Health & Safety Policy

"Mental Health and Workplace Stress"

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Statement

Westchurch Homes (WH) are committed to protecting the health, both physical and mental , safety and welfare of our employees. We recognise that mental health and workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and managing mental health issues and reducing workplace stressors. This policy will apply to everyone in the company. Managers are responsible for implementation and Westchurch Homes (WH) will ensure adequate provision of the necessary resources.

Policy

WH will strive to identify any mental health issues and contributors such as workplace stressors and conduct suitable and sufficient risk assessments to identify and eliminate stress, so far as is reasonably practicable, or, where this is not practicable,   identify and provide adequate controls for any remaining / residual risks. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed.

Where applicable WH will endeavour to consult with any Safety Representatives and other relevant bodies / parties on all proposed action relating to the prevention of mental health issues and workplace stress.

WH will provide training for managers and supervisory staff in good management practices.

WH will strive to identify those at risk and provide confidential counselling, where required, for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors. Where this approach may not be relevant or useful the company will assist the affected individuals to identify and access appropriate assistance and advice

 The company will provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the company's agreed stress management strategy.

SIGNED :

POSITION:

DATED : Sept 2022

DATE FOR REVIEW : Sept 2023

Responsible Persons:

Senior Management / site management :

- Implement recommendations of risks assessments within their areas of operation.
- Ensure and facilitate good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are, or are going to be, organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties.
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that employees are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that employees are not overworking.
- Monitor holidays to ensure that employees are taking their full entitlement.
- Attend training, as requested / required, in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within the company or their areas of responsibility.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.
- Support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their management on a planned return to work.
- Refer to workplace counsellors or specialist agencies as required.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.

Human Resources / Occupational Health / H&S Advisors

- Provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress.
- Train and support managers in implementing stress risk assessments and managing mental health issues.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to prevent and reduce mental health and workplace stress.
- Inform the employer and the health and safety committee of any changes and developments in the field of mental health and workplace stress at work.
- Give guidance to managers on the mental health / workplace stress policy.
- Help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address mental health and workplace stress by collating sickness absence statistics.
- Advise managers and individuals on training requirements.
- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to occupational workplace counsellors where appropriate.

Employees:

- Raise issues of concern with your Safety Representative, line manager or occupational health.
- working with your employer to identify issues at source and agreeing realistic and workable ways to tackle these.
- Accept opportunities for counselling, assistance and advice when recommended.

Advisory Organisations:

- Acas website www.acas.org.uk; and
- CIPD website www.cipd.co.uk.
- HSE Stress Management Standards (INDG 430 Guidance) the Royal College of Psychiatrists
- MIND, the charity for mental health
- NHS Choices
- PTSD Support, a charity that helps those with, or living with people who have, PTSD. 24-hour helpline 01788 560800
- A time to change - info@time-to-change.org.uk.

Definition of stress and work-related stress

 The European agreement defined stress as *"a state which is accompanied by physical, psychological or social complaints or dysfunction and which results from individuals feeling unable to bridge a gap with the requirements or expectations placed on them"*.

In line with the approach taken in the European agreement. In the UK the HSE defines stress as **"the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them"**.

A key point to recognise is that individuals will react differently to pressure in different situations and at different stages in their working lives.

Stress is not a disease, but it can lead to a reduced ability to perform at work and have an impact on a person's health and wellbeing

Current applicable legislation:

- Under the European framework directive 89/391 requires that all employers have a **"duty to ensure the safety and health of workers in every aspect related to work"** in so far as they entail a risk to health and safety. This duty covers work-related stress and its causes.

- The Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires employers to secure the health (including mental health), safety and welfare of employees whilst at work and, amongst other things,

provide a safe place of work; ensure safe systems of work and provide information and training. The Act also requires employees to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others and to co-operate with the employer in discharging their duties under the Act.

- The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999, UK employers are required to carry out a suitable and sufficient assessment of the health and safety risks to which their employees are exposed whilst they are at work. This includes the requirement to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities and to take measures to control the identified risk.

Risk assessments six key factors for consideration;

- The demands of your job; - includes workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- Your control over your work;- how much say a person has in the way they do their work.
- The support you receive from managers and colleagues;- includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- Your relationships at work;- promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- Your role in the organisation; - whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
- Change and how it's managed.:- how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

HSE Stress Management Standards Guidance – 6 key areas

Westchurch Homes , as a responsible employer, are intending, as part of their work related stress management to implement relevant management systems to reduce the likelihood of work related stress and , where identified or brought to our attention, manage accordingly and appropriately.

