



Stress Management Policy

This policy was adopted by Laughton Community Primary School

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Document summary

The effective management of stress is vital to the successful operation of the County Council and to the wellbeing of its employees. This Policy seeks to provide guidance on how this can be achieved and makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be positive if managed correctly, and stress, which is likely to be detrimental to physical or mental health if it is prolonged.

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Stress Management Policy

Key Points:

- This Policy outlines the key aims and objectives for managers and staff throughout the organisation in dealing with stress
- This policy recognises that the release of managers and staff to attend stress management and stress awareness workshops within reasonable timescales is essential
- Responsibilities in relation to this Policy fall on Chief Officers, Headteachers, Managers, Personnel and Training staff and employees
- Detailed information and guidance is provided in the appendices
- Guidance for employees on what they can do to manage their stress effectively is included as are references to resources on the internet/ intranet/ Webshop.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The County Council is responsible for the health, safety and welfare of its employees at work and recognises that their well-being is important to its performance and service delivery. The County Council therefore aims to take positive measures to manage stress effectively and to create a culture where stress is "managed" out of the organisation, so far as is reasonably practicable. It also aims to ensure that where stress becomes an issue for employees, they are encouraged to seek support and guidance.
- 1.2 Primarily this policy is concerned with stress arising from the working environment but it also recognises that an employee's personal life may contain stress. An approach has to be taken to help an employee whatever the cause of their stress, particularly if this has an impact on an employee's ability to work effectively.
- 1.3 The County Council will deliver this policy through:
 - 1.3.1 promoting the health, safety and well-being of all employees, including the use of risk assessments to identify and manage stressors impacting on health in the workplace
 - 1.3.2 the monitoring of absence levels to identify particular sources of stress as a means of taking action to prevent or reduce such sources in the future
 - 1.3.3 implementing strategies and support mechanisms to prevent and manage work related stress. Further supporting information is available at Appendix 1.

2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 **Chief Officers will:**
 - 2.1.1 demonstrate their commitment and support of this policy by ensuring that the principles and strategies for managing stress are implemented

- 2.1.2 reflect the policy's principles and strategies within their own management practice
- 2.1.3 ensure that resources e.g. management time and commitment, are available to ensure that stress management principles and strategies are implemented.

2.2 LMG, Headteachers and other Line Managers will:

- 2.2.1 familiarise themselves with this policy and associated documentation
- 2.2.2 ensure through good communication that their staff are aware of the provisions of this policy including the action everyone can take to minimise the risk of stress contained in the document "Stress Awareness Information for Employees" and of the support services available to them i.e. the Staff Counselling and Employee Assistance Programme.
- 2.2.3 identify and meet training and development needs including induction training
- 2.2.4 attend stress management training when needed
- 2.2.5 understand the risk assessment process detailed in Appendix 1 and identify individuals, groups of staff or jobs that could be affected by stress and work to eliminate, minimise or reduce the risks using the Stress Risk Assessment form at Appendix 3.
- 2.2.6 meet with their staff on a planned and regular basis to discuss any concerns they may have and to listen to what they have to say. This could be through formal staff appraisals, supervision, team meetings etc.
- 2.2.7 monitor their staff's workload and working hours and adopt a flexible approach wherever possible to work schedules, in order to help avoid conflicts between work and personal lives
- 2.2.8 ensure that staff are provided with clear and realistic objectives and that performance is managed effectively and fairly
- 2.2.9 involve staff, and their representatives, in issues which affect them and may change their work or work environment
- 2.2.10 be vigilant towards staff who show signs of stress whether it is work related or related to their personal lives
- 2.2.11 ensure that staff have access to the appropriate information in order to help them recognise and manage stress, e.g. advice available on the internet/Czone and access to the Staff Counselling and Employee Assistance Programme
- 2.2.12 effectively and sensitively manage any staff stress related absence as well as the return to work in accordance with the Attendance Management Procedure.

2.3 PAT HR and Health & Safety Advisers will:

- 2.3.1 provide additional advice and guidance, on request, to assist with the implementation of this Policy

2.3.2 ensure that the Policy is kept up to date in accordance with any changes in legislation and reflects current best practice.

