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| **Human Resources** | **HR43 Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing at Work** |

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**EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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**POLICY VALIDITY STATEMENT**

Policy users should ensure that they are consulting the currently valid version of the documentation. The policy will remain valid, including during its period of review. However, the policy must be reviewed at least once in every 3-year period.

**ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION STANDARDS**

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as easy read, large text, braille or an alternative language please contact [necsu.icbhr@nhs.net](mailto:necsu.icbhr@nhs.net)

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# Policy Statement

* 1. Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing at work is central to delivering Government policy and commitment to improving the health and wellbeing of the workforce. The Organisation recognises that good mental health and wellbeing are associated with improved outcomes for individuals including longevity, physical health, employment status and productivity. It also recognises the importance of maintaining and improving the mental health and wellbeing of its employees and is committed to implementing measures which encourage a healthy workforce.
  2. The organisation acknowledges that certain working conditions and practices can negatively affect employees’ mental wellbeing, including aspects of work organisation, management, environmental and social conditions that have the potential for psychological as well as physical harm. The Organisation recognises the importance of identifying and reducing potential stressors in the work environment as far as possible. The aim of this policy therefore is to provide a framework from which the organisation can support employees in the maintenance of their mental health and psychological wellbeing at work.
  3. This policy has been written to provide guidance for managers and staff, and it is intended that the information be used by managers to develop a positive culture of good mental health and psychological wellbeing in the workplace. The policy has been developed in conjunction with Health & Safety and Occupational Health.

# Principles

## Definitions

* + 1. The World Health Organisation defines Mental Health as: “a state of well-being in which an individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”. Mental health problems can range from mild distress arising from, for example, relatively short-lived life events through to severe illness of a longer-term duration. The more common problems include anxiety, depression and other stress related disorders. Any increase in stress levels can cause problems with working relationships and work performance.
    2. Stress is a term that can mean different things to different people. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) definition of stress is “*the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them*”. There is a clear distinction between pressure, which can be positive if managed correctly and stress which can be detrimental to health.
    3. The HSE provide a definition of positive stress which identifies that a certain level of pressure and challenge at work can actually optimise performance, it is therefore important to note that its occurrence is not always a negative factor. However, the Organisation is aware that for some people, demands placed upon them may impact on their ability to work effectively. The experience of undue pressure can lead to stress, which may impact on their psychological wellbeing.
    4. A person’s mental health and psychological wellbeing can be affected by factors in the workplace as well as outside of it and often stress caused by work will impact on a person’s outside life, and vice versa. The World Health Organisation defines Wellbeing as: “***a positive state of mind and body, feeling safe and able to cope, with a sense of connection of people, communities and the wider environment***”***.***
    5. Guidance from the HSE identifies that everyone is individual and what one person finds stressful, another will consider a challenge. A persons coping ability may be affected by various factors including the occurrence of negative life events as well as their own personality traits and level of social support available.

## Aim

This policy aims to reflect the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards for Work Related Stress 2004 (see section 3.1).

* + 1. The Organisation recognises and accepts its responsibility as an employer to provide a safe and healthy working environment, for all its employees as required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The reference to health in the Act applies to both the physical and psychological wellbeing of employees.
    2. Causes of stress in the workplace are a health and safety issue, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999) imposes specific legal duties on employers, one of which is to assess health and safety risks to employees and to identify control measures to reduce risks, including stress.
    3. The Organisation is committed to promoting the mental health and psychological wellbeing of its staff. It is the responsibility of the organisation to minimise as far as possible those risks to mental health which arise from a person’s work and to support those who are experiencing psychological problems as a result of work related issues.
    4. Individuals also need to take responsibility for promoting their own general health and wellbeing in the workplace.
    5. Research has shown the links between high levels of stress and errors, but also that interventions exist to lower both, (HSE Research Report 488, 2006).
    6. The Organisation recognises that by promoting positive mental health in staff, this will improve the quality of employees working lives but also the quality of their work. The overall effectiveness of the organisation should also be improved by reducing the costs associated with mental health related sickness absence in employees, high levels of staff turnover and complaints from service users.