This is to be achieved by adopting elements of the HSE "Stress Management Guidance" the 6 main elements of which are outlined below.

1/ Demands:

The Standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their
- jobs; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

Achieved by:

- The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work;
- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;
- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and
- Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

2/ Control:

How much say the person has in the way they do their work:

The Standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/States to be achieved:

- Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work;
- Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work;
- Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work;
- The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills;
- Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and
- Employees are consulted over their work patterns.

3/ Support

Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

The Standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

What should be happening/States to be achieved:

- The organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;
- Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it;
- Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job; and
- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

4/ Relationships:

Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour. The Standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, eg bullying at work; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/States to be achieved:

- The organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
- Employees share information relevant to their work;
- The organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour;
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

5/ Role:

Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

The Standard is that:

- Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; and

- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/States to be achieved:

- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible;
- The organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;
- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear; and systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

6/ Change:

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The Standard is that:

- Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change; and
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/States to be achieved:

The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes;

- The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals;
- Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs;
- Employees are aware of timetables for changes; and
- Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

Factors for consideration

24hr connectivity/tablets and mobile phones

As work patterns and technology changes many of us are now working away from workplaces and have become more reliant of mobile phones, tablets and laptops which allow us to maintain contact with 'the office'. Used properly these can be useful and helpful – if you're out visiting a customer they can give us directions, warn us of travel difficulties, and get emails and messages.

However, they can become a stressor when used to contact people out of normal working hours. Pressure is cumulative and as long as people are given sufficient opportunity to recover, does not always result in stress – contacting people outside their normal working time is reducing this recovery time and may have an adverse effect.

If you have workers using such equipment it would be useful to have a policy that explains the approved use of the equipment outside work hours and getting line managers to sign up to it – this should include a cut-off point after which it is accepted that emails will not receive a response or be considered. The policy may include provision that users should switch off their units whilst on leave.

Bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment are behaviours that make someone feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated or offended and can contribute to work-related stress.

They are often covered by legislation, for example Equalities Act where it is targeted, the Protection from Harassment Act or even criminal law where violence is involved. You can find out more about tackling harassment and bullying at work from:

- **ACAS Bullying and harassment at work: a guide for managers and employers**
- **CIPD Harassment and bullying at work**
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Presenteeism

Presenteeism means people attending work even though they are unwell due to physical or mental health conditions. Presenteeism can be a major concern if people won't take time to recover because, for example, they:

- don't get paid when they are off sick
- are worried about losing their job
- don't want to adversely affect their promotion chances
- don't want to add to other people's pressure because they are covering for them
- When people are ill they are less productive, can't fully concentrate, are more prone to making errors or having accidents and may be infectious, causing others to become ill.

PTSD

PTSD is a psychological and physical condition affecting people who have experienced or witnessed profoundly traumatic events. It can affect people in work which exposes them to war (such as soldiers) or disaster (such as emergency service workers).

A risk-based approach can help identify where incidents might happen. Preparing employees with training and other steps, such as psychometric testing, may help avoid or minimise the impact.

You can find out more about PTSD from:

- **the Royal College of Psychiatrists**
- **MIND, the charity for mental health**
- **NHS Choices**
- **PTSD Support, a charity that helps those with, or living with people who have, PTSD. 24-hour helpline 01788 560800**

Return to work

If staff take time off work because of work-related stress, getting them back to work as quickly as possible is important, particularly for them. A well-managed early return to work will reduce the risk of the absence becoming long term (that is longer than a month). In general, people find it more difficult to return to work the longer they are absent. Fit for Work provides free, confidential and impartial work-related health advice to employers and employees. It offers expert help from occupational health professionals to help people return to work after sickness absence.

Well-being

Well-being is a measure of satisfaction and happiness. It is a generic term for many initiatives to promote good health ranging from massage or yoga to five-a-day and smoking cessation schemes. These are aimed at the individual workers and only help the individuals taking part, improving their health.

While this kind of initiative can make people feel better, they are not designed specifically tackle work-related stress or its causes and using just these interventions, an employer is not fully meeting their legal duty.

HSE promotes the use of preventative measures that tackle the stressors at an organisational level. The actions taken then prevent work-related stress developing in the whole workforce, or in groups of staff. Research has shown that approaches that includes a combination of organisational and other approaches, such as resilience or mindfulness training, is more effective for tackling stress.

Working patterns/locations

Shift work, lone working and other non-standard working hours can negatively impact on employees' welfare.

For example, lone workers do not have the 'social' side of work. They may face additional risks of violence or abuse. It is not easy for their manager to monitor their welfare, which may lead to health

problems. Short-term or zero-hour contracts can also present problems for employees, particularly worries about money and job security.

