



Managing Stress and Enhancing Wellbeing Policy and Procedure

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1 Statement of Aims and Objectives

- 1.1 South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust) is committed to creating a working environment that promotes the health and wellbeing of its colleagues. To this end, the Trust knows that their colleagues are the most important asset and that their wellbeing is essential to effective work performance and the provision of high quality care.
- 1.2 The Trust specifically recognises that there will be times when an individual may experience excessive stress or negative pressure in their personal life or at work, which may affect their health, performance and ability to provide an efficient and effective service.
- 1.3 The Trust recognises [the Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) legal requirement to minimise stress at work.
- 1.4 The Trust is committed to minimising avoidable work related stress wherever possible (by using the [HSE's Stress Indicator Tool](#)), and promoting wellbeing throughout the Trust.

2 Principles

- 2.1 To work in partnership with employees to develop working practices that reduce the factors that may lead to stress in the workplace and to ensure that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken so as to reduce and control the risk of stress.
- 2.2 To manage stress through both effective leadership and management practices by providing mandatory training for managers and supervisors and by encouraging employees to recognise and to be involved in the management of stressors which affect them.
- 2.3 To provide adequate resources to enable the Central Health and Safety Working Group (CHSWG) to monitor the effectiveness of procedures to reduce and manage work related stress in order to support individuals that may be affected.
- 2.4 To provide ongoing support, information and training on the management of work related stress and to offer immediate support through the Wellbeing Hub or line managers.

3 Definitions

- 1.1. The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”.



- 1.2. Some pressure is vital to all of us, but when we experience excessive stressors or other types of demands being placed upon us, particularly over a period of time, it can then become detrimental to health. It is important to remember that reaction to stress is a very individual experience. Individual stress can be influenced by our own beliefs, attitudes and unrealistic expectations of others. Individual reaction to stressful situations may also be influenced by our conditioning, cultural background, education, life experiences, state of health and personality type.
- 1.3. Stress is an individual response to a perceived pressure and therefore people will have different coping thresholds – it may be difficult to predict who is likely to suffer with stress. It should be noted that stress can also be accumulative and it not necessarily predictable.
- 1.4. There is a clear distinction between pressure and stress. Pressure if managed well can be a positive state, whilst stress left mismanaged can be detrimental to health.
- 1.5. The HSE identifies the following potential causes of workplace stress in accordance with the HSE Management Standards:
- Demands – for example workload and/or exposure to physical hazards or difficult situations which have a negative impact on emotional wellbeing;
 - Support – from peers, colleagues and managers;
 - Control – how much say the individual has in the way they carry out their work;
 - Change – how organisational change is managed and communicated in the organisation;
 - Role – whether the individual understands their role in the organisation and if they have conflicting roles or role demands.
- 3.5 Examples of indicators of stress are illustrated in [APPENDIX A: Indicators of Stress](#).

4 Responsibilities

- 1.6. The **Chief Executive Officer** is accountable for ensuring that the general principles of this policy are followed by all and to support mechanisms to aid the promotion of health and wellbeing.
- 1.7. **The responsibilities of the Trust**
- 1.7.1. The Trust has a legal duty of care to colleagues to ensure health at work, as set out in the [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#) and the [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#). The Trust will ensure that its policies and practices reflect this duty and review the operation of these documents at regular intervals (at least yearly).



1.8. The responsibilities of **our people**:

- Colleagues must take responsibility for managing their own health and wellbeing, by adopting good health behaviours and informing the Trust if they believe work or the work environment poses a risk to their health. Any health-related information disclosed by a colleague during discussions with the Wellbeing Hub, managers, or Occupational Health is treated in confidence.
- Be aware of colleagues who may be experiencing difficulties at work which are or could result in work related stress.
- Further guidelines for colleagues are shown in [APPENDIX B – Guidelines for Colleagues](#)

4.4 **Managers'** responsibilities:

- Attend training and updates as required by the Trust in order to raise personal awareness and deliver effective management practices and implementation of specific action plans and interventions for reducing and managing work related stress.
- Offer support and engage with employees that may be experiencing stress and where appropriate signpost to the Wellbeing Hub.
- Ensure they take steps to reduce risks to colleagues' health and wellbeing by:
 - Keeping colleagues in the team up to date with developments at work and how these might affect their job and workload
 - Ensuring colleagues have a wellbeing conversation as part of the annual appraisal process and ongoing 121's
 - Ensuring colleagues know who to approach with problems concerning their role and how to pursue issues – e.g. line manager and Occupational Health.
 - Undertaking risk assessments, evaluating risks identified, and ensure these are recorded and regularly monitored and reviewed.
 - Making reasonable adjustments where risks have been identified, using the reasonable adjustments passport.
 - Ensure all job descriptions are up to date
 - Supporting colleagues with carer responsibilities (carer's passport)
- Monitor stress risk factors within the Trust by using the [HSE Stress Indicator Tool \(SIT\)](#) which measures the attitudes and perceptions of individuals regarding work-related stress.
- Further guidelines for managers are shown in [APPENDIX C – Guidelines for Managers](#)

4.5 The **Wellbeing Hub** responsibilities:

- Provide advice and support to all our people.
- Support individuals going through sickness absence management where appropriate, including the administration of the alternative duties pathway



to keep colleagues in work wherever possible. This is in partnership with the HR Business Partnering service.

- In conjunction with the Human Resources Department, monitoring of levels of occurrence of stress and other illnesses associated with stress as well as identifying trends.
- The responsibilities of Health and Safety representatives:
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress at work.
- Contribute to the provision of information to the Wellbeing Hub, Executive Team and the Trust Board regarding the implementation of this policy and the stress management standards.
- Contribute to the provision of information to the WWC on the efficacy of this policy and the measures in place within the Trust to reduce and manage work related stress.

4.6 The responsibilities of **Trade Unions**:

- Work in partnership with management to ensure that the general principles of this policy are adhered to
- Be allowed access to statistical and anonymous data concerning stress related issues and to conduct joint inspections to ensure stressors are controlled every three months.
- Attend training and updates as required by the Trust in order to raise personal awareness and contribute to the development and implementation of this policy.

5 Risk assessment

5.1 If an individual believes they are suffering the harmful effects of stress, rather than endlessly worrying about it, they are encouraged firstly to talk to their Line Manager and/or safety representative. Alternatively, an individual can contact the Wellbeing Hub to discuss their concerns (0300 123 9193, wellbeinghub@secamb.nhs.uk).

5.2 The Trust will use the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) [HSE Management Standards](#) to assist in the reduction of workplace stress. There are six key potential stressors at work identified by the HSE that, if properly managed proactively, can help reduce work-related stress. Appendix D. A stress risk assessment may be carried out by the Line Manager for the individual using the [HSE Stress Indicator Tool questionnaire](#). This will help identify the areas of stress in the workplace that the individual is currently experiencing. Further details regarding this question can be found [here](#), on the HSE website.

6 Identification, analysis and evaluation of workplace stressors

6.1 The Trust can identify workplace stressors by examining existing information, for example: IRW1 trends ('low', 'no harm', 'near miss'), employment turnover



and exit interview data, incident reporting, sickness absence information, Wellbeing Hub, Occupational Health and linking in with unions and staff networks.

- 6.2 When there is a noticeable trend in workplace stressors, the Trust will endeavour to provide education and training to address the issue, and to implement safer working practices.

7 Managing stress related illness

- 7.1 If an individual starts to feel the effects of stress ([signs of stress](#)) they should first speak with their line manager or local Wellbeing advocate who can offer help and support.
- 7.2 A Health and Wellbeing Conversation should be considered as this will provide a safe space for the individual to reflect on what the stressors are and what they can do to mitigate these.
- 7.3 In addition to the health and wellbeing conversations, the line manager may undertake a stress risk assessment. Any work related stressors that are identified need to be managed effectively and reduced; assistance and support should also be given to allow the individual to deal with any external sources of stress. This may require contacting the Wellbeing Hub for advice, support or guidance.
- 7.4 Refer to Occupational Health for advice and guidance on reasonable adjustments.
- 7.5 Once a stress related illness has been identified, it is important that all individuals are aware of what sources of support are available and where these can be found. The Wellbeing Hub is available for a wide range of support and can refer or signpost individuals to further treatment or external services.
- 7.6 Regular review meetings between the Line Manager and the individuals must be held to ensure appropriate support is being provided and agreed actions being taken. These meetings should be scheduled as deemed necessary, and may vary on regularity depending on the individual's needs. A Union representative can also be present at these meetings.
- 7.7 If appropriate, the Wellbeing Hub will provide access to Wellbeing Practitioners to meet with any individual who is experiencing stress or stress related symptoms. Further treatment may be necessary and will be supported by the Wellbeing Hub.
- 7.8 In all cases, if the Trust is aware that an individual is suffering from stress, appropriate steps will be taken to try and manage the situation – this may



include providing assistance or training, or linking in with the Wellbeing Hub for advice on next steps.