## Strategies

* 1. The HSE has identified that there are 3 levels of intervention that can be applied to managing stress and enhancing psychological wellbeing at work:

1. Identifying and removing potential sources of stress in the workplace (*Primary)*
2. Helping individuals to develop coping strategies for dealing with stress *(Secondary)*
3. Treating and supporting those members of staff who are already experiencing symptoms of psychological wellbeing difficulties *(Tertiary)*
   * 1. The main emphasis should be on developing strategies to prevent stress, i.e. primary prevention.
     2. The Organisation managers will be supported to be able to undertake risk assessments. Training on the policy is provided by Human Resources and there are NHS national tools available on the NHS peoples website.
     3. There are certain stressors within the workplace which are difficult to prevent or avoid, for example, exposure to a traumatic incident. The aim is to minimise any stress-related symptoms that may develop.
     4. When individuals are identified as having psychological difficulties, every effort will be made to support them by the organisation and through the Occupational Health services or to sign post them to other available services. Occupational Health can advise on the most appropriate course of action.
     5. It is essential that managers who become aware that an individual is experiencing psychological difficulties know what steps they can take in order to support them through the process of identifying sources of help.

* + 1. All members of staff have a responsibility to take appropriate action should colleagues appear to be struggling with their workload. Please refer to HR43 Resource Pack.

# Identifying and Reducing Stress in the Workplace

3.1 The HSE Management Standards on Stress focus on six areas which can impact on workplace stress and which should form the basis of a risk assessment.

Demand – being able to cope with the demands of the job

Control – having an adequate say over how work is done

Support – having adequate support from colleagues and superiors

Roles – understanding roles and responsibilities

Relationships – not being subjected to unacceptable behaviours

Change – being involved in any organisation changes

3.2 The following can be sources of stress arising from work, this is however not an exhaustive list:

* Relationships
* Dynamics within teams
* Lack of Training
* Not meeting the expected competencies for the role
* Boring or repetitive work, or too little to do
* Too much to do, in too little time
* Lack of training for the job
* Confusing organisational/reporting structures
* Lack of control over work activities
* Poor communication
* Conflicting demands
* Bullying/harassment
* Lack of support
* Poor working conditions, for example: poor lighting or temperature control, poor equipment and workstations, poor facilities for rest breaks etc.

## 3.3 Risk Assessments

3.3.1 Risk Assessments are an important tool in stress prevention. In line with best practice and the HSE Management standards indicator tool (HR43 Resource Pack) regular organisation wide stress risk audit using various tools i.e staff survey, local health and wellbeing audits will be carried out. The results will be used to develop action plans to target areas for improvement across the organisation.

3.3.2 This organisational stress audit will be complemented by individual risk assessments and wellbeing conversations. using the HSE Management standards indicator tool (HR43 Resource Pack)). This will further identify specific areas for improvement in individual departments and teams, so that appropriate strategies can be implemented to minimise risks in these areas. Copies of these risk assessments will be held appropriately and the Health and Safety department will review these risk assessments.

3.3.3 The work/life risk assessment (HR43 Resource Pack)) will be used in partnership by managers and staff where individual issues with work related stress have been identified. Copies of these individual work/life risk assessments will be maintained on the employees file. Where occupational health intervention has been sort the risk assessment will be shared with occupational health.

3.3.4 The Organisation is committed to undertaking stress audits to assist in the process of managing stress at work. The management of stress at work shall be facilitated through various mechanisms including appropriate committee/groups of the Organisation.

## 3.4 Prevention

3.4.1 The Organisation is committed to looking at ways to prevent stress in the workplace.

3.4.2 Preventative work may involve the following where appropriate:

* Undertake risk assessment
* Work within the organisation to improve communication and consultation
* Empowering individuals to increase control over their work wherever possible
* Introducing strategies to help staff to manage their workload
* Stress management training to help staff to recognise and manage their own stress
* Training to enable managers to recognise and manage stress and psychological problems in individuals and teams.

## 3.5 Support and Rehabilitation

3.5.1 The Organisation is committed to ensuring that staff who are experiencing psychological difficulties are treated in a sensitive and supportive manner.

3.5.2 There are various ways in which an individual or group of employees can be helped once it is identified that they are experiencing difficulties. Employees may want to access occupational health services, which can offer counselling and psychological support, others may decide to engage in help and support from outside the organisation. The HR43 Resource Pack provides details of agencies that provide help and support.

