

Adopted: July 2023

MANAGING STRESS AND PROMOTING WELLBEING

PURPOSE

Age UK Cambridgeshire & Peterborough (AUKCAP) is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace environment and improving the quality of working lives for all our employees. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors. Managing work-related stress presents a challenge and can be difficult to identify and tackle, it is a major cause of occupational ill health, leading to sickness absence, high staff turnover and effectiveness in the workplace. Adopting a proactive approach to ensure a safe and healthy working environment contributes to the motivation, job satisfaction, performance and creativity of all our employees.

AUKCAP is committed to promoting health and wellbeing, preventing work-related stress and providing support to any employee who may suffer with stress.

SCOPE

This policy outlines the responsibility of the organisation, and all employees and volunteers in managing stress and promoting individuals wellbeing.

The term employees will be used throughout this document to refer to trustees, employees and volunteers.

POLICY

Stress is defined by the Health & Safety Executive 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. The point at which workplace pressures become excessive will, of course, vary with individual levels of tolerance and with levels of pressure in other areas of life at particular times.

Stress may affect people in a variety of ways, and in serious cases may be a causative factor of a physical or mental illness. When stress is not controlled, the individual affected may experience physical, psychological or behavioural symptoms (see appendix 1 for list of symptoms).

Stress can also have organisational impacts, including increased absence, higher turnover, poor performance and productivity, increased accidents, lower morale and employee motivation and increased employee complaints.

AUKCAP aims to minimise the risk of stress through a risk management process involving the identification, assessment and implementation of control measures to workplace stressors. It is important to take prompt action to prevent, minimise and manage stress. AUKCAP therefore commit to the following actions:

Prevention

- To identify all potential workplace stressors via service and workplace risk assessments, and to take steps to eliminate or control the risks from all stressors identified.
- To ensure all employees receive sufficient training, refreshed regularly, to complete their roles effectively.
- To ensure adequate preparation for new roles and responsibilities through risk assessment and training.
- To ensure new employees are adequately supported and prepared for their roles through the Induction on-boarding process.
- To conduct regular one-to-ones between line managers and their direct reports, including discussions about the employee's wellbeing, workload, training needs and any concerns they have that are impacting their working lives.
- To ensure regular contact both virtual and face to face within individual teams, to maintain good communication and reduce feelings of isolation, particularly among remote workers.
- To ensure regular and effective two-way communication across the organisation through regular bulletins, staff meetings and email communications, especially during and prior to periods of organisational change.
- To ensure clear job descriptions for all roles that clarify roles, responsibilities and tasks, and a well-defined organisational structure
- To acknowledge and consider the impact of technostress when selecting and implementing new technology and software, and to ensure employees are adequately supported during periods of technological change.
- To have clear HR policies and procedures in place which are acted on consistently.
- To provide adequate resources to line managers to implement the organisation's stress and wellbeing strategy.

Detection and Action

- To conduct individual stress risk assessments where an employee is experiencing work-related stress and to agree reasonable actions with the individual to eliminate or control the risks from all stressors identified.

- To raise general awareness of stress among employees via staff communications, meetings and supervisions.
- To provide training for line managers on spotting the early signs of stress and taking action to provide appropriate interventions, particularly in remote workers.
- To consult employees on the presence of stressors via the service/workplace risk assessment process, team and staff meetings and staff surveys.
- To investigate absence and consider work-related stress as a possible underlying cause.
- To provide support to employees on their return to work after any period of sick leave, and ensure steps are taken to prevent the recurrence of work-related stress.
- To provide a confidential counselling service via the Employee Assistance Programme for all employees.
- To respond to any complaints and grievances promptly in line with HR policies and procedures.
- To provide trained Mental Health First Aiders in each service.
- To promote healthy initiatives such as smoking cessation, to improve general employee wellbeing.

Monitoring

- To monitor stress-related absence rates within each team to assess the effectiveness of control measures to eliminate and control the risk of work-related stress.
- To review service and workplace risk assessments at least annually.
- To conduct regular staff surveys to understand staff concerns and identify stress hotspots.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Trustees and Chief Executive Officer hold ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for ensuring sufficient resources are made available to support the implementation.

The **Chief People Officer** has responsibility for

- The development and implementation of all HR policies and associated procedures
- The investigation of sickness absence and supervising the return-to-work process.
- The selection of the Employee Assurance Programme provider, monitoring its effectiveness and promoting its services to staff.
- Giving guidance to line managers on the Managing Stress and Promoting Wellbeing Policy and delivering training on stress awareness.
- Training and supporting managers in implementing stress risk assessments.

- Establishing a network of Mental Health First Aiders within the organisation.
- Helping to monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Providing continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to EAP counsellors or other external sources of support where appropriate.

The **Health and Safety Manager** has responsibility for:

- Writing, reviewing and updating the Managing Stress and Promoting Wellbeing Policy and all associated documentation.
- Conducting and reviewing all service and workplace risk assessments with the involvement of the relevant line managers and staff.
- Training and supporting managers in implementing the Managing Stress and Promoting Policy and stress risk assessments.
- Providing stress awareness training to line managers.
- Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the Managing Stress and Promoting Wellbeing Policy and all measures to reduce stress.
- Supporting the network of Mental Health First Aiders and monitoring completion of all relevant MHFA training.
- Directly consulting staff on measures to reduce stress, including conducting workplace surveys.
- Informing the organisation of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.
- Promoting workplace health and safety at every opportunity.

Line Managers (**Senior Leadership Team, Service Managers and Team Leaders**) are responsible for:

- Working with the H&S Manager to conduct service/workplace risk assessments and implementing recommendations of risks assessments within their area of responsibility.
- Conducting individual stress risk assessments with their employees where concerns are noted or raised.
- Ensuring good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensuring staff are fully trained to carry out their duties and provide staff with meaningful developmental opportunities where required or requested.
- Ensuring staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads 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.

- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their area of responsibility.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g., bereavement or separation.
- Supporting individuals who have been off sick with stress and working with the Chief People Officer to support a phased return to work.

Employees are responsible for:

- Raising any concerns with their line manager, the H&S Manager or Chief People Officer.
- Accepting opportunities for counselling when recommended.
- Cooperating with their line managers when a stress risk assessment is recommended and implemented.
- Looking after their own wellbeing.

MONITORING

This Policy will be reviewed every 24 months.

Managing Stress and Promoting Wellbeing Policy approved: July 2023



Signed by Chair of Trustees

Appendix 1

When stress is not controlled, an individual may experience any of the following (list is not exhaustive):

- Physical symptoms such as sleep disturbance, headaches, gastrointestinal upset, raised blood pressure, suppressed immune system and increased risk of cardiovascular disease.
- Psychological symptoms such as anxiety, irritability and depression, loss of concentration, lack of motivation, difficulty with thought process and loss of memory, and difficulty making decisions.
- Behavioural symptoms such as substance misuse including alcohol, drugs and food, poor punctuality, isolation, inappropriate behaviour and decreased libido.

Appendix 2

Key causes of work related stress:

- Demands – workload, work patterns and the working environment.
- Control – how much say an employee has in how they do their work.
- Work relationships – Poor or unsupportive relationships with colleagues and/or line managers can be a potential source of pressure.
- Resources – individuals need to feel they have appropriate training, equipment and resources to perform their job effectively.
- Role – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures employees do not have conflicting roles
- Change – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation