



Stress management policy for Viablies Community Association

POLICY, PROCEDURE AND GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING EMPLOYEES

1. INTRODUCTION

Viablies Community Association (VCA) recognises and is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its staff.

VCA recognises that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors. Whilst a degree of pressure can be a positive force at work, excessive pressures can have a negative effect on both the health and performance of all staff.

2. DEFINITION OF STRESS

The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

VCA is committed to promoting good health at work and recognises the effects of stress may have on individual staff and the need to provide suitable support mechanisms for employees suffering from the negative effects of stress. Signs to look out for include:

- More sickness absence
- Decreased performance
- More complaints and grievances
- Arriving late for work on a frequent basis
- Being withdrawn
- Loss of motivation, confidence and commitment
- Increased emotional reactions

To manage the working environment in a manner that reduces the risk of stress occurring, VCA:

- undertakes to identify and review all workplace stressors and conduct stress risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed by the Employment subcommittee.
- will seek guidance and/or support from HSE wherever appropriate.
- will make available training for managers and supervisory staff in good management practices.

- will provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement VCA agreed stress management strategy.
- places particular importance on the provision of guidance and training, to identify and reduce workplace stressors, together with the appropriate preventative measures to minimise the potential hazards at work.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers and Trustees

Have a responsibility for implementation and the committee is responsible for providing the necessary resources. Managers and Trustees are required to:

- conduct and implement recommendations of risk assessments within their jurisdiction and make reasonable adjustments for staff in relation to limitations arising from medical conditions.
- ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties
- ensure employees are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- monitor workloads to ensure that staff are not overloaded and monitor working hours, time off in lieu and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking.
- monitor annual leave, lunch and other breaks to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement and taking adequate rest and relaxation time.
- attend training as identified in good management practice and health and safety awareness.
- ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction.
- be vigilant and offer additional support to staff who are experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement, separation or personal problems.
- encourage staff to seek support and advice when staff have personal issues to deal with.
- seek support and consider recommendations and advice and information on which external source of assistance is most appropriate for individual needs.
- monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Provide continuing support to individuals in a changing environment and encourage and support individuals to find professional support outside the organisation where appropriate.

STAFF

All staff have a responsibility to:

- raise issues of concern, at the earliest opportunity, with their Line Managers and General Practitioner.
- seek support and advice from the manager who can also provide confidential support and advice and information on which external source of assistance is most appropriate for individual needs.
- ensure that all annual leave, lunch breaks and all other breaks to which entitled to are taken and avoid working excessive flexi or overtime.
- manage their time and workload effectively and seek support and guidance if required from Line Manager.

5. MANAGING STRESS

In order to control work-related stress, VCA has first to ascertain whether it exists, and to what extent, within the workplace. The main areas of work-related stress are: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change.

VCA will carry out a stress risk Assessment based on the possible causative factors and this will indicate whether any of these factors are present and how likely they are to be the cause of work-related stress. This forms part of the Health and Safety Risk assessment. The Employment subcommittee, with the Centre Manager, are responsible for carrying out the stress risk assessments and may seek guidance and/or support from the Health and Safety Trustee in carrying out this work. Other tools and indicators available to support the risk assessment in determining the extent of any problem may include:

- providing a means whereby staff can talk freely and confidentially about any problems
- employee appraisals
- sickness absences / patterns of absence
- exit interviews/meetings
- worker turnover rates
- sudden or excessive increases in workload
- reduced productivity rates and/or reductions in work standards
- grievances/disciplinary actions.

Each of these tools will provide some information about the perceived levels of work-related stress within the workplace. However, they all have limitations and should not be used in isolation or taken as a 100% accurate reflection of the actual situation.

6. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE POLICY

Managers are responsible for implementation of the policy and the Trustees are responsible for providing the necessary resources.

Staff have a responsibility to raise any work-related issues with their line manager to raise concerns re appropriately supporting staff.

7. PROCEDURE

Where a line manager has concerns that staff may be exhibiting possible signs of excessive stress that is affecting their work performance, conduct, or relationships with others, which could in turn affect their work performance, the manager should have a private discussion with the member of staff about the situation. This will be a very sensitive matter and it is quite likely the member of staff may become agitated, upset and may deny they have any issues. The manager has a responsibility for the health and safety of the staff they manage and must ensure that the individual does not put anyone, including themselves, at risk. The manager should inform the member of staff of the help available under this policy, and offer referral to the Chair of the Trustees in the first instance.

VCA will support reasonable time off during normal working hours to attend appointments e.g. counselling, an appointment with the General Practitioner. These should be agreed in advance with Line Management.

If the member of staff agrees, the Chair of the Trustees will arrange a confidential interview with them as soon as possible to explore possible ways to deal with the issues. The content of the referral and associated meetings with the Chair is strictly confidential between the member of staff, the Chair, and the Employment subcommittee. However, the line Manager will need to be aware of reasonable time off requested.

In addition, a stress risk assessment may be completed by the Chair in discussion with Centre Manager.

In accordance with VCA Equal Opportunities Policy, this procedure will not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or natural origin, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, gender reassignment, religion or religious beliefs, age, trade union membership, disability, offending background or any other personal characteristic.

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

When a member of staff seeks help, records or discussions, will be kept completely confidential within the Employment Subcommittee together with any associated information. Where the member of staff is given time off work to attend counselling or medical treatment, the reason for the absence will be kept confidential between the member of staff, the Chair where appropriate and manager. Attendance and progress will be monitored by the line manager with the Chair where appropriate. The content of any counselling, however, will remain strictly confidential. It is accepted that any written records are the property of the person administering the counselling or medical treatment. The General Data Protection Regulations and Access to Medical Records Acts will be strictly complied with.

9. INFORMATION

Managers, Trustees and colleagues all have a responsibility to ensure that all staff recognise the possible indicators of excessive stress and are encouraged to seek help and advice as early as possible.

The Trustees will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented and will oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.