



WORKPLACE STRESS POLICY

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1. The aim of this policy is to develop and maintain a culture where everyone in this business work together to reduce the incidence of work-related stress.
2. Those involved include employees, senior management and managers who all have a role to play in effectively managing pressure at work.
3. In our rapidly changing world, it is certain that business pressures and developments will result in pressures on the business and require a frequent change to work processes and/or established structures. Such change will inevitably lead to pressures on employees, at all levels, to adapt to new ways of working, perhaps in different operational structures but certainly in a dynamic environment.
4. In these circumstances, we recognise that we have an important role in helping employees cope with change by ensuring that the planning for and implementation of change is effectively managed. The need to communicate fully with employees and as far as possible involve them in the change process is fully recognised.
5. Should employees find themselves under pressure at work giving rise to ill health, this Policy gives advice and guidance on what should be done to raise concerns and remove or reduce the cause of the stress in so far as that may be possible. JRH Support (Nottingham) Ltd acknowledges that too much pressure leading to workplace stress can have detrimental effects on employees and that managers and employees together have an important responsibility to raise and tackle the causes of ill health at work.
6. For the most part, it is expected that managers will be able to remove the cause of the work-related pressure, or at least reduce its impact, that may not always be possible.
7. This is why all parties have a collective responsibility to work together to manage work-related pressures within JRH Support (Nottingham) Ltd.

GUIDELINES

1. What is Stress?

- 1.1 There is no single definition of stress but for the purpose of this Policy, we use the Health and Safety Executive definition that stress is, “the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them.”
- 1.2 Employees at all levels can suffer from stress and their reactions can be very different.
- 1.3 It is important that suffering is not seen as a weakness. People have different abilities to cope with the pressures on them and may be able to cope with some pressures better than others.
- 1.4 Stress in itself is not an illness but can and in some cases does lead to mental and physical problems.
- 1.5 There is no simple way to predict what harm levels of pressure can cause, however it is more likely to occur where: -
 - Pressures pile on top of each other or are prolonged
 - People feel trapped or unable to exert any control over the demands placed on them
 - People are confused by conflicting demands made on them.

2. Legal Issues

- 2.1 There are no laws that specifically cover the risks from work-related pressure, but there are elements of health and safety legislation, which cover risks to mental health as well as physical health and safety.
- 2.2 The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 provides a general duty for employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, employees’ mental health as well as their physical health and safety and welfare. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to undertake risk assessments, which must cover risks to mental health as well as physical health and safety.
- 2.3 An employer is not under a legal duty to prevent ill health caused by pressure due to problems outside work (e.g. financial or domestic). But non-work problems can make it difficult for employees to cope with the pressures of work and their performance at work might suffer. So being understanding to employees in this position would be in the employer’s interests.
- 2.4 Employers are required to:-

- Carry out a systematic health and safety inspection of their premises and practices.
 - Identify any risks or hazards to their workers arising from those premises or practices.
 - Take action to eliminate the risks or hazards identified or reduce them to the lowest extent reasonably practicable.
- 2.5 Bullying in the workplace has been identified as a source of employee stress. However, any form of bullying at work would be in contravention of JRH Support (Nottingham) Ltd policies and would be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

3. What we are doing

- 3.1 JRH Support (Nottingham) Ltd takes its obligations to deal with work-related pressure very seriously. We acknowledge that there are a huge number of legal requirements and customer demands placed on us all; as a good employer, we invite and expect everyone in the business to work to keep workplace pressures to a minimum and to deal speedily and effectively with issues that arise.
- 3.2 Along with the advice and guidance contained in this Policy Guidelines, JRH Support (Nottingham) Ltd will provide appropriate training to managers to raise their awareness of work-related pressure and help them to develop their knowledge, skills and experience to manage the workplace effectively.
- 3.3 The Health and Safety Advisory Team will monitor sickness absence statistics and develop the collation of data to enable the production of management reports.
- 3.4 Whilst employees have the opportunity to raise their concerns at any time about work-related stress issues, managers are instructed to ensure that the employee supervision and appraisal process gives employees the opportunity to raise concerns or difficulties. The employee supervision and appraisal process will also identify any job-related training and development needed to help in reducing stress in an individual.
- 3.5 JRH Support (Nottingham) Ltd is committed to communicating with employees by regular postings on insight, team meetings, company updates, the availability of various minutes, results from surveys, circular and personal letters. We positively welcome feedback from employees on matters that affect them. Employees are also encouraged to raise concerns as they arise with their managers.

3.6 Employees have access to an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which offers specialist counselling, expert advice and support on a range of subjects.

4. Managers' Responsibilities

4.1 Managers have a unique role in the process of managing work pressure.

4.2 Managers have responsibilities for the management of employees and their work, which includes work pressures. They also must apply effectively and consistently our company policies and procedures and ensure that the employer's duty of care to provide a safe working environment is exercised at all times.

4.3 The advice and guidance available from the HSEQ Advisory Team does not negate the manager's responsibility to manage. The team provides advice and guidance to assist managers, it is not their role to take over the management of an issue or an individual employee's case.

4.4 Whilst managers MUST address issues once they become aware of them, they must only operate within their level of capability. Managers do not have the medical knowledge, skills or experience to deal with health-related issues and must refer such issues to their own managers.

4.5 Counselling employees who are under pressure may raise issues of sensitivity and confidentiality and managers must NOT attempt to deal with matters outside their competence and/or responsibility. Because there are so many grey areas the golden rule must be, "if in doubt seek assistance". The Human Resources department and employee assistance program is available for help and guidance.

4.6 The managers' prime role must be to remove or reduce the cause of the pressure as far as that is reasonably practicable. Clearly, that will be more difficult for pressures emanating from outside of work but depending on the circumstances it may be possible to help.

4.7 Line Managers in conjunction with the HR department will if agreed to by the employee carry out a specific stress risk assessment. The purpose of this is to identify any influences either at home or at work that are impacting on the employee's wellbeing and understand what JRH Support (Nottingham) Ltd may be able to minimise.

4.8 As a final, but crucial point, managers must take the initiative and raise with employees their concerns if they consider the employees to be under pressure. Turning a "blind eye" is not acceptable and raising issues at an early stage may stop more serious problems developing.

5. What can Employees do?

- 5.1 Employees have a very important role in helping us to manage workplace pressure effectively.
- 5.2 The most important step is for them to raise their concerns, openly and honestly, with their manager as soon as possible. If their immediate manager is the cause of concern they should go to a higher level of management.
- 5.3 If the cause of concern is not work-related, but is having an impact on work, being open and honest will help managers understand why there may be work problems and where possible give help. For example, if the employee needs to provide care for a dependant, it may be possible to agree revised working arrangements on a temporary or perhaps permanent basis.
- 5.4 Employees have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of other persons who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. Employees also have a duty to co-operate with their employer in these matters.

Paul Battershall
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