



WILLIAMSBURGH

HOUSING ASSOCIATION LTD

STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Revision History

Revision Date	Reviewer(s)	Review Date	Description of Revision
December 2021	Corporate Services	December 2024	To update existing policy and Risk Assessment

1. Introduction

Williamsburgh Housing Association is committed to reducing and where possible eliminating stress for its employees. Stress in itself is not an illness, however it can be a contributory factor to many conditions and can cause both physical and mental illnesses.

Stress can result in poor mental health of employees even if the effects are not severe enough to result in a medical diagnosis. Williamsburgh Housing Association recognises the need to promote a culture of good mental and physical health in its duty of care under the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

2. Equal Opportunities

The Association is committed to the principles of equal opportunities and good practice. In this regard, we acknowledge the Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes and Standards (Updated April 2017): Outcome No. 1, Equalities, which states

"every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect and receives fair access to housing and housing services."

Whether relating to the way we provide services to customers, employ and support staff, or work with partners and stakeholders, we strive to ensure that all people we interact with are treated equally, irrespective of their sex or marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other social attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

This policy is designed to support fair treatment of our staff.

3. Background

Stress in the workplace is not new, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) introduced Stress Management Standards several years ago and implemented tools to accompany them which have developed over the years.

The management standards cover six key areas:

- Demands
- Support
- Change
- Control
- Role
- Relationships

Full descriptions of the standards and typical behaviours which can be a sign of stress are available from the HSE website [www.hse.gov.uk].

It is important to distinguish the difference between stress and pressure. In most work situations some pressure is healthy, but stress is when a person experiences too much pressure and the effect of the pressure becomes negative.

4. Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

- promote a culture of mental and physical wellbeing
- increase awareness of stress
- provide managers with a clear process to use should an employee report that they are experiencing symptoms of stress
- provide details of the proactive measures Williamsburgh Housing Association will implement to help reduce and, where possible, eliminate stress and its causes

5. Legal Framework

Although there is no specific legislation on stress the following are relevant through case law.

- *Health & Safety at Work Act 1974*

Under section 2 (1), employers have a duty to 'ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees'

- *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*

Requires that employers make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the H&S of its employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work and this includes stress.

6. Definitions

The following are definitions which will be applied in the context of this policy:

- **Stress** - the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them
- **Proactive measures** - aims to prevent the harm caused by stress by taking action before it occurs
- **Reactive measures** - actions which will respond to any stress related situation to minimise harm once it has occurred and assist in preventing it occurring again.

7. Confidentiality

Williamsburgh Housing Association will ensure that employees experiencing stress are dealt with in the strictest of confidence.

The organisation will treat staff's personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own policy Privacy Policy. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in Williamsburgh Housing Association's employee privacy notice (also known as fair processing notice).

8. Line Manager Responsibilities

Line managers play a key role in managing stress within the workplace. It is vital to the success of this Stress Management Policy that managers have a thorough understanding of what stress is, what the causes and early signs are.

The line manager's responsibilities include:

- attending stress awareness training
- to be aware of the signs of stress and intervene where necessary
- promote the organisations culture of a physically and mentally healthy organisation
- to manage staff effectively to minimise them experiencing stress
- where issues of stress arise, intervene as early as possible
- encourage staff contribute to the organisation's stress risk assessment when necessary
- to ensure that a stress risk assessment is conducted, when necessary.
- to take steps to assist employees maintain a state of good mental health e.g. encourage rest breaks, fresh air, and holidays.

9. Employee Responsibilities

- to raise any concerns they may have regarding stress at the earliest opportunity
- to participate in Williamsburgh Housing Association's measures to assist in reducing or eliminating stress
- to be aware of the HSE Risk Management standards and the signs of stress
- to raise any concerns, they may have for their colleagues in regard to stress with a manager

10. Managing Stress

Proactive Measures

To support the organisation's commitment to reduce the risk of stress occurring, Williamsburgh Housing Association will ensure that the following initiatives are implemented and adopted.

- **Managers' training**

Williamsburgh Housing Association will ensure that all line managers attend stress awareness training and subsequent refreshers at appropriate intervals.

10. Managing Stress Contd.

- **Stress Risk Assessments**

Williamsburgh Housing Association will conduct a stress risk assessment among staff on a periodic basis to help inform the team/department risk assessment. This will assist in identifying any 'at risk' areas within the organisation.

- **Analysing Information**

Williamsburgh Housing Association will review appropriate data e.g. absence, employee concerns, employee questionnaires to identify areas where stress is or could be a risk.

- **Promoting the Wellbeing of Employees**

Williamsburgh Housing Association is committed to facilitating a culture of promoting physical and mental health in the following ways:

- ⇒ provide stress awareness sessions/training for staff.
- ⇒ encourage staff to take regular breaks.
- ⇒ manage staff holiday entitlement in order that leave is taken throughout the year at reasonable intervals.
- ⇒ promote the benefits of physical activity for both physical and mental health.
- ⇒ ensure that staff are not working excessive hours on a regular and prolonged basis.

Reactive Measures

Stress is a very individualised condition and, as a result, it is unfortunate that even with the above measures being put in place some employees may nonetheless find themselves experiencing a stressful period in their lives. This may be caused by work or personal circumstances, or a combination of both.

- **Managing Individual Stress Concerns**

Williamsburgh Housing Association will use the process below if an employee raises concerns of stress.

- ⇒ the manager becomes aware that an employee is experiencing stress.
- ⇒ the manager should arrange to meet with the staff member as soon as possible to discuss the issues.

When the manager becomes aware he/she will;

- ⇒ give the employee a stress risk assessment to complete
- ⇒ request that the employee return the risk assessment by an agreed date.
- ⇒ arrange a second meeting to discuss the stress risk assessment, identify ways of managing the issues, and any support or interim arrangements that may assist the employee.
- ⇒ if appropriate the employee may be referred to an occupational health specialist, for counselling or to any other appropriate service.
- ⇒ during this meeting an action plan will be developed to summarise discussions and lay out actions that will be taken by the organisation, line manager and employee.
- ⇒ if the employee is absent as a result of stress, the absence will continue to be managed in line with Williamsburgh Housing Association's absence management procedures, as well as providing the employee with the stress risk assessment to complete.

NB: If the employee's line manager is a contributing factor to the employee's stress, another appropriate manager will conduct the meetings.

If it is identified that the stress is being caused by another employee then appropriate investigations may be required in line with Williamsburgh Housing Association's Grievance Procedure.

If through discussions with an employee a line manager becomes aware of a stress risk they will raise this in the appropriate way to ensure it is addressed at an organisational level. This will be done while maintaining the employee's confidentiality.

- **Counselling Service**

The line manager will provide the details of the service available to employees.

11. Review

The Management Committee will have regard to this policy, as per our review schedule. As such, the policy will be considered regularly, to ensure that it responds to any changing circumstances or legislation (as advised by Employers in Voluntary Housing).

11. Additional Sources of Information

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/workplace-mental-health/work-and-stress/>