



Knaresborough
Town Council

STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Introduction:

Knaresborough Town Council is committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees. The Council recognises that work-related stress can have a significant impact on both individual wellbeing and organisational effectiveness and is committed to identifying and reducing workplace stressors wherever reasonably practicable.

The Council acknowledges its duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and other relevant employment legislation.

This policy applies to all employees of Knaresborough Town Council. The Staffing Committee has overall responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy. Day-to-day implementation rests with managers and those with supervisory responsibilities.

Policy Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Prevent work-related stress wherever reasonably practicable.
- Identify and assess workplace stressors.
- Reduce the risk of stress-related ill health.
- Promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Support employees who experience stress.
- Ensure compliance with the Council's legal duties relating to health, safety and welfare.

Definition of Stress

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as:

"The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them."

Stress is not itself an illness, but prolonged exposure to excessive pressure can contribute to physical and mental ill health. The effects of stress may be evident through physical, emotional, behavioural and cognitive symptoms.

Responsibilities

The Council

The Council will:

- Provide a safe working environment.
- Take reasonable steps to identify and reduce workplace stressors.
- Ensure appropriate resources are available to support employee wellbeing.
- Promote a culture of dignity, respect and inclusion.
- Ensure employees are not subjected to bullying, harassment or victimisation.
- Review this policy annually or sooner if required.

Staffing Committee

The Staffing Committee will:

- Oversee the implementation and effectiveness of this policy.
- Consider recommendations arising from stress risk assessments.
- Monitor sickness absence trends and wellbeing issues where appropriate.
- Ensure staff wellbeing is considered when organisational changes are proposed.
- Ensure managers receive appropriate training and guidance relating to stress management.
- Review anonymised management information where necessary to monitor organisational wellbeing.
- Promote wellbeing initiatives and supportive working practices.
- Review this policy on a regular basis.

The Staffing Committee will not normally be involved in day-to-day management of individual stress cases unless required through its governance responsibilities.

Town Clerk and Managers

The Town Clerk and any employees with supervisory responsibilities will:

- Foster a supportive working environment.
- Maintain regular communication with employees.
- Identify signs of stress and respond appropriately.
- Ensure workloads are reasonable and regularly reviewed.
- Encourage employees to take annual leave and rest breaks.
- Conduct and review stress risk assessments where necessary.
- Consider reasonable workplace adjustments where appropriate.
- Seek professional advice, including occupational health support, where required.
- Support employees returning to work following stress-related absence.
- Ensure concerns raised by employees are dealt with sensitively and confidentially.

Employees

Employees are expected to:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and wellbeing.
- Inform their manager, the Town Clerk, the Chair of the Staffing Committee, or another appropriate contact if they believe they are experiencing work-related stress.
- Cooperate with any measures introduced to reduce workplace stress.
- Attend meetings and assessments intended to identify and address workplace stressors.
- Treat colleagues with dignity and respect.

Employees are encouraged to make use of counselling, occupational health services or other support mechanisms that may be available. Participation in such support remains voluntary.

Identifying and Managing Stress

The Council recognises that stress may arise from work-related or personal circumstances.

Where stress-related concerns are identified, the Council may:

- Discuss concerns with the employee.
- Undertake a stress risk assessment.
- Review workloads and priorities.
- Clarify duties and responsibilities.
- Provide additional supervision or support.
- Consider temporary or permanent workplace adjustments.
- Refer employees to occupational health services where appropriate.
- Signpost employees to external support services.

Stress risk assessments will be reviewed periodically and whenever significant changes occur to an employee's role or working environment.

Support Available

The Council is committed to supporting employees experiencing stress and may provide assistance through:

- Regular one-to-one meetings.
- Wellbeing discussions.
- Workplace adjustments.
- Occupational health referrals.
- Return-to-work interviews.
- Signposting to counselling or specialist support services.
- Flexible working arrangements where these are operationally feasible.

Confidentiality

The Council recognises that information relating to health and wellbeing is sensitive personal data. All information relating to an employee's health, wellbeing or stress-related concerns will be treated confidentially and handled in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Information will only be shared where there is a legitimate business need, a legal obligation, or with the employee's consent where appropriate.

Training

The Council will provide appropriate training and guidance to those with management and supervisory responsibilities to help them:

- Recognise signs of workplace stress.
- Conduct supportive wellbeing conversations.
- Undertake stress risk assessments.
- Implement reasonable measures to reduce workplace stress.

Monitoring and Review

The Staffing Committee will monitor the effectiveness of this policy by considering:

- Stress-related sickness absence data.
- Outcomes of risk assessments.
- Wellbeing discussions and employee feedback.
- Organisational changes that may impact employee wellbeing.
- Any trends identified through grievance or dignity at work processes.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislative or organisational changes require it.

Appendix 1 – Typical Stressors

Work-Related Stressors

Demands

- Excessive workload.
- Unrealistic deadlines.
- Inadequate staffing levels.
- Poor working environment.

Control

- Limited influence over how work is performed.
- Lack of autonomy.
- Excessively rigid procedures.

Support

- Insufficient supervision.
- Limited training opportunities.
- Lack of feedback or recognition.

Relationships

- Poor working relationships.
- Bullying or harassment.
- Workplace conflict.
- Social isolation.

Role

- Unclear responsibilities.
- Conflicting expectations.
- Ambiguous reporting arrangements.

Change

- Poorly managed organisational change.
- Lack of consultation.
- Uncertainty about future arrangements.

Personal Stressors

- Bereavement or loss.
- Relationship difficulties.
- Financial concerns.
- Caring responsibilities.
- Personal illness.
- Significant life changes.

Recognising Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Physical Indicators

- Headaches.
- Fatigue.
- Digestive problems.

- Sleep disturbance.
- Weight changes.
- Skin conditions.

Emotional Indicators

- Irritability.
- Anxiety.
- Mood changes.
- Loss of confidence.
- Tearfulness.

Behavioural Indicators

- Reduced work performance.
- Increased errors.
- Withdrawal from colleagues.
- Conflict with others.
- Increased use of alcohol or tobacco.
- Presenteeism.

Cognitive Indicators

- Poor concentration.
- Memory lapses.
- Indecisiveness.
- Difficulty solving problems.
- Lack of focus.

Appendix 2 – Employee Stress Risk Assessment Form (including Employee Questionnaire)

Employee:

Job Title:

Date of Meeting:

Manager/Assessor:

Nature of Concerns: *(see completed employee questionnaire)*

:

HSE Management Standards Areas Affected

- ☐ Demands
- ☐ Control
- ☐ Support
- ☐ Relationships
- ☐ Role
- ☐ Change

Existing Controls

Agreed Actions

Action	Responsible Person	Target Date

Review Date

Employee Signature:

Manager Signature:

Appendix 3 – HSE Management Standards Framework

The Council will align its stress management arrangements with the HSE Management Standards, which identify six key areas associated with workplace stress:

1. **Demands** – Workload, work patterns and work environment.
2. **Control** – The degree of influence employees have over their work.
3. **Support** – Resources, encouragement and assistance provided.
4. **Relationships** – Positive working practices and prevention of conflict.
5. **Role** – Clarity regarding responsibilities and expectations.
6. **Change** – Effective management and communication of organisational change.

Further Information: HSE Stress Talking Toolkit

https://books.hse.gov.uk/gempdf/HSE_stress_talking_toolkit.pdf

Date Adopted:

Review Date: Annually