People working from home may have some specific needs to be considered, for example one of the six Management Standards relates to support from both peers and managers, clearly being a way from colleagues could mean good support is more difficult to achieve.

Advice for managers on mental ill health conditions

Talking at an early stage

- As a manager, you may have employees who experience mental health difficulties. As soon as you notice that an employee is having difficulties, talk to them – early action can prevent them becoming more unwell.
- If the person does not want to speak to you, suggest they speak to someone else, for example someone from your employee assistance programme, occupational health team or their own GP.

Managers should concentrate on making reasonable adjustments at work, rather than understanding the diagnosis. Their GP, medical support or occupational health should be able to provide guidance on what you can do to help them.

If an employee goes off sick, lack of contact or involvement from their manager may mean they feel isolated, forgotten or unable to return. You can reduce the risk of them not returning to work by:

- keeping them informed about what is going on, including social events
- reassuring them early on and throughout their absence
- Use routine management tools to identify and tackle problems or needs
- Use scheduled work meetings, appraisals or informal chats about progress to find out more about any problems an employee may be having. You could have health and safety as an agenda item at meetings. As well as things like display screen equipment assessments etc, this can be used for stress or mental health issues.

If you have specific concerns about someone's health, talk about these at an early stage. Ask questions in an open, exploratory and non-judgemental way. These conditions affect people differently, so making adjustments to their job could relieve symptoms. You should be positive and supportive while exploring the issues and how you can help.

If a person has been off sick, you should discuss their return to work and reintegration into the workplace beforehand. A written plan can help. You both might want to agree when they have reached the stage of 'business as usual'. At this point, you can use existing management processes to review their performance, needs and work plan.

Supporting an employee who is tearful and upset

If an employee gets upset, talk to them, reassure them, and tell them that you will give them all the help and support available. Explain that things will go at a pace that suits them. If you are in a meeting with them, ask if they would like someone else with them.

Try to be sensitive to the level of information the person can cope with. In the middle of a crisis they may not be able to think clearly and take in complex information. Try to stay calm yourself.

Problems can build up over time and while you may feel pressure to do something, it might be better to take some time to think about options properly. Agree with the person which issues are most urgent.

If the session is not helpful for the person or you, rearrange it for when they are less upset. If the problem carries on, you should encourage them to seek help, for example from occupational health or their GP.

A much smaller number of people will experience more severe anxiety or depression. These can be associated with episodes of 'mania', which can include:

- extreme, heightened activity
- psychosis
- loss of touch with reality
- hallucinations
- distortion of the senses

In these rare instances, an employee may behave in ways that impact on colleagues or clients and you should keep your responsibilities for all employees in mind.

Take the person to a quiet place and speak to them calmly. Suggest that you could contact a friend or relative or that they go home and contact their GP or a member of their mental health team, if appropriate. You may be able to make an appointment and go with them to the surgery, if they want you to.

If someone is experiencing hallucinations or mania, they may not take in what you are saying. In this case, they will need immediate medical help. If an employee is disturbing others and refuses to accept help, seek advice from:

your occupational health provider

the person's GP

the NHS – call 111

or call an ambulance.

Additional guidance to help you think about ways to support employees who may experience severe and enduring mental ill health can be found in a series of toolkits developed by Business In The Community.

Managing a person with an ongoing illness

Most people who have ongoing mental health problems continue to work successfully. But when someone needs support, managers can work with them to ensure flexibility to suit their health needs. People with mental health problems should be treated in exactly the same way as any other member of staff, unless they ask for help or demonstrate clear signs that they need it. It is discriminatory to make assumptions about people's capabilities, their promotability or the amount of sick leave they may need because of their illness.

Coping strategies

Most people are encouraged to develop a coping strategy as part of their care. This often involves noting signs of a possible relapse and taking pre-emptive action, such as cutting down on work, being careful about drinking alcohol, taking exercise and finding time to relax. It is important you support the employee at this first warning stage. Small, inexpensive adjustments may well prevent a more costly period of illness.

Advance statements

Some people find it useful to draw up an 'advance statement' which explains how they want to be treated if they become unwell. The statement can cover practical arrangements such as details of the people who need to be contacted or provided with information.

It might be helpful to draw up an advance statement which relates to the workplace. It could include:

- signs that indicate the person is becoming unwell
- who to contact (perhaps a close relative, care coordinator or GP)
- what sort of support is helpful and what is not
- If an employee draws up an agreement with you, you should put the statement into practice to maintain trust.

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