- 7.9 All individuals should be aware of changes in someone else that may indicate that an individual is suffering with stress, or stress related symptoms. However, some people will not display overt signs and it is not always noticeable when someone is stressed. Once alerted that someone is experiencing stress, this should be highlighted to a line manager and/or the Wellbeing Hub. A list of signs and symptoms can be found in Appendix A.

8 **Monitoring**

- 8.1 The Wellbeing Hub will review any trends or issues and where appropriate escalate these to the Central Health and Safety Working Group. The NHS colleagues' survey also measures this which is reported to the Workplace Wellbeing Committee.

9 **Audit and Review**

- 9.1 All policies have their effectiveness audited by the responsible Management Group at regular intervals, and initially six months after a new policy is approved and disseminated.
- 9.2 Effectiveness will be reviewed using the tools set out in the Trust's Policy and Procedure for the Development and Management of Trust Policies and Procedures (also known as the Policy on Policies).
- 9.3 This document will be reviewed in its entirety every three years or sooner if new legislation, codes of practice or national standards are introduced, or if feedback from employees indicates that the policy is not working effectively.
- 9.4 All changes made to this policy will go through the governance route for development and approval as set out in the Policy on Policies.

10 **Supporting References**

- [Health and Safety at Work Act 1974](#)
- [Health and Safety Executive Management Standards – Work Related Stress 2007](#).
- HSE stress management
- [Management, Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#)
- Wellbeing Hub Stress booklet



11 Equality Analysis

- 11.1 The Trust believes in fairness and equality, and values diversity in its role as both a provider of services and as an employer. The Trust aims to provide accessible services that respect the needs of each individual and exclude no-one. It is committed to comply with the *Human Rights Act* and to meeting the *Equality Act 2010*, which identifies the following nine protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Race, Religion and Belief, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Sex, Marriage and Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity.
- 11.2 Compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty: If a contractor carries out functions of a public nature then for the duration of the contract, the contractor or supplier would itself be considered a public authority and have the duty to comply with the equalities duties when carrying out those functions.



APPENDIX A: Indicators of Stress

The below outlines some example symptoms that are indicators of too much pressure which can come from the individual, work, home, any combination, or all three.

Psychological signs:

- Inability to concentrate or make simple decisions
- Memory lapses
- Becoming rather vague
- Easily distracted
- Less intuitive and creative
- Worrying
- Negative thinking
- Depression and anxiety

Emotional signs:

- Tearful
- Irritable
- Mood swings
- Extra sensitive to criticism
- Defensive
- Feeling out of control
- Lack of motivation
- Angry
- Frustrated
- Lack of confidence and/or self-esteem

Physical signs:

- Aches/pains of muscles/grinding teeth
- Frequent colds/infections
- Rashes/allergies/skin irritations
- IBS/constipation/diarrhoea
- Weight loss or gain
- Heartburn/ulcers/indigestion
- Hyperventilating/lump in the throat/pins and needles
- Dizziness/palpitations
- Nausea/panic attacks
- Physical tiredness
- Menstrual changes/loss of libido/sexual problems
- Heart problems/high blood pressure

Behavioural signs:

- No time for relaxation or pleasurable activities
- Prone to accidents and forgetfulness
- Becoming a workaholic



- Increased reliance on alcohol, smoking, caffeine, recreational or illegal drugs
- Poor time management and/or poor standards of work
- Absenteeism
- Self-neglect/change in appearance
- Social withdrawal
- Relationship problems
- Insomnia or waking tired
- Recklessness
- Aggressive/anger outbursts
- Nervous
- Uncharacteristically lying

The above information was taken from www.isma.org.uk



APPENDIX B – Guidelines for Colleagues

There is a difference between stress and pressure. Individuals may experience pressure on a daily basis, and need it to motivate us and enable us to perform at our best.