2.4 Employees will:

2.4.1 inform their manager of any work related issues / difficulties that cause stress, or have the potential to do so and participate positively in determining solutions. If the stressors have arisen from circumstances outside of work, employees are encouraged, where possible, to discuss these with their manager so that appropriate assistance and flexibility can be considered

2.4.2 where possible, take account of the impact of their lifestyle in terms of controlling stressors, e.g. adopting healthy lifestyle habits

2.4.3 co-operate with their manager in the undertaking of any risk assessments and the implementing of any necessary control measures

2.4.4 be aware of their own well-being and seek advice and support when necessary

2.4.5 be supportive of colleagues through any difficulties they may be dealing with.

3. Monitoring and Review

3.1 Managers should remain vigilant and consistently monitor their work situation and staff in order to anticipate the potential for work-related stress (see Appendix 4), using the risk assessment process as a guide.

3.2 This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects changes in legislation and current best practice.

Appendix 1: Supporting Information

1. General

- 1.1 Stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed on them. This distinguishes stress from the pressures or challenges that provide the motivation for everyday living. Being under pressure can often improve performance but when demands and pressures become excessive they can lead to stress.
- 1.2 People respond to pressure in different and individual ways. Much will depend on an employee’s personality, experience, motivation and the support available from managers, colleagues, family and friends. Difficulties faced outside of work can also have an impact on someone’s ability to cope or function well at work.
- 1.3 If stress is intense and sustained it can affect mental and physical health and contribute to employee ill-health and sickness absence. It is important that all employees are aware of the factors that can give rise to stress (stressors) so that where possible their causes can be foreseen and appropriately managed before damage/harm is done.
- 1.4 There are legal obligations as well as ethical and economic reasons for taking positive action to manage stress. This policy guidance contains information and advice on how to recognise, reduce and manage stress at work.
- 1.5 Stress prevention and management interventions in the workplace can be broken down into three broad groups:

Primary Interventions attempt to eliminate the sources of stress by, for example, implementing our stress management policy, undertaking stress risk assessments etc.

Secondary Interventions set out to improve the overall situation in the workplace by implementing the recommendations identified in any risk assessment e.g. raising awareness of stress issues, job competency training, setting up staff communication groups

Tertiary Interventions deal with the treatment and rehabilitation of those individuals who have suffered ill health as a result of stress e.g. Occupational Health advice, access to the Staff Counselling and Employee Assistance Programme.

- 1.6 Managers may not always be aware of the problems their staff are experiencing, especially if they relate to situations outside of work. It is therefore important that managers are familiar with the recognisable effects and indicators of stress so they can judge whether there is a need to take action e.g. review work, open up conversation with affected person/s, and reinforce the availability of support e.g. Staff Counselling and Employee Assistance Programme.

2. Typical Causes of Work Related Stress

- 2.1 Listed below are the key factors identified by the Health and Safety Executive as having the potential to cause stress at work. More information about these factors is contained in Appendix 4 and can also be found on the HSE’s website (www.hse.gov.uk).

- Job demands – either too much or too little to do e.g. having too much work to do in the time available or work that is beyond the capability of the employee due either to a lack of appropriate training or the individual's capacity, excessively tight deadlines, irregular working patterns (e.g. shift work), inadequate or excessive training for the job, boring repetitive work and noisy, hot or threatening working environment
- Control – issues around the extent of self control over tasks, timing, pace of work or skills used
- Relationships – for example, working in an atmosphere of unacceptable behaviour such as bullying, sexual or racial harassment
- Role conflict – perceived conflicting job demands or being asked to undertake tasks which are not considered part of their job
- Role ambiguity – when an employee doesn't have a clear view of their job and the expectations of them, lack of understanding and leadership from managers
- Organisation change – appropriate communication is vital to prevent uncertainty about what is going on
- Support – the extent of personal support available from managers and colleagues.
- Training – are the training opportunities suitable and sufficient
- Individual factors – pressures from home/personal life e.g. bereavement, relationship or family problems, poor work life balance (home and work related pressures can feed off and reinforce each other).

