to explore issues and talk about the ways we can support them in the short and long term. A stress risk assessment should not be seen as a test, but be an informal process. It is essential that managers ensure the process is followed for **every** stress related absence (of both work related and personal stress), and also where managers have realised that an employee may be displaying symptoms of stress. The outcomes of a stress risk assessment are also very useful to share with occupational health if an employee needs to be referred for further help. It is important to understand that employees also have a duty to take care of both their own health, safety and wellbeing and for colleagues who may be affected by their actions. Employees should:

- Tell their line manager if they feel the pressure of the job is putting them or anyone else at risk of ill health
- Think of and suggest ways they can work differently to avoid stress
- Speak to their line manager if they think they may be suffering from a medical condition that could have an impact on their ability to carry out day to day tasks, including memory and learning
- Take part in any discussions to find solutions to any issues or / and discuss alternative ways that would help them in their job.

Early interventions

As a manager you need to identify and act on all cases of stress and related conditions as soon as possible. If a member of staff is absent from work due to stress, then you should arrange a stress risk assessment as soon as possible after they notify you of their absence. Each case of stress absence is unique and some people may not want to speak to their

manager straight away, however it is important that you begin the process as soon as possible, and if possible before stress is identified as the reason for their absence. By taking action at the earliest opportunity you will be able to better manage the problem, and this may help the employee to manage their stress and prevent them from either taking leave from work or where this is unavoidable, making their absence as short as possible.

Keeping in touch

You should maintain regular contact with any member of staff who is suffering from stress. Although you may feel that they need time and space away from work, it is important that they understand that you have a genuine concern for their wellbeing. After their first week of absence, it may be appropriate for you to agree the regularity and method of contact; telephone conversation and/or face-to-face welfare meetings.

Depending on the reason for the employee's stress, it may sometimes be necessary to nominate a peer manager to make contact with them. This does not replace the line manager's formal role, but acts as a way to help maintain the support network for the employee with work. Direct line managers will need to continue to manage the employee through the Improving Attendance procedure, where required.

Invitation to the meeting

Before starting the stress risk assessment process, it is essential that you speak to the employee to explain its purpose and offer them the opportunity to ask any questions.

Provide them with a copy of the individual Stress Risk Assessment and a letter of invitation. Employees are also invited to bring a trade union representative or colleague to the meeting to act as support.

Employees are asked to complete the checklist and return this to their manager before they carry out the Stress Risk Assessment. The checklist gives the employee opportunity to consider work related factors and to identify if any of these may be contributing to their stress. There is also an opportunity for the employee to outline any personal stress factors.

Preparing for the meeting

It is essential that managers carry out the required preparation of the scheduled Stress Risk Assessment before meeting with the employee.

Once the employee's completed checklist has been received the manager should map their responses across to the template **Stress Risk Assessment** so that areas of concern can easily be identified.

Once this has been completed, you will be able to easily identify the areas for concern allowing the meeting to focus on these themes and identify possible interventions that may help in minimising stress. By carrying out this preparation, you will also have the opportunity to consider the practicalities of any interventions and plan the meeting so that it focuses on agreeing the support needed.

Focused discussions

The Stress Risk Assessment form has been designed to help you focus your discussions. The meeting should concentrate on any areas of work that the employee has suggested may concern them and the possible interventions which could be put in place to help prevent their stress whilst also taking into account the needs of the school. Discussions should be summarised on the form and agreed actions logged, together with agreed timescales for review. The timing of the review meeting should also be recorded on the form to create a simple audit of agreed actions over a period of time.

Ideas for support

There are many different types of support / actions / interventions which managers may wish to consider putting in place for an employee. Looking at the stress factors outlined in the **Stress Risk Assessment** form, examples of interventions which a manager may wish to consider include;

Demands:

- Does the employee have a personal work plan to help them structure their work?
- Does the employee identify skills gaps for new work and can these be addressed through training and support?
- Would the employee benefit from skills training in dealing with difficult situations?
- Does workload manageability need to be discussed in scheduled meetings on a more regular basis?
- Can additional resources be made available to help in times of particular high demand?
- Are measures in place to ensure employees do not work excessive hours and can take breaks such as the job will permit?

Control:

- Are measures in place to empower employees to make decisions about how they work?
- Does the employee have sufficient input into work planning?
- Is there opportunity for any flexible working arrangements to help with work / life balance pressures?
- Can work be assigned to teams to allow individuals to contribute to work design / task allocation?

Role:

- Is the employee's role clearly defined in their job description? Do they have a copy?
- Does the employee need to revisit aspects of their induction?
- Would the employee benefit from more regular one to ones?
- Would the employee benefit from any skills or knowledge training?

Relationships:

- Are there any serious relationship problems in the team which may require managerial action?
- Is there zero tolerance of disrespectful behaviour between colleagues? Does this require reinforcement?
- Are there any relationship issues with other parties beyond the team which require manager action?

Change:

- Do any proposals for change require further communication? How is the consultation process for change managed? Could this be improved?
- Has the employee had sufficient time and opportunity to contribute to the change process? Is further opportunity required / possible?

Support:

- Will a phased return to work or partial reallocation of duties be possible in the short term?
- Is a review of workload amongst colleagues required to adjust for new priorities, staff absence or other unplanned events?
- Would the employee benefit from additional supportive feedback on their performance?
- How can the employee's return to work be best supported? (if applicable)
- Is the employee aware of additional support available to them? e.g. Employee Assistance Programme.

Duration of measures

It is important for both the manager and employee to agree the duration of any measures or interventions which are to be put into place. It is likely that most interventions will be for a short period of time, subject to an agreed review date. Short term measures would include temporary changes to hours or workload, or additional levels of support.

It may also be necessary to discuss more long term measures. This could be a permanent reduction in hours or change to working patterns with a change to contract.

Signposting employees

Employees should be signposted to additional support which is available to anyone experiencing stress;

- HR Advisory Service – ext 8138, 8139, 3969, 3220, 4996
- Employee Assistance Programme – 0800 030 5182
- NHS Direct – 111
- Oldham's NHS Integrated Care Centre – 0161 621 3400
- AEP – Association of Educational Psychologists – 0161 770 3290
- GMB – 0161 770 8499
- Unison – 0161 770 4008
- Unite – 0161 770 1943/1944

Confirming agreed actions

Once the Stress Risk Assessment form has been completed and agreed it is important to confirm the actions and outcomes of the meeting and this should be done in writing. It would be helpful to include a copy of the completed Stress Risk Assessment with the letter. It may also be appropriate to confirm the arrangements for agreed review meetings in the letter.

Regular and ongoing review

As stated, it is essential that the Stress Risk Assessment meeting is followed up with further review meetings to review progress. The first Stress Risk Assessment review meeting should be scheduled around four weeks of the original Stress Risk Assessment meeting and further meetings carried out on a timely basis. If the employee is in work, reviews could be carried out as part of their regular one to one meetings, or additional ones scheduled if necessary.

Further support for managers

It is important to note that managers are not trained mental health professionals and are not expected to replace the professional support which is available to individuals. Managers are encouraged to speak to their HR Advisor for advice and guidance when dealing with cases of stress and, if required, make a referral to the Occupational Health Service. The purpose of this referral will be to ascertain independent medical advice from a trained health practitioner. The manager can then use this advice, along with the stress risk assessment to plan any relevant support and care for the employee.

Record of document review and amendments		
Date	Amended by	Comments
September 2017	AS	New policy