STRESS MANAGEMENT & WELLBEING POLICY & PROCEDURE

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Agreed:

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Contents

Stress Management and Wellbeing Policy

Stress Management Policy

1   Introduction

West Lothian College are committed to providing a safe & healthy work environment for all employees and wish to address the issue of stress and well-being in the workplace by means of the following policy and its associated documents. The College believe that the measures set out in this document will contribute to creating and maintaining a healthy work environment; minimize the potential for psychological ill-health and provide support for those experiencing problems.

Work, generally, is good for you. It promotes physical and mental health and general well-being. The beneficial effects of work are greater than the harmful effects of prolonged absence. A working environment that promotes and sustains positive psychological well-being is one that is challenging, stimulating and enriching. Within this context, a level of feeling stressed is a normal aspect of everyday life. It can be positive in that it spurs people to do things. Prolonged exposure to stressors, however, can provoke the harmful effects of stress, and have a negative impact on the overall physical and psychological well-being of individuals.

Stress in the workplace can be a major factor in reduced staff performance, commitment and motivation, increased sickness absence and loss of productivity. The College recognise our legal duty to staff and are committed to developing procedures and support systems that comply with our legal obligations, helping all staff to understand and recognise the characteristics and causes of workplace stress and to take positive actions to manage stress effectively. This policy should be read in conjunction with the College's *Employee's Guide to Stress Recognition & Reduction* and our *Managers Guide to Monitoring Stress & Supporting Staff.*

2   Policy Statement

This policy sets out the College's aims and objectives for the management of health & safety in relation to promoting and sustaining well-being and reducing the potential for psychological ill-health in the workplace. The intention of the policy is to ensure that staff members who experience stress are supported, whatever the causes of that stress.

Adverse reactions to stress reduce performance, creativity and productivity. The College therefore aim to develop procedures, training measures and support systems to help all staff understand and recognise the nature and

causes of stress for them as individuals, and take positive steps to manage stress effectively and promote psychological health.

The College believe that staff are our most important asset and that their well-being is essential to effective work performance and the provision of a high quality service.

This policy will apply to everyone in the College. Employees are responsible for recognising and understanding the signs of stress in themselves and others. Managers are also responsible for identifying stress in employees and are responsible for policy implementation. The College is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

3   Purpose of Stress Management & Well-Being Policy

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to:

- Advise staff of their duty to take care of their own health & well-being.
- Equip Managers with the knowledge and skills to recognise and manage stress at work appropriately.
- Raise awareness of stress, especially work related stress, amongst all staff.
- Provide information on the support available in managing stress, whether work related or caused by other factors.
- Confirm West Lothian College's commitment to manage stress through its Policy Statement.

4   Definition

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has defined stress as:-

"the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them."

The College recognises that stress can be a work related issue or it can arise from other factors i.e. family circumstances, health issues, etc. The College is committed to providing support and assistance to members of staff suffering from stress regardless of where the stress originates.

The HSE outlines six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and

increased sickness absence. The sources of work based stress are identified below:

- **Demands** - workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- **Control** - how much say the person has in the way they do their work.
- **Support** - the encouragement and resources provided by the organisation, Line Managers and colleagues.
- **Relationships** - 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.

5   Responsibilities

All staff have **responsibilities** under this policy. These are:

Employees:

- Be aware of the College's policy on the prevention and control of stress at work.
- Seek advice from their manager about circumstances or situations within their job which they find stressful and difficult to cope with, before stress becomes problematic.
- Seek Occupational Health advice if either they or their manager is concerned that their health & safety is being affected by stress at work.
- Recognise symptoms of stress in colleagues and encourage them to seek assistance.
- Be aware of their own feelings and reactions to stress at work and whether they need specific training to help them develop coping skills.
- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that unnecessary stress at work is not caused to others.
- Make the College aware of any concerns about work-related stress which might present a hazard to them or others.
- If appropriate, undertake any relevant training or participate in an assessment of stress at work.
- Accept counselling, or other services, when this is recommended.

Line Managers:

- Ensure this policy and procedure is applied and observed within their areas of work.

- Ensure employees are consulted over aspects of their employment that may cause stress or impact on their health and well-being when changes affecting them are planned.
- Ensure that staff are fully trained and have adequate resources to meet their responsibilities.
- Ensure that staff are provided with meaningful development opportunities.
- Consider workloads to ensure jobs are realistic and manageable.
- Monitor working hours, overtime and holidays to encourage individuals to take breaks as required by legislation.
- Staff attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated in their jurisdiction.
- Line Managers should also be vigilant and offer additional support to members of staff who are experiencing stress outside work, e.g. bereavement or separation.
- Carry out stress risk assessments when it is identified that an employee may be suffering from stress or where there is a perceived risk of stress ensuring that any reasonable measures identified are implemented.
- Liaise with HRM for additional help and advice.