3. How do I recognise stress in myself or in others?

3.1 Emotional/Behavioural effects include:

- Persistent or recurrent moods, anxiety, frustration, anger, irritability, detachment, worry, depression, guilt, sadness
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering things, inability to switch off, loss of creativity, making more errors, apathy
- Increase use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs
- Eating disorders.

3.2 Physical effects include:

- Tiredness, skin or sleep disorders, clumsiness, nervous tics
- Raised blood pressure, ulcers, increased sweating, dizziness
- Migraine, muscular pain and tension.

3.3 There might also be some adverse effects on the County Council if stress levels are not managed effectively. These include:

- Increase in sickness absence – particularly short-term absences
- Poor work performance – less output, lower quality, poor decision making
- Conflict between colleagues, poor relationships with service users
- General loss of motivation or commitment, poor time-keeping, working longer hours but with diminishing effectiveness.

3.4 It is therefore important that stress is pro-actively managed, in accordance with the requirements of this Policy.

3.5 There are a number of pro-active interventions listed below. Risk Assessment is fundamental in identifying and putting in place controls to minimise the risks associated with stressors in the workplace and must be carried out. Other interventions may also apply, depending on the circumstances.

4. Risk Assessment

- 4.1 Proactive management measures based on suitable and sufficient risk assessments are the most effective method of preventing harm to employees arising from work-related stress. Risk assessment is an on-going process and should be continuously monitored and regularly reviewed.
- 4.2 When stress hazards are suspected Headteachers/managers may find it helpful to facilitate employees completing Part 1 of the Stress Risk Assessment form (Appendix 3). When a stress related absence has occurred this process must be followed and in both cases Part 2 of the form must be completed. Any actions identified must be implemented, monitored and reviewed as necessary. See the guidance contained in Appendix 2.
- 4.3 Headteachers and Managers should take a lead role in raising any potential, or actual, stress issues in team meetings and supervision and encourage staff to participate in any risk assessment process. They must be vigilant towards individual staff that may show signs of work-related stress and every effort should be made to identify such signs at an early stage and immediate supportive action taken to prevent the situation continuing.
- 4.4 If Headteachers and Managers feel unable to resolve work-related stress issues themselves, they should seek assistance at an early stage from their line manager and if further assistance is necessary from a Personnel Officer as a follow up to any formal training already provided.

5. Recruitment and Selection

- 5.1 The full range of responsibilities and demands of a job, including areas of potential pressure, should be identified and set out clearly in the job description that is sent to all candidates. To ensure that the right candidate is selected for the role, be certain that the policies and guidance available from Personnel and Training are followed.

6. Induction and Promotion

- 6.1 All new employees must receive induction into their jobs. Starting a new job can be stressful and a planned induction can help eliminate many concerns. The situation could be aggravated if the new employee is also relocating. As part of the induction programme this policy should be discussed and employees advised who will provide them with support. For further information, please consult the documentation on Supported Introduction to Employment.

7. Sickness Absence

- 7.1 When dealing with concerns related to stress and sickness absence, ESCC's policies on Sickness Absence and Management of Attendance must be adhered to.

8. Training and Development

- 8.1 Identifying and meeting training needs should not be seen as a one-off exercise but as a continual and evolving process. Training must be provided to ensure managers and their staff are aware of the risks of stress and the measures that can be taken to identify and manage it.

- 8.2 In management and supervision training and other appropriate skills training courses this policy should be cited as part of a manager's ongoing responsibilities. Managers and supervisors should also consider ways of dealing with their own stress management. Stress management training courses (details contained on East Sussex Learning Portal) must be attended by all line managers.
- 8.3 A general information guide for staff, to support this policy, is available on the intranet and must be brought to the attention of all staff. It will include advice on coping with stress including lifestyle factors and approaches to relaxation.

9. Violence at Work

- 9.1 The Violence at Work Policy which can be found on the intranet and any departmental guidance must be adhered to. All staff should be made aware of the policy, departmental guidance and of any local arrangements necessary to help ensure a safe working environment. Violence at Work training must be provided to all staff in key areas and they must be made aware of the support which is available to them if they have been involved in a violent incident e.g. counselling.