It's when too much pressure is experienced without the opportunity to recover that stress may be experienced. Stress affects people in different ways at different times, and is often the result of a combination of factors in personal and working lives.

Work-related stress can be tackled by working with the Line Manager to identify any issues at source and agree realistic and workable ways to manage them.

Every individual has a responsibility to look after their own physical health and mental wellbeing, and to take action to prevent stressful situations wherever possible.

It is important to recognise your own signs and symptoms of stress (Appendix A), and be willing to seek or receive support as necessary. This could be by speaking with your Line Manager and/or the Wellbeing Hub.



APPENDIX C – Guidelines for Managers

What do Line Managers need to do to prevent and reduce stress?

Good people management practices can help to reduce the incidence of work related stress. The following areas are particularly relevant:

Recruitment and Selection

Jobs should be well designed with a clear job description and realistic workload. Recruiting the wrong person into a job can lead to a very stressful situation for the whole team. If a job is known to involve exposure to stressful situations, then this needs to be clear to job applicants and taken into account during recruitment.

Colleagues' Induction

Starting a new job can be exciting, but also stressful, and a good induction programme in the workplace can help a new team member to settle in more quickly and reduce stress within the team.

Workload Management

All colleagues should have manageable workloads. Team work and work re-allocation should be considered, particularly where peaks and troughs of work demand occur. Systems should be in place for re-prioritising work at times of high demand or high colleague absence. If workload increases above a manageable level, senior managers should be made aware of this.

Management Style

Managers need to be aware of their own personal style, and whether they are perceived as approachable and supportive by colleagues. Some colleagues are very self-motivated and require minimal supervision. Others require more support and guidance.

Training and Development

All colleagues should have a personal development plan detailing the training and development they need to perform their role effectively. Lack of training can be a cause of poor performance and stress.

Change Management and Communication

Managers should ensure effective two-way communication with colleagues, to include proper consultation processes and listening to feedback. Communication should include one to one meetings and team meetings. Colleagues should be involved in decisions which affect them. Prolonged uncertainty for colleagues can be very stressful and good leadership is required at these times.

Conflict Between Colleagues

Where there is conflict within the team, this needs to be actively addressed by the manager. Support and advice is available from the Human Resources team, and external mediation is a possible option. Bullying and harassment can be a major stressor, and will



not be tolerated. Please refer to the Dignity at Work policy for further details. Colleagues can also avail themselves of the Freedom to Speak Guardian Team where appropriate.

Absence Management and Return to Work

Returning to work after a period of absence can be stressful and extra support from the Line Manager and colleagues may be required to integrate the individual back into the team.

Support for Colleagues

Managers are expected to support their colleagues in dealing with stress and to actively manage and minimise any stressors within the workplace. It is recognised that individuals respond differently to pressures, and that different strategies will be needed for different individuals.



APPENDIX D – HSE Management Standards

HSE's Management Standards represent a set of conditions that, if present:

- demonstrate good practice through a step-by-step risk assessment approach
- allow assessment of the current situation using pre-existing data, surveys and other techniques
- promote active discussion and working in partnership with employees and their representatives, to help decide on practical improvements that can be made
- help simplify risk assessment for work-related stress by:
 - identifying the main risk factors
 - helping employers focus on the underlying causes and their prevention
 - providing a yardstick by which organisations can gauge their performance in tackling the key causes of stress

They cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health, lower productivity and increased accident and sickness absence rates. The Management Standards are:

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

To effectively implement the Management Standards approach it is essential that you ensure the resource, support and infrastructure for the project is in place in your organisation. For advice on doing this go to [Before you start](#).

Management Standards workbook

The implementation process detailed here is supported by a [workbook](#) which provides tips, advice and guidance from people who have gone through the process. It includes a selection of checklists to allow you to be sure that each step has been achieved before you move on.

You can print this workbook free of charge and use it to develop your approach; the completed document can be retained as evidence of what you have done should an inspector need it.

The workbook will also be useful to organisations choosing to use an alternative approach, and provides advice on ensuring their approach is suitably equivalent – many of the practical solutions may also be applicable.



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<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards>