



# Williamsburgh

## HOUSING ASSOCIATION

• Limited •

### Stress Management Policy

Policy Title:	Stress Management Policy		
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This policy can be made available in different languages and other formats such as Braille, large print or tape, on request.

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## 1. Introduction

Williamsburgh Housing Association is committed to reducing and where possible eliminating stress for its employees. Although stress in itself is not an illness, it can be a contributory factor in many conditions and can cause both physical and mental illnesses. Stress on its own can also 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 requirement of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

## 2. Background

Stress in the workplace is not new. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) introduced Stress Management Standards a number of 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](http://www.hse.gov.uk)].

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

### 3. Aims and Objectives

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 suffering from stress.
- Provide details of the proactive measures Williamsburgh Housing Association will implement to help reduce and, where possible, eliminate stress and its causes.

### 4. 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.

## 5. 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.

## 6. Confidentiality

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

## 7. Line Manager Responsibilities

Line managers play a key role in managing stress within the workplace. It is vital to the success of a stress policy that managers have a thorough understanding of what stress is, what the causes are and what to be aware of to help identify early signs.

Line manager's responsibilities include:

- Attending stress awareness training.
- To be aware of the signs of stress and intervene, where necessary.
- Promote the organisation's culture of a physically and mentally healthy organisation.
- To manage staff effectively to minimise them experiencing stress.

## 7. Line Manager's Responsibilities Contd.

- Where issues of stress arise, intervene as early as possible.
- To ensure that a stress risk assessment is conducted with their staff.
- Ensure staff contribute to the organisation's stress questionnaires.
- To take steps to help employees maintain a state of good mental health e.g. encourage rest breaks and holidays.

## 8. Employee Responsibilities

- To raise any concerns 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 regards to stress, with a manager.

## 9. Managing Stress

### 9.1 Proactive Measures

To support the organisation's commitment in reducing the risk of stress occurring, Williamsburgh Housing Association will ensure that the following initiatives will be implemented and adopted:

- *Managers Training*

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

## 9. Managing Stress Contd.

### 9.1 Proactive Measures Contd.

- *Employee Questionnaires*

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

- *Analysing Information*

Commitment will be given that 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.

- *Risk Assessments*

Stress risk assessments will be conducted, on a periodic basis.

- *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 for staff.
- Ensure that staff take any allocated 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.

## 9. Managing Stress Contd.

### 9.2 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.

### 9.3 Managing Individual Stress Concerns

The following details the process that will be used by Williamsburgh Housing Association should an employee raise concerns of stress:

- Manager becomes aware that an employee is experiencing stress.
- The manager should arrange to meet with the staff member within 3 days to discuss the issues.
- The line manager will give the employee a stress questionnaire to complete (Appendix No.2).
- The employee completes the questionnaire and returns this to the line manager.
- The line manager completes any appropriate sections.
- A second meeting is arranged to discuss the questionnaire, identify ways of managing the issues and any support or interim arrangements that may assist the employee's recovery.
- If appropriate, the employee may be referred to an occupational health specialist, employee counselling service or any other appropriate service.
- At the conclusion of the meeting, an action plan will be completed to summarise discussions and what actions 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.

## 9. Managing Stress Contd.

### 9.3 Managing Individual Stress Concerns Contd.

NB: If the employee's line manager is a contributing factor to the employee's stress, another appropriate manager e.g. a manager one level above 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 Conditions of Service.

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.

### 9.4 Occupational Health

If deemed appropriate, an employee may be referred to an occupational health specialist to assist in the absence management and help identify any actions that could be taken to assist in the employee's recovery.

### 9.5 Employee Counselling Service

All employees have access to the Employee Counselling Service. The details of this are displayed on the staff notice board or can be sought from the employee's line manager and/or Corporate Administration.

## 10. Evaluation and Monitoring

Williamsburgh Housing Association seeks to maximise the efficiency of our business performance while maintaining our reputation and financial well-being. These objectives will be pursued while protecting the interests and safety of tenants and service users. Equally important will be consideration of the safety and well-being of staff members. This is fundamental to the effective operation of the Association and to achieving the high standards of health and safety set by Williamsburgh Housing Association.

Having identified our aims and objectives, we will assess whether the policy is being implemented effectively through monitoring:

- instances where work related stress are identified, and
- our adherence with the procedures, in relation both to prevention and responding to cases presented.