10. Managing Stress Related Absence

- 10.1 It is important to manage an employee's return to work after a stress-related absence, whether or not it was related to work. The manager must:
- Follow the Management of Attendance procedures in planning the employee's return to work. A meeting should be held with them, with the opportunity for a trade union representative or safety representative to be present, in accordance with the procedure. If necessary advice should be sought from the relevant Personnel Officer
 - Ensure that when an employee returns to work they are not subject to the same pressures, without additional support/safeguards, that are known to have contributed to their absence in the first place
 - Complete a stress risk assessment, take any necessary actions and issue a copy to the employee, put a copy in the employee's personal file and, if agreed by the employee, issue a copy to their agreed representative
 - Consider a phased return, for up to a maximum of four weeks, during which time there should be a gradual increase in working towards normal hours. Managers should also consider other flexible working options. Full details are given on the Flexible Working page on the intranet. A person may be ready to return to some aspects of their job but not others and workload responsibilities may need to be adjusted accordingly
 - After returning to work, continue to provide support to help the employee's full recovery. Meetings with the employee may need to be planned more frequently than would be usual under normal supervision arrangements
 - Consider other options and take urgent advice from the relevant Personnel Officer if the employee continues to experience difficulties in managing pressures at work and particularly if as a result the employee is absent from work again.

Appendix 2: Stress Risk Assessment – Guidance Notes

The individual Stress Risk Assessment is a tool which enables employees to identify the issues which have caused them to experience stress and to work with their Manager in identifying solutions which help reduce this risk. The circumstances in which this tool must be used are:

- If individuals report difficulties in coping with their work and/or personal life
- If individuals are absent from work and report experiencing increased stress or stress related illness
- If a manager identifies a pattern of sickness absence and feels that this may be stress related
- If a manager is concerned about anyone's performance at work and feels that this may be stress related.

NB: If a manager has concerns that an individual may be experiencing stress, this must be confirmed with the employee before initiating a Stress Risk Assessment. If a concern remains it is recommended that advice is sought from a Personnel Officer.

Notes for Employees

The overall aim of the Stress Risk Assessment process is for employees and their managers to jointly investigate the causes of, and identify solutions to, stress. It is a chance to reflect upon the situation and the circumstances around it and to help identify how to reach a satisfactory outcome e.g. return to work following absence. Approaching it in this way means that employees can play a major part in clearly identifying the issues involved and how these issues can be addressed.

Where it is not appropriate to return the form back to their line manager, an alternative person must be identified.

The first stage of the Stress Risk Assessment process is for the staff concerned to complete Part 1 of the form. This can be completed alone, with the support of another person or their line manager.

NB. It is important that staff using this tool are as specific as possible with the information and examples they provide.

Perceptions of Stressors

Employees should be encouraged to think of their current stressors and how they feel these can be addressed.

Evidence of Perceptions

They should provide examples to support their perceptions.

The future

On the Stress Risk Assessment form, staff should list the most significant issues affecting them in section 1, prioritise them in section 2, list any existing controls in section 3 and detail any further controls they consider appropriate in section 4.

Non-work factors

Individuals should also document any non-work issues that are causing / contributing to their stress and how the organisation may be able to help them with those issues.

Notes for Line Manager

Summary of actions proposed by employee

Each of the actions identified by the employee need to be summarised and put in order of importance.

Actions to be taken by management

Each action needs to be individually considered and comments given on what action will be introduced and has been introduced to address the concerns raised.

Explanations of reason for any inaction

Identify specific reasons for why actions are not going to be resolved or addressed.

Review date for each action and details of progress at that date.

Identify a suitable review date for each of the actions identified and then, at the review date, identify the actions that have been introduced.

If the actions are not completed, identify what further actions are proposed with review date.

Appendix 3: Stress Risk Assessment Form

Part 1 – For completion by employees:

1. Describe the current stressor(s) here, giving specific examples where possible:	2. Prioritise the current stressor(s) listed in order of their significance to/ impact upon you – starting with 1 as the most significant.	3. Have any controls, to mitigate the current stressor(s) listed in column 1, already been implemented? If so, list below.	4. What further actions would you consider necessary to control the current stressor(s) listed in column 1?