* + 1. The Organisation is also committed to working with employees to support them back into the workplace.

# 4. Responsibilities

4.1 All employees have responsibilities under this policy, to ensure that they are aware of what their responsibilities are.

* 1. The Organisation **will:**

4.2.1 Recognise and accept its responsibility and “duty of care” as an employer to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all its employees as required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

* + 1. Ensure that the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 are adhered to and that current risk management techniques are employed.
    2. Under the Equality Act 2010 ensure that procedures are in place to prevent discrimination against those with a known mental illness and to make reasonable adjustments as far as is practicable.
    3. Carry out regular organisation wide stress risk audits using the Health and Safety executive Management standards indicator tool (HR43 Resource Pack).
    4. Work in collaboration with its managers, leaders and employees in response to the stress risk assessments to implement measures which reduce stress and promote the mental health and wellbeing of the workforce.
    5. Promote the mental health and wellbeing of all employees by developing policies and practices, and by providing training which enables employees to look after their mental health and wellbeing.
    6. Provide training and support to managers/ supervisors to allow them to develop the skills required to promote the mental health and wellbeing of employees and to deal with issues around mental health and work related stress.
    7. Senior management will ensure that staff performing a management or supervisory function have sufficient competence to discharge that function in a manner consistent with the maintenance of mental health in the workplace.

Consider appointing a wellbeing guardian where appropriate.

* + 1. Support staff to use other forms of transport for example cycle to work scheme.
    2. Ensure that workplaces offer opportunities to be physically active and that staffs are able to access physical activity throughout their working day.

Provide supportive break out areas to support the mental and physical demands in the work place.

* 1. Managers **will:**

4.3.1 Participate in regular department stress risk assessments using the Health and Safety executive Management standards indicator tool (HR43 Resource Pack)

* + 1. Be responsible for ensuring the departmental risk assessment is stored in the relevant shared area for the department, and made available to the Health and Safety department for monitoring purposes.
    2. Give regular positive feedback to staff in team meetings, one to ones and ensure health and wellbeing conversations are included at induction and in one to ones These can be either weekly or monthly and is dependent on service need and agreement with employees.
    3. Use appropriate processes and systems to undertake the relevant risk assessment (HR43 Resource Pack) to identify and manage factors which may result in work related stress, including elimination/reduction of these factors as far as is reasonably practicable. This can be undertaken as a component of the return to work process following sickness absence or at a time when it is identified that an employee may be experiencing stressors affecting work place performance.
    4. Promote a culture of open communication between management and staff, i.e. via team meetings, one to ones, particularly where there are ongoing organisational and procedural changes affecting employees, to encourage staff to share concerns about work related stress.
    5. Promote effective team working, including dealing with any issues regarding bullying/harassment and also encourage team members to support each other.
    6. Ensure employees are fully informed, instructed and trained to undertake their duties and responsibilities; and when appropriate, review employees work distribution to ensure individuals are managing work demands.
    7. Encourage participation in decision making and problem solving and give staff ownership in how they do their work wherever possible.
    8. Ensure employees are provided with appropriate developmental opportunities, through implementation of the appraisal system.
    9. Ensure all employees, including all levels of management, attend appropriate Mental Health and Wellbeing training and have access to the appropriate tools.
    10. Conduct, discuss and implement recommendations following completion of work/life risk assessment with employee where appropriate.
    11. Support employees in accordance with the management of sickness absence policy, and attend training regarding this.
    12. Support employees when they become aware that they are experiencing any life stressors e.g. bereavement, childcare etc. in accordance with Organisation policies. When a problem is identified it should be addressed as soon as practicable and in a sensitive, supportive manner.
    13. Monitor working hours, overtime and performance targets to ensure that employees are not overworking and ensure that employees are taking their allocated breaks and annual leave entitlement.
    14. Offer clear leadership, being available for formal as well as informal discussion.
    15. Ensure they are aware of the information provided in The HR43 Resource Pack.
  1. Occupational Health **as part of the contract will:**