Unless the monitoring arrangements indicate problems with the procedures or we identify an increase in the stress levels experienced

by staff, the Management Committee will be advised, at the time of the policy review, whether we are achieving our objectives or whether more effective measures require to be introduced.

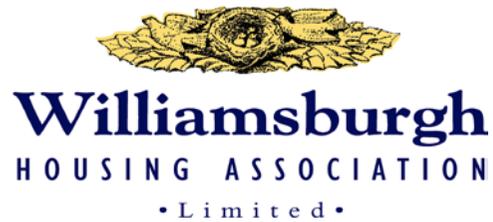
## 11. Review

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).

## 12. Appendices

### No.1: Additional Sources of Information

- Healthy Working Lives:  
[www.surveys.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.surveys.healthyworkinglives.com)
- HSE:  
[www.hse.gov.uk/stress](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress)



## Individual Employee Stress Questionnaire

You have been given this questionnaire to complete as it has been highlighted to your line manager that you are or may be feeling stressed. The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify what factors may be contributing to you feeling stressed and for you to think about and detail what you feel would help reduce or take away your stressors. Once you have completed the form, please return it to your line manager. Your line manager will complete their comments and return a copy of the document to you with details of a meeting to discuss your stressors and what support may be available.

Cause of Stress	Question	If yes, please provide details if this causes an issue for you in work.	What do you feel could help in changing the situation?	Manager's comments	Details of Support discussed
	Do different people at work demand that you complete tasks which are hard to combine?				
	Do you feel you have unachievable deadlines?				
	Do you feel you have to work very intensively the majority of the time?				

Demands	Do you feel you have to neglect some tasks as you have too much to do?				
	Do you feel that you are unable to take breaks due to your workload?				
	Do you feel pressured to work long hours?				
	Do you feel that you have to work fast the majority of the time?				
	Do you feel you have unrealistic time pressures?				
Control	Do you feel you can decide when to take a break from your work?				
	Do you feel you have a say in the pace/speed that you work?				
	Do you feel you have any choice over how you do your work?				
	Do you feel you have any choice in what work you do on a day to day basis?				
	Do you feel you have any influence over the way you do your work?				
	Do you feel that your work time is flexible?				
	Do you feel your manager gives you enough feedback on the work you do?				

Support (Manager)	Do you feel you can rely on your manager to assist you with a work problem?				
	Do you feel you can talk to your manager about something that may upset, annoy or distress you at work?				
	Do you feel that your manager encourages you at work?				
Support (Peers)	Do you feel your colleagues would help you if your work became difficult?				
	Do you feel you get the help and support from your colleagues that you need?				
	Do you feel you are respected by your work colleagues?				
	Do you feel your colleagues give you the respect you deserve?				
	Do you feel that your colleagues will listen to any work related problems you may have?				
Relationships	Do you feel you have been personally harassed, in the form of unkind words or behaviour at work?				
	Do you feel that there is/or has been friction or anger between colleagues?				
	Do you feel you are or have been bullied at work?				

	Do you feel that relationships are strained at work?				
Role	Are you clear about what work is expected of you at work?				
	Do you know how to go about doing your job?				
	Are you clear about the goals and objectives for your team?				
	Do you understand how your work fits in to the overall aims of your organisation?				
Change	Do you feel you have enough opportunities to ask your manager questions about change?				
	Do you feel you are consulted about changes within your workplace?				
	When changes are made in work, do you feel that they are clearly explained as to how they would work in practice?				
Other issues	Do you feel that there are any other factors in work that may be contributing to the way you are feeling just now?				
	Do you feel that there is anything outside of work that maybe contributing to the way you are feeling just now?				

## Stressors

Now that you have identified your stressors, please rank them, detailing the examples you have provided above, in the order of 1-10 with 10 having the biggest impact on you and 1 the least.

Example of Stressor	1-10	Example of Stressor	1-10

## Factor outside of work

This list of questions is mainly focused on factors at work. There may be factors, however, outside work, e.g. family life, which may be affecting your ability to cope at work and which in normal circumstances you would be able to deal with.

It may be benefit you to share these with your line manager (or another manager) as you can discuss with them if there are any short terms support measures that could be put in place to assist you at this time. In addition, your manager may be able to direct you to any additional support services you may not have thought of before.

## Action Plan

Detail below the action plan discussed with your line manager to support you in managing your stressors.

Stressor/Area of Concern	Agreed Action	Review Date