Part 1 completed by:	
Name:	Dept.:
Signature:	Date:

Stress Risk Assessment

Part 2 – For completion by the relevant manager:

5. Summary of actions proposed by employee.	6. Management action and implementation date(s) – Following consideration of the information provided in Part 1 and discussion with the individual, outline any actions planned below, including who will carry them out and by when:	7. Set a date for reviewing the actions listed in column 6. Then insert the date in the review date box below, diarise it and file this sheet in review date order.

Part 2 completed by:		
Name:	Dept.:	
Signature:	Date:	
Review undertaken on:	Signature of Manager:	Date:

Appendix 4: Work-Related Stressors

Lists of potential stressors are set out below and each of these should be considered by managers undertaking work-related stress prevention risk assessments. Each stressor is set within the six key areas that have been identified as likely to give rise to stress, namely, work demands; control; relationships and social support; organisational change; employee role; and individual training and support.

Failures in any of these key areas can give rise to an adverse culture that fails to acknowledge the seriousness of work related stress and associated ill health issues and fails to respond appropriately to identified concerns.

Following on from each list of stressors are possible measures which can be considered in relation to controlling the stressors (please note these lists are not exhaustive and the most effective control strategy will reflect local circumstances).

Potential Stressors

1. DEMANDS

Includes issues like workload, work patterns and the work environment.

DEMAND – work overload

Essentially there are two identified forms of work overload, qualitative or quantitative and may be characterised by conflicting demands or roles. Quantitative overload is simply having too much work to do in the time available. Qualitative overload is work beyond the capability of the employee, due either to a lack of appropriate training or the individual's intellectual or physical capacity.

Work overload occurs when an employee is allocated work without the necessary resources, in terms of time, individual ability, staff shortages or physical capacity.

DEMAND – capability and capacity

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires that:
“When allocating work to employees, employers should ensure that the demands of the job do not exceed their employees' ability to carry out the work without risk to, themselves or others. Employers should review their employees' capabilities to carry out their work, as necessary”

DEMAND – work underload

Work related stress can arise when an employee is not sufficiently challenged by the work. Under load is normally associated with routine and under-stimulating work, often relating to repetitive tasks and can result in employees feeling dissatisfied or underutilised.

DEMAND – physical environment

The degree to which employees are affected by their physical environment depends greatly on where they are working and the nature of the work. This could include factors such as temperature, humidity, noise, ventilation, the quality and arrangement of offices and workstations, interruptions etc.

Poor environmental conditions can result in both physical and psychological effects such as fatigue, headaches, irritability or reduced ability to concentrate.

DEMAND – occupational

Some jobs are such that employees may be exposed aggressive and abusive behaviour, or even physical assault during the course of their duties.

The effect of such exposure varies between individuals, according to their level of experience, training, the type of supervision and the degree to which they feel threatened or anxious by an incident.

Potential Control Measures:

- Consider the allocation of workloads and ensure there are sufficient resources to undertake the work or that staff are not underemployed
- Remember that each individual is different and only by talking to employees can you get the balance right between challenging demands and stressful demands. Also circumstances change, at work and at home, so you need to maintain communication
- If adequate resources are not available, ensure you give guidance to staff as to the priorities at an early stage
- Provide positive support for staff by assisting them to plan, prioritise or where necessary, renegotiate time scales in relation to their workload
- Assess and consider adjustment of priorities or where possible arrange workload cover, during periods of staff absence
- Assess and be aware of the individual strengths and weaknesses of the team and ensure that staff are adequately trained to carry out their work.

2. CONTROL

How much say a person has in the way they do their work.

If employees are to perform well it is desirable for them to have control over elements of how and when their job is done. A lack of control over their working life is one of the most common causes of stress for employees and can lead to disaffection, alienation and poor performance.

