

POLICY STATEMENT

The company is concerned for the general health, safety and well being of its employees, and is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment as required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

POLICY RATIONALE

The rationale for this policy is to ensure that all employees minimise stress whilst working for Revive Healthcare Training.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS**CROSS REFERENCES and other RESOURCE MATERIAL**

Prepared by:	Department:	Authorised:	Review Cycle:	Issue Number:
D. Reid	Administration	Directors	Bi-Annual	01-07-2004
05-2004				Issue 1

1.0 Introduction

The Company is concerned for the general health, safety and well being of its employees, and is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment as required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

Uncontrolled stress at work can create problems and affect employees, their families and the efficiency in which we provide services to performance duties. Stress is a legitimate issue on the Health and Safety agenda and the Company is concerned about both the physical and mental well being of all staff and will, wherever practicable, reduce or eliminate in-built stressors.

2.0 Definition

There is not a single agreed definition of stress, however the Health and Safety Commission defines stress as:

“Stress is the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed on them .”

This definition also equates to that used by the Loss Prevention Council.

3.0 Purpose

This policy is designed to encourage the development of practices that confront the causes of stress in the workplace through the application of reasonable management systems and procedures. This will mean that staff will be better equipped to deal with the demands of their duties so that they are able to provide the quality of work activity that reflects their professional expertise and knowledge and students will benefit from improved standard of care.

This policy supports the Company's existing Policies and Procedures and is designed to provide a framework for Heads of Department/or equivalent and employees

4.0 Aims of the Policy

The aims of the policy are:

- to raise the awareness of the impact of work on stress
- to promote the need for reasonable employment Practices
- to assist the Company to comply with their statutory obligations
- to ensure the intervention aimed at reducing stress are based on an assessment of the conditions in the organisation and take into account current knowledge on best practice

5.0 Work Stress

Most people have their own ideas about what stress is and what causes it. **As stated** stress is the reaction people have when the demands placed on them are not matched by their ability to cope or by any other available resources. This reaction is more likely when people have insufficient control over their situations and inadequate support in coping with them.

Work stress is that which arises as a result of, or is aggravated by work. More specifically, work stress is a response to acute or chronic exposure to unpleasant, dangerous or threatening aspects of work. These may have emotional, psychological, behavioural and physiological characteristics.

It is a common fallacy that a little stress is good for you. Such claims are based on confusion between demand, challenge, stimulation or pressure on the one hand and stress on the other. The former characteristics of work can be good for staff; they keep staff alert and motivated, it is when these demands become excessive that they may lead to the experience of stress

6.0 Causes of Stress

It is worth noting that the causation is often difficult to establish in many stress-related claims. Each person has a unique set of pressures to cope with, which may on an occasion become excessive. However experience has identified those common aspects of home and work which are associated with the experience of stress, as being:

- Personal reasons such as death of close relative, divorce, personal injury or illness.
- Work reasons such as physical environment, demands of the job, training needs, excessive working hours, relationships at work, contractual obligations and personal expectations.
- Change programmes and situations.

7.0 The Symptoms and Effects of Stress

Stress can show itself in different ways and being aware of some of the symptoms of stress will help employees find a solution more quickly.

Symptoms can be :-

- Emotional such as anxiety, depression, irritability, tearfulness, anger and helplessness.
- Physical such as fatigue, sleep problems, muscle tension, headaches and high blood pressure.
- Behavioural such as frequent sickness absences, poor time management, erratic eating habits and increased intake of alcohol, cigarettes and other drugs.

Employees who are suffering from stress may be more likely to have accidents, suffer from poor concentration, reduced performance, make mistakes, experience poor time management, increased absence, low self esteem and physical symptoms. Relationships at work may suffer resulting in increased tension and conflict between colleagues.

8.0 Responsibilities

- 8.1 The Company is responsible for ensuring effective management arrangements are in place to manage organisational stress. These arrangements will be consistent with the priority accorded following a Company-wide Risk Assessment, taking due regard of the competing demands for resources.
- 8.2 Each Department will be responsible for implementing procedures and Practices, which reflects its assessment for the identified risks within its area and meets the aims and objectives of the Policy.
- 8.3 Heads of Department/or equivalent are responsible for ensuring job **tasks** are designed in such a way as to reduce in-built stressors and be vigilant for the stress caused by change in management programmes. They are also required to be vigilant for the signs and symptoms of stress and to investigate possible causes, to arrange for support to be given and, wherever possible, try to avoid increasing the stress levels of the employee concerned.
- 8.4 The **Personnel Department will assist** Heads of Department/or equivalent with return to work programmes for employees who have been absent due to stress-related illness and where **appropriate**, investigate suitable alternative work for employees returning to work following a stress related illness. This would be in consultation with the appropriate Medical Advisers. The

Health, Safety and Environment Unit and Personnel Department will be responsible for establishing stress awareness training for both managers and staff

8.5 Occupational Health is responsible for providing advice and counselling facilities to both staff and managers.

9.0 Procedures and Practice

The Company will implement the policy by putting appropriate arrangements in place. Such arrangements will undertake actions in 3 fundamental approaches these being:

- Prevention – Primary Stress
- Timely reaction – Secondary Stress
- Rehabilitation – Tertiary Stress

9.1 Prevention

Prevention addresses the problems at source, by removing or reducing the source of the stress or by otherwise protecting staff from exposure to those hazards. Responses within this broad category of prevention can be subdivided into a number of specific actions; these being :-

- Risk Assessment
- Management Training
- Work Design and Organisational Development
- Selection & Training for the Job
- Stress Management Awareness Training

9.1.1 Stress Risk Assessment

It is now clear from recent cases and from the HSE's Guidance for Employees on Work Stress, that the Company should consider stress when undertaking their general risk assessments. It would be wrong for the Company to only consider stress when an individual employee is already experiencing a problem.

The basic risk assessment involves answering 7 fundamental questions :-

1. Is there a problem?
2. Is stress affecting employees' health?
3. How are the problems caused?
4. Is there a system which will detect and respond early enough?
5. How do you solve the problem?
6. Are there support services available?
7. Is the system being evaluated?

In general, stress in work is likely to arise as a result of organisational and psychosocial hazards. Appendix 1 includes a list of factors which should be included in the Risk Assessment.

Heads of Department/or equivalent will need to carry out risk assessments to identify :-

- a. those type of jobs where risk of stress is more likely than others
- b. those areas of work where conflict is being generated
- c. those staff who may by change of circumstance be place at risk

In consultation with relevant staff the Head of Department/or equivalent will complete the risk assessment process followed by introduction of appropriate actions (control measures), which may be generic and of a permanent nature or be personal and of a temporary nature.

9.1.2 Management Training

Training will be established for Heads of Department/or equivalent /Department Safety Co-ordinators to facilitate their ability to recognise symptoms of stress within their staff, and respond appropriately, and will include how to access the professional help.

9.1.3 Planning Work Design

Redesigning work Practices and work environments can achieve prevention. Departments and Line Managers have been, and will continue to give consideration to the reduction in stress benefits from clarity of job descriptions, task variety and flexi-time arrangements.

9.1.4 Selection and Training for the Job

The Company currently has recruitment and selection systems that are designed to ensure an adequate supply of suitably qualified and able staff. Employees also receive training, which is repeated and updated when necessary. These play an important part in ensuring that the Company is not trying to make demands that are beyond the abilities and resources

9.1.5 Stress Management Training

Training will be organised in collaboration with the **Health, Safety and Environment Unit** and **Personnel Department** to help staff cope with the pressures they may encounter. It will include how staff can access more specific advice and emphasise the confidentiality of the whole process.

9.1.6 Employee Assistance Programme

The Company shall establish a telephone helpline where employees can get advice and guidance with regard to their problems and some access to short term counselling.

This Helpline will be managed by the Occupational Health Department on a similar basis to the Needlestick Hotline.

9.2 Timely Response

When all efforts toward prevention have failed the Company need to act swiftly and appropriately to care for employees who are experiencing stress. Action will be taken at three levels (i) by the Head of Department/or equivalent, (ii) by Senior Manager or in-house Occupational Health, (iii) by referral to Specialists.

Confidentiality is paramount when dealing with issues relating to stress and will be ensured throughout the whole of the response and rehabilitation actions.

9.2.1 First Level of Response - by the Head of Department/or equivalent

This action may be initiated by the employee by approaching the Head of Department/or equivalent or by the Line Manager on learning that the employee has, or may have a problem. Line Managers must work within a supportive organisational culture, be aware of stress related issues and be trained to deal with them as part of their normal duties. Staff will be invited to talk through a problem. Managers will give careful thought about it and if possible, changes in the content and context of the employee's work. (resources, targets, support etc).

9.2.2 Second Level of Response –Senior Manager and Occupational Health

The second level of response is internal referral to either a Senior Manager or the Occupational Health Department to explore the problem further. The degree of confidentiality under which this service operates is consistent with any other Occupational Health referral. Support would be available for Managers from the Personnel Department. Occupational Health referrals need to have a nominated Personnel representative who would be responsible for all the paperwork etc. relating to the referral. This second level of response should be operative when the employee has a problem which is not being resolved by initial line management activity, or where for some reason, the employee is unwilling or unable to discuss the issue with their Line Manager. The referral can therefore be made by the Line Manager or directly by the employee.

9.2.3 Referral to Specialist

The Occupational Health Department will initiate the third level of response to a specialist or support agency where it is considered that the in-house response is not improving the situation. Care will be taken if the specialist is from within the Hospital Trust that the employee does not feel compromised by possible contact in the work place.

9.3 Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation represents the Company's last opportunity to manage the situation. Rehabilitating the employee who is experiencing a problem may be within the workplace or equipping them for a return to work in cases that involve sickness absence.

The Head of Department/or equivalent should be clear whether an employee is fit to return to work or not, and under what circumstances that work can be resumed. Amongst the possible difficulties is that of returning the employee to exactly the same working conditions that were associated with the original difficulties. In such cases, the experience of further problems would be reasonably foreseeable and could render the Company to charges of negligence.

10.0 Record Keeping

It is important that records be kept of all relevant actions. Records should be accurate, deal largely with the facts and points of evidence, rather than feeling or conjecture. Unqualified opinions and judgements should be avoided. Proposed actions should be recorded.

ORGANISATIONAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS LIKELY CAUSES OF STRESS AT WORK

Context of Work

Organisational

Poor communications and poor leadership
Lack of clarity about organisational objectives and structure
Organisation change

Participation and control

Lack of participation in decision making
Lack of control (e.g. over work methods, work pace or work environment)

Interpersonal relationships

Inadequate, inconsiderate or unsupportive supervision

Poor relationships with co-workers

Bullying harassment and violence
Isolated or solitary work
No agreed procedures for dealing with complaints or problems

Career development, status and pay

Job security
Lack of promotional prospects, under-promotion or over- promotion
Lack of recognition or work of low social value
Unclear or unfair performance evaluation systems
Being over skilled or under skilled for the job
Lack of training for the job

Role in organisation

Unclear role or conflicting roles
Responsibility for other people
Continuously dealing with other people and their problems

Home-work interface

Conflicting demands of work and home
Lack of support for work problems at home and home problems at work

CONTENT OF WORK

Task content
Unpleasant tasks
Monotonous, under-stimulating or meaningless tasks

Workload and work pace

Having too much or too little to do
Working under time pressures

Working hours

Inflexible working schedules
Long, unsociable or unpredictable hours
Poorly designed shift system