

# STRESS MANAGEMENT & WELLBEING GUIDANCE

We are committed to minimising the causes of work related ill health, and managing the effects of ill health when it occurs, through the promotion of employee wellbeing. This is a guide for managers to help them take a proactive approach to managing stress and wellbeing with their team.

## WHAT IS STRESS

The Health and Safety Executive define 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. The HSE has developed [Stress Management standards](#) to guide employers on how to reduce the likelihood of work related stress to support employee health & wellbeing.

## LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 imposes general duties on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 as employers we are required to:

- record significant findings of any risk assessments
- make, implement and record preventive and protective measures to control the risk
- Provide information to employees on the nature of potential causes of stress and the measures the organisation has taken to prevent them
- Not require an employee to work more than 48 hours per week (unless a written opt-out is provided)
- Provide employees with 5.6 weeks paid leave per year, including bank holidays (20 days leave for a full time employee) and regular breaks during work time.

## RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MANAGING STRESS AT MVDC

The Council's Senior Management team and Chief Executive in particular are accountable for ensuring that all risks, are reduced to acceptable levels in accordance with Mole Valley Health & Safety Policy.

All managers must:

- Ensure staff are trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their area of responsibility.
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Implement recommendations of risk assessments within their areas of responsibility.

All managers should:

- Be aware of and encourage staff to undertake role development opportunities where they can be made available.
- Monitor and review workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor and review working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking.
- Ensure management/health and safety skills and awareness are kept up to date attending training as required.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support so far as reasonably practicable to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

The policies and procedures to address the issues and reinforce employee wellbeing include:

- Health and Safety manual, in particular p109
- those tabulated below;
- workload management procedures defined in procedural or service manual appropriate to each service area.

All employees:

- must co-operate with their manager to help implement Mole Valley procedures for matters under their control
- must refer issues beyond their control to appropriate contacts identified in the procedures or their own manager

All employees are encouraged:

- to display and promote the values and behaviours that underpin the organisational strategy of Mole Valley District Council and outlined in the organisation's Code of Conduct.
- to take personal preventative action using advice available on the EAP website and from Occupational Health, where appropriate.
- to respect the needs of others and support colleagues to reduce the likelihood of stress
- **to use annual leave and other breaks to good effect**

## WHAT IS THE LINK BETWEEN STRESS MANAGEMENT AND WELLBEING AT WORK?

Wellbeing at Work looks beyond stress management to preventative measures by: *“creating an environment to promote a state of contentment which allows an employee to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation”*.

In line with the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards our wellbeing at work is enhanced if:

- we understand our **role** within our organisation
- we feel comfortable in our **relationships** with work colleagues and are not subject to unacceptable behaviours
- we feel the **demands** placed upon us are within our capabilities
- we are able to exercise some form of **control** over our work and the way we do it
- we know that **support** is there to be called upon in the form of encouragement, resources or oversight from peers and managers
- we are consulted and involved during times of **change**
- we know that there are **systems** in place within our organisation to respond to our concerns

## WHAT ACTION SHOULD I TAKE AS A MANAGER?

### Focus on wellbeing in your team.

A useful tool for that process is the MVDC Team Wellbeing assessment, which is based on the HSE's *Management Standards* and the CIPD guidance on *Wellbeing at work*. The assessment form is attached at Appendix A. This tool allows you to involve your staff in assessing whether the team's current arrangements reinforce Health & Wellbeing.

The assessment, as a team activity, is a useful method of involving and communicating with staff. The proactive approach means that you can use this as a prompt for an annual review as well as using it as part of planning for the future so that proposed changes in working procedures or structures consider employee wellbeing.

### Focus on yourself and your development needs.

The role of the line manager is key. Good line management can lead to good health, well being and improved performance. The first step is to think about your own wellbeing – there is advice on [EAP \(Employee Assistance Programme\) website](#). Further links to wellbeing and personal resilience tools and training are available on the My HR pages on Molly.

It is then useful to think about the effect that your behaviour has on the team. The HSE have published a [stress management competency tool](#) to help managers assess their skills and development needs to reinforce wellbeing at work. The MV line managers training includes courses aimed at addressing the issue of stress management, wellbeing and personal resilience. These tools all emphasize the line manager's role in ensuring communication, providing constructive feedback, and providing support.

### Focus on individuals in the team

Line managers have a role in identifying and supporting people with health conditions to help them to carry on with their responsibilities, or adjust responsibilities where necessary.

Where an individual is experiencing stress it may be helpful to complete an Individual Wellbeing Assessment. Attached at Appendix B. This tool may assist you, and them, in identifying their stressors and any reasonable changes to the work that may help them to reduce their stress.

Where an individual has been referred to Occupational Health (OH) due to mental health issues or a diagnosed condition a more in depth stress risk assessment may be recommended and provided by OH to work through with your employee.

For others in the team a certain amount of both physical and mental stimulation is essential for healthy living. Too much or too little can cause overload, or boredom, which are unhealthy and may lead to a stress reaction. Stress reactions result from the body's natural defence mechanisms against threat. To reinforce wellbeing it is helpful to recognise the signs and manage the response through e.g. exercise, taking breaks, talking through issues. Further advice is available on the EAP website.

### MINIMISE STRESS & REINFORCE WELLBEING

MVDCs efforts to minimise stress and reinforce wellbeing are focused on a variety of policies and procedures, as well as managers holding regular one to one meetings with staff to discuss issues directly :

<b>DOMAIN</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>POLICIES/PROCEDURES/RESOURCES</b>
<b>CULTURE</b>	'Atmosphere' of the organisation and how it approaches employee wellbeing	Corporate Plan Code of Conduct Team meetings
<b>DEMANDS</b>	Such as workload, working pattern working hours and physical environment	Flexitime procedure Flexible working Training & development
<b>CONTROL</b>	How much influence people have in the way they do their work	Communication & Consultation Performance Management
<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b>	Promoting fairness, team working and skills to resolve conflict	Code of Conduct Respect at Work Team meetings
<b>CHANGE</b>	How organisational change is managed and communicated	Policy to manage staff changes Consultation processes Team meetings
<b>ROLE</b>	Whether people understand their role in the organisation and that conflict in their role is avoided	Performance Management Job Descriptions Targets, performance indicators & appraisal
<b>SUPPORT</b>	From colleagues and managers including encouragement, feedback, sponsorship and resources	Training to promote coaching management style Absence Management Occupational Health service EAP service Team meetings
<b>PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	To give people the skills to perform their tasks, and develop new skills	1:1s Performance Development Review
<b>INDIVIDUAL FACTORS</b>	Catering for individual differences	Wellbeing Risk assessments 1:1s Conversations