Potential Control Measures:

- Create every opportunity for staff to plan their own work and to participate in collective team decisions in relation to how objectives should be met and the development of problem solving strategies. Employees who are involved in making decisions often generate better ideas. It makes the most of people's talents and, by increasing motivation, can reduce stress and improve performance
- Meetings of any kind, whether between individuals, teams or larger groups, are very important because they give staff and managers the chance to exchange ideas and discuss projects face to face. Smaller meetings are useful for discussing the work of a particular group and should give plenty of opportunity for employees to contribute. Larger meetings are often used to present information to a large number of employees at once but provide limited chance for employees to respond

- Ensure staff have a clear understanding of the contribution their work makes to the organisational objectives and give positive feedback, which recognises both their value and skill
- A culture of trust in staff professionalism should be encouraged where staff performance may be assessed in the course of normal supervision. Supervision meetings should provide constructive and positive support for staff and is a means to ensure that staff are coping.

3. RELATIONSHIPS

Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

- Human beings are genetically programmed to interact with their fellows in mutually supportive groups and this instinctive quality provides a framework of 'social support' which can represent a significant stress control or prevention factor
- Because of this interaction, employee 'relationships' within the work place can have an important positive or negative effect, depending on the culture and nature of individual personalities, which may either be supportive or a source of potential conflict
- Given the importance of these 'social' influences, the working relationship between managers, peers and subordinates can have a dramatic effect on individual staff members of a team and if the culture is dysfunctional, conflict and work-related stress will increase
- Such a dysfunctional culture can be created by the inappropriate actions of managers or individuals within the team, who may resort to bullying or harassment of either individuals or teams
- Bullying and harassment are particular aspects of workplace relationships that can have extremely damaging effects on employees, and may lead to severe levels of work-related stress
- The Grievance Policy and Procedure contains advice and guidance on harassment and bullying
- Managers cannot always control relationships, personality clashes will occur and employers and employees often have very personal reasons for preferring to work with one person rather than another. However, employers can be pro-active in helping to encourage relationships based on good behaviour and respect
- Some of the most frequent problems between individuals at work arise because employers don't have clear rules and policies on dealing with grievances and disciplinary issues. These help to set boundaries and promote awareness of equal opportunities and diversity.

Potential Control Measures:

- Ensure, by working in partnership with staff and by communicating the Grievance Policy and Procedure that any form of bullying or harassment is not permitted. Should any instance arise, the matter must be dealt with quickly and effectively in line with the relevant policies and if necessary using current disciplinary or grievance procedures
- Staff should be encouraged to recognise the value and contribution of their colleagues and to promote a culture of trust and dignity within which all individuals feel comfortable.

4. CHANGE

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated.

- Organisational change is one of the more obvious causes of stress. It alters routines and can create uncertainties about the future
- Significant organisational changes can give employees cause for concern in relation to feelings of insecurity and anxiety resulting from reviews and changes in established work practice or a fear that new objectives may not be achievable. This is particularly true if organisational change is poorly managed and can increase levels of work-related stress
- Ongoing change and reviews affecting work patterns and objectives can also affect employee motivation and morale, creating work-related stress.

Potential Control Measures:

- Where significant change is occurring ensure staff are fully informed and provided with clear easily understood action plans and timetables. As part of this process identify, with staff, how the change will affect normal work activity, job roles and any training or development needs that may be required
- Seek guidance from the Managing Change suite of policies
- In order to avoid rumour and unnecessary staff anxiety, new strategies or planned developments should be communicated quickly to allow staff an opportunity to ask questions and discuss. Managers should have an 'open door' policy to encourage staff input in relation to either their concerns or suggestions for improvement
- Provide consistent support for staff throughout periods of change
- Following significant organisational changes managers should consider the impact of revised objectives and ensure staff are clear regarding their individual roles
- Existing stress risk assessments must be revised to address any changes that may increase levels of work-related stress to staff, particularly if this results in relocation within new social groups or in working with completely different people
- Any staff subject to redundancy due to organisational change must be provided with all reasonable means of support.

5. ROLE

Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

- There are two key stressors associated with the role of an employee within the organisation that of 'role conflict' and 'role ambiguity', both of which have clear links with the individual's capabilities
- Role conflict relates to an employees' inability to manage conflicting aspects of the work which are perceived to be incompatible either in terms of the desired outcomes or are outside the individual's personal skills or ability
- These aspects may also be elements of work that the employee does not want to do or are not perceived to be part of their job
- Such conflict often causes employees to portray different roles or patterns of behaviour according to the perceptions of other colleagues who may interpret their job requirements differently

- Role ambiguity arises when individuals are unclear as to the scope and responsibilities of their job or the associated key work objectives. There may also be uncertainty as to the employees' responsibilities and the expectations of their colleagues. This ambiguity can arise from a lack of adequate information or supervision from a line manager or due to work practice changes being made without an appropriate review of the job description and provision of suitable training
- Other examples of role ambiguity arise from situations such as taking up a new job, a promotion or transfer, moving to another team with new colleagues and line manager, or simply having to adapt to changes within the existing organisational structure.

Potential Control Measures:

- The employment relationship between an employee and their work starts with the selection process. However, the future of that relationship depends to a large extent on how the new employee settles into the job. Therefore, a robust induction process must be implemented for all new staff
- Managers must oversee the induction training of all new staff to ensure that all aspects have been delivered effectively and the individual is properly equipped with the necessary skills to undertake their responsibilities
- An employee's job description should be accurate and kept up to date with any changes. It should include the main purpose, the main tasks and the scope of the job
- Managers should use the staff appraisal procedures to ensure staff have a clearly defined role which enables them to understand exactly what their responsibilities are
- Take time in normal supervision to talk to staff about how they perceive their role and as a means to regularly monitor common understanding of what is expected of them and what they in turn can expect from their manager
- Change has been dealt with above but managers should remember that it can have a huge impact on the way an individual is expected to do their job
- During change managers need to review work plans and objectives to ensure they are still relevant. This also applies if new members of staff have joined or new teams have been created or merged with each other.

6. SUPPORT

Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

- In order to undertake any role and to successfully discharge their responsibilities all employees require the necessary competence. It is therefore essential that staff receive appropriate training to properly equip them with the necessary skills so that they feel comfortable and personally confident within their individual role
- If employees are not properly trained and provided with the required competencies, their performance will be below standard, giving rise to feelings of inadequacy or being pressurised which will increase their level of work-related stress
- Where a new strategy, or changes to existing work practice are introduced, proper consideration should be given to ensuring that objectives can be met using existing staff competencies or that they can be developed appropriately in the short term. Failure to do so will again impose additional work-related stress on the employee.

- Often employees are subject to external stress factors which can impact on their working life and such times of crisis should be dealt with sensitively, providing the individual with any necessary additional support. This can be a most effective means of reducing or moderating work-related stress, which tends to increase at times when staff experience personal difficulties
- Negative, unsupportive, or inappropriately critical management input has the effect of raising an employees' anxiety, undermining confidence, which in turn affects morale and, if an integral part of the culture, can significantly impact on the stress levels of both an individual and a team
- It is important to take account of the individual differences of team members as some may thrive on meeting tight deadlines whilst others perform better when not working within defined, time limited plans. These differences if ignored can lead to interpersonal conflict and create a dysfunctional group, increasing greatly the degree of work related stress.

Potential Control Measures:

- Provide support and encouragement to staff
- Ensure that criticism is constructive and offered with a view to improvement rather than to in any way demean the individual
- Through supervision always encourage staff to put forward their views or raise their concerns within a participative framework where problems can be identified and solutions agreed collectively. Refer to the 'appraisal standards and guidance' - [click link for further assistance](#)
- Individual meetings with staff can also be used to try and identify any personal problems which could include money worries, illness, bereavement, family problems
- By being supportive
- Individuals will be more willing to admit that they are suffering from stress because they can expect to be dealt with sympathetically
- Encourage access to the Staff Counselling Service whether problems are work-related or personal
- The sorts of issues causing work-related stress can be added to the agenda of team meetings and therefore be discussed regularly
- All staff must be provided with suitable and sufficient training to do their jobs, particularly new staff for which a proper induction training programme is essential, commencing on their first day
- Managers must promote a culture that values diversity and ensure that any form of discrimination is dealt with promptly and effectively
- Managers should ensure staff take their annual leave entitlement and that they take appropriate rest and meal breaks during the course of their working day
- Managers should encourage staff to adopt a healthy 'work-life balance'.