



# Kingsteignton Town Council

## WORK RELATED STRESS POLICY

### Definition of Stress

The Health and Safety Executive 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 pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.

### Introduction

This is a supporting document to the Health and Safety Policy.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires us to take reasonable steps to look after our employees’ mental health and welfare. This means that we need to ensure that staff do not have excessive demands placed on them by their job. However, we are entitled to assume that all staff can cope with the normal day-to-day challenges of their job. If this is not the case, staff have a duty to inform us.

Pressure is not always bad, as a certain amount of pressure and stimulation can be a positive force that motivates particularly when there are deadlines or targets to be met. It is when an individual feels that they cannot cope and can see no end to the pressures they are feeling that signs of stress may occur.

The Council recognises that there are occasions when pressures at work and/or home can affect people’s behaviour and their ability to cope. When an individual is suffering from stress both the health and performance of the individual is adversely affected which in turn has an adverse impact on colleagues and the organisation.

### Statement

The Council recognises that.

- Anyone can suffer from stress.
- That stress is not a mental illness, but the natural adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures and demands imposed on them.
- That there can be beneficial effects of *reasonable* pressure and challenge.
- People have a varying ability to deal with the pressures encountered in life and some people are particularly vulnerable but if the emotional and physical demands on a person are greater than their capacity to cope, ill health may occur.
- That ill health can often be caused by stress due to problems outside work which may then affect the employee’s performance and relationships at work.
- Individuals who are suffering from stress *for whatever reason* must have support and access to help.

## **Our Commitment to You**

*The Council recognises work-related pressure and stress as a genuine health and safety issue.*

*The Council is committed to fulfilling its health and safety duties by reducing the causes of work-related pressure and stress. We will achieve this by working together with staff to minimise stress in the workplace and through working with individuals affected by stress – whether work related or of a personal nature – to mitigate the adverse effects of stress. The Council believes all staff can participate in this process by doing whatever they reasonably can to reduce work-related stress.*

## **Organisation**

### **Responsibilities of the Clerk**

To prevent and manage work-related stress, you need to:

- Accept that work-related stress might be a problem for your staff.
- Understand what work-related stress is and the relationship between work and home stress.
- Listen to your staff, both individually or as a team, and act on what you find out.
- Set expectations with your staff, so that they understand what you can and cannot do for them.
- Make time to tackle stress properly, ensuring that you are approachable and available to discuss issues of concern with individual members of staff.

It is the responsibility of the Clerk to ensure that.

- They have set clear objectives, have good communication channels, involve staff in decision making, provide management support and appropriate training.
- They set realistic deadlines, plan, and agree working hours, look at flexibility in work schedules.
- Tasks and responsibilities are well defined, ways of avoiding boring repetitive jobs are considered, skills are used appropriately, suitable training is provided.
- Staff are treated with respect and dignity, training is available in interpersonal skills, effective systems are in place for dealing with interpersonal conflict e.g., bullying or harassment.
- They assess the risk of stress to their staff and implement recommendations of risk assessments. Measures are put into place to address jobs with high demands/pressures.
- They discuss with the employee the findings of the risk assessment, if appropriate, make changes to their role to reduce the levels of stress experienced, referring to Ellis Whittam where appropriate.
- They attend training as requested in good management practice and health and society.

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Updated March 2023

Review date: March 2025

Reviewed: Bi annually



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- There are good communications between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational procedural changes.
- Staff are full trained to discharge their duties and workloads are monitored to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking. Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement.
- They are vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g., bereavement or separation.
- They seek help/advice when required – support and advice are available.

## Responsibilities of Employees

It is each employee's responsibility to:

- Take a share in the joint responsibility of management of health and stress hazards in the workplace.
- Raise issues of concern about anything that may lead to stress or other health related hazards.
- Accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.
- Take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing by:
  - Working healthily
  - Taking regular breaks, rest, and holidays
  - Supporting one another

## Arrangements

The Council will:

- Identify all workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.
- Provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in the management of stress.
- Monitor stress.
- Provide initiatives which have various health benefits and may help to reduce stress and help staff relax.
- Provide confidential counselling.
- Provide training in spotting symptoms of stress in themselves and in staff.
- Provide adequate resources to implement the Council's agreed stress management strategy.
- Provide access to confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.

## The HSE's Stress Management standards

As an employer, we have a duty to ensure that risks arising from work activity are properly controlled. The HSE's Management Standards approach was designed to help employers

work with their employees and their representatives to undertake risk assessments for stress and give the Clerk the help need to achieve these aims.

The HSE's Management Standards highlight the six key areas of work design that, if not properly management, may be associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity, and increased sickness/absence. In words, the six Management Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work (stressors). If we can achieve these standards, there is a lower likelihood that our staff will be adversely affected by stress.

The stressors are:

- Demands – such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- Control – such as how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
- Support – such as the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, Clerk, and colleagues.
- Relationships – such as promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- Role – such as whether people understand their role within the Council and whether the Council ensure that they do not have conflicting roles.
- Change – such as how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated.

### **Monitoring Stress**

Taking action to reduce stress can result in better health, reduced sickness absence, increased performance, and output, better working relationships and lower staff turnover.

### **What to do if you feel you are suffering from work related stress**

Should any member of staff feel that they are suffering from an unacceptable level of work-related stress, they should inform their Clerk, if this is the Clerk, she/he should inform the Mayor, who will treat the matter with sympathy and in confidence.

If you have been off work with a stress-related illness, talk about it with the Clerk when you return. Say how you fell, explain what led to the event and what you would like to see happen.



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Kingsteignton Town Council has declared a 'Climate Emergency'

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