4.4.1 Provide confidential advice to employees and managers on mental health, wellbeing and stress related issues.

* + 1. Support individuals where necessary to maintain their mental health and wellbeing and advise the employee and their manager on a planned return to work and/or reasonable adjustments as appropriate.
    2. Provide advice and information on sources of support and refer individuals to workplace counsellors or specialist agencies as required.
    3. Give specialist advice to Human Resources, Health and Safety, managers and employees in relation to individual cases.
  1. **The relevant Lead of the Organisation will:**
     1. Support managers in implementing and completing organisational and individualstress risk assessments..
     2. Monitor the regular organisational and individual stress risk assessments to ensure these are reviewed and updated as required.
     3. Facilitate training and support managers in implementing and completing work/life risk assessments.
     4. Gain specialist advice from the Senior Governance Manager (H&S) at NECS where necessary.
  2. Human Resources **will:**
     1. Give guidance to managers on the management of sickness absence.

4.6.2 Advise on individual employee sickness absence which relates to mental health problems including stress-related illness.

* + 1. Provide continuing support to managers, ensuring best practice in the management of mental health and wellbeing.
    2. Give specialist HR advice to managers in conjunction with Occupational Health in relation to individual cases, including return to work arrangements.
  1. Employees **will:**

4.7.1 Act in accordance with their responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to maintain their own health and safety at work and that of others and understand that reducing stress at work is everyone’s responsibility. Further support guidance on steps employees can undertake to reduce work life stressors can be found in HR43 Resource Pack.

* + 1. Attend training courses including those related to stress management and psychological wellbeing.
    2. Discuss with their manager and/or seek advice and support from the Health and Safety Department or HR around any factors in the workplace which are affecting their mental health and wellbeing.
    3. Report any illness which they feel may be caused or exacerbated by work to their manager and/or seek advice and support from Occupational Health Department and/or Accredited staff side representative.
    4. Discuss and agree support mechanisms that are appropriate with their manager and/or Occupational Health Department/Accredited staff side representative.
    5. Consider opportunities for counselling and psychological therapy if recommended.
    6. Participate in the completion of work/life risk assessment with line manager as appropriate, and follow agreed recommendations.
    7. Participate in Wellbeing activities which promote a healthy diet and lifestyle as far as is reasonably practicable.
  1. **Trade Unions will:**

4.8.1 Work with managers, Occupational Health and Health and Safety or HR at NECS in improving the mental health and wellbeing of staff as far as is reasonably practicable.

* + 1. Provide advice and support where applicable to individual members.
    2. Consult with members on the issues of mental health, wellbeing and work related stress whilst analysing the content and impact of staff surveys and inspections.
    3. Be expected to attend relevant formal Organisation Committee’s and working groups to support staff and represent the interests of members.

# Equality

5.1 In applying this policy, the organisation will have due regard for the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and provide for good relations between people of diverse groups, in particular on the grounds of the characteristics protected by the Equality Act (2010): age; disability; gender; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sexual orientation, in addition to offending background, trade union membership or any other personal characteristic.

# Data Protection

6.1 In applying this policy, the Organisation will have due regard for the Data Protection Act 2018 and the requirement to process personal data fairly and lawfully and in accordance with the data protection principles. Data Subject Rights and freedoms will be respected and measures will be in place to enable employees to exercise those rights. Appropriate technical and organisational measures will be designed and implemented to ensure an appropriate level of security is applied to the processing of personal information. Employees will have access to a Data Protection Officer for advice in relation to the processing of their personal information and data protection issues.

# Monitoring & Review

7.1 The policy and procedure will be reviewed periodically by Human Resources in conjunction with Health and Safety, operational managers and Trade Unions. Where review is necessary due to legislative change, this will happen immediately.

7.2 The Organisation will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy and provide updates to the appropriate committee/groups in the Organisation.

# **Associated Documents**

8.1 Other policies relevant to staff psychological wellbeing are:

* Appraisal Policy
* Absence Management Policy
* Health and Safety Policy
* Flexible Working Policy
* Lone Worker Policy
* Other Leave Policy
* Harassment and Bullying Policy
* Disciplinary Policy
* Grievance Policy
* Change Management Policy
* Whistleblowing Policy
* Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy
* NHS People Plan
* Annual Leave Policy
* Buying and Selling annual leave
* Induction Policy

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# Appendix 1 Equality Impact Analysis

Equality Impact Assessments will be updated to include statistical data. Equality Impact Assessments will be updated and included in each Human Resource policy, as per the agreed 2022/23 HR EIA review schedule