The HR Manager & Advisors

- Provide support & guidance on the Stress & Well-being policy.
- Provide continuing support to employees experiencing stress and advise them and their line-managers of the support available, including referrals to Occupational Health or counselling as appropriate.
- Provide mediation services where appropriate.
- Monitor sickness absence, bullying and harassment, grievance etc to identify risk areas/evaluate interventions and implement training to assist managers and staff.
- Consult with Union Representatives on all proposed actions relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- Liaise with CPD Officer to review stress awareness training for managers, to ensure that it is fit for purpose and that any staff training is properly designed to equip individuals with appropriate skills to deal with stress.
- Conduct return to work interviews for all staff, probing to find the root cause of any stress where appropriate.

Senior Management Team:

- Understand what contributes to psychological well-being within the workplace and develop strategies, policies and practices that actively encourage this.
- Operation, management and support of this policy.
- Be aware of the causes and effects of harmful stress upon staff and how this may affect the College as a whole.
- Initiate an action plan for the prevention and control of harmful stress at work as a means of improving the well-being and work performance of staff.
- Understand the College's legal responsibilities for health & safety and duty of care for employees.
- Ensure that managers have the facilities and resources to prevent and control harmful stress arising from work.

6 Information & Training and Development

The College is committed to ensuring that all Line Managers and Union Representatives receive appropriate development and training that equips them with the interpersonal skills, knowledge and confidence to manage work related stress appropriately.

The College is committed to providing guidance to all staff regarding the operation of this policy. Please read the policy in conjunction with our Employees Guide to Stress Recognition and Reduction and our Managers Guide to Monitoring Stress & Supporting Staff.
Information is available to all staff, on the recognition of stress, stress reduction and sources of help and advice. Please contact HRM in the first instance.

7 Other College Policies and Procedures

The College has a number of other policies which may be considered relevant alongside the Stress Management & Well-Being Policy, depending upon the issues affecting an individual member of staff i.e. Maternity and Family Care Policy, Performance Improvement Policy, Harassment Policy and Absence Management Policy. Advice and support regarding the application of these policies is available from HRM. Copies of all College Policies & Procedures can be found on Serengeti.

8   Monitoring and Evaluation

The HRM Manager will co-ordinate a review of the College's Stress Management &Well-Being Policy on a regular basis to maintain compliance with legislation and good practice.
Line managers will carry out risk assessment audits from time to time. The key objectives of which are:

- To ensure that the purpose and scope set out in the policy are being met
- To assess and compare the effectiveness of different aspects of the policy.

Stress Management and Wellbeing Procedure

1 Risk Assessment

Health and Safety legislation requires the College to undertake an assessment of risks arising from work hazards, including stress. Line Managers have a responsibility to undertake regular risk assessments of each member of staff and their workplace in order to identify and assess:

* Factors at work likely to cause stress.
* Whether these factors are currently causing stress.
* Those staff who are at risk of experiencing work related stress.
* Existing preventative or precautionary measures.
* Action required eliminating or reducing and controlling the risk.

Recommendations arising from each risk assessment should then be implemented.

In addition, the College will undertake an HSE Management Standards Work Related Stress survey on an regular basis, to monitor performance against the Standards. Recommendations of this risk assessment will then be implemented on a College wide basis.

2 Raising issues of Stress at Work

* Staff who feel that they are suffering from stress at work should normally approach their Line Manager in the first instance to make their Line Manager aware of issues affecting them.
* The Line Manager should discuss the situation with the member of staff, seek to identify the stressors and consider possible courses of action to reduce their impact upon the member of staff.
* Where a member of staff feels unable to raise issues regarding stress at work with their Line Manager, Human Resource Management (HRM) Staff and Union Representatives are also available to provide guidance and support.
* Confidential support is available to staff through the Employee Counselling Service. Appointments are made for this service through HRM.
* Where it is considered appropriate, the College may refer the member of staff to the Employee Counselling Service or the College's Occupational Health Service.

- HRM may issue a 'stress questionnaire' which should be completed by the member of staff to try to identify the cause of the stress.

3 Induction

All new staff will receive local induction into their posts. The College's Stress Management & Well-Being Policy will be highlighted to new staff during induction. A copy of the Employee's guide to Stress Recognition & Reduction, and the Managers Guide to dealing with Staff with Stress (if appropriate), will also be provided, containing information on how to identify stress, and   advice on sources of additional help and support.

4 Absence Management
(to be read in conjunction with the current Absence Management Policy)

- Absence which appears to be a result of work-related stress should be managed in accordance with the current Absence Management Policy.
- When a member of staff is absent due to work related stress, HRM, in conjunction with their line Manager where appropriate, will seek to identify the stressors impacting upon the member of staff.
  This will normally involve discussion and consultation with the member of staff to identify the issues and see what steps can be reasonably taken to address these. In conjunction with this, a questionnaire may be issued by HRM, to the member of staff for completion. This is an additional way to try to identify the cause of the stress.
- The line manager, in consultation with HRM, should plan an individual's return to work after a stress-related illness. This planning should include consultation with the staff member.
- Following a staff members return to work, the Line Manager and HRM should continue to monitor and discuss their recovery and the factors that may have contributed to or caused the stress.
- If a staff member continues to find difficulty in coping, it may be necessary to instigate the College's Performance Improvement Policy.
- Any skills issues which contribute to the stress should be addressed through CPD.