



Somerset
Council

HS015 Supporting Wellbeing and Work- Related Stress Policy

Organisation	Somerset Council
Title	HS015 Supporting Wellbeing, Work-Related Stress Policy
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Owner	The Health and Safety Service
Protective Marking	Official – Unclassified
Primary legislation	<u>The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999</u>

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Policy on a page

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as *'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.'* Pressure can have a positive or negative effect on an individual; it can motivate or lead to stress. Stress and pressure affect individual resilience differently.

Somerset Council (SC) is committed to protecting the health, safety & welfare of its employees. The Council recognises that stress can damage the mental & physical health of its employees. SC will proactively aim to increase wellbeing at work & will do all that it reasonably can to ensure that employees do not suffer stress-related illness as a result of work.

This policy and associated guidance is aimed at all staff and introduce them to the signs and symptoms of stress. It also encourages staff to discuss any signs of stress with their manager at the earliest opportunity and the procedures that need to be followed as a result of this.

This document and associated guidance will be available to: **All Elected Members, Somerset Council Staff, Secondees and Volunteers.**

Key Messages

- Somerset Council (SC) is committed to protecting the health, safety, and welfare of its employees. It recognises that stress can damage the mental and physical health of its employees. It will proactively aim to increase wellbeing at work and will do all that it reasonably can to ensure that employees do not suffer stress-related illness as a result of work.
- Managers will pro-actively support employees' in maintaining their wellbeing.
- Somerset Council has a range of mechanisms to support employees with work-related stress provided through HR, the Wellbeing Team, and the Corporate Health and Safety Service.

This "policy on a page" is a summary of the detailed policy and guidance documents, please ensure you read, understand, and comply with the arrangements stated.

Responsibilities

Somerset Council will ensure:

- Actively encourage fair, reasonable, and supportive management styles, to help maintain and promote a healthy, happy, effective, & satisfied workforce.
- Emphasise, through its management training courses, that good management practices are crucial to increasing wellbeing and reducing work-related stress.
- Encourage a culture which supports individuals experiencing stress.
- Provide employees with the tools to support themselves when experiencing work-related stress.
- Consult with Trade Union Safety Representatives (TUSR) on proposed actions relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- Provide a confidential counselling service, via [Care First](#), for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.

Directors and Senior Managers will:

- Regularly review compliance with this policy in their Service area.
- Monitor the performance of managers in reducing the risks from work-related stress, and
- Monitor the number of employees who have had stress related OH management referrals.
- Ensure that all employees have access to training and support mechanisms.
- Ensure that all employees have access to this policy and are aware of their responsibilities.
- Consult with TUSR on all proposed actions relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- Check on team wellbeing regularly.
- Consider the impact on stress through reviewing staffing levels, service plans, and risk registers, escalating as required.
- Ensure health, safety, and wellbeing is a standard agenda item at management team meetings.

Service Managers and those with direct line-management responsibilities will:

- Pro-actively review the impact of work-related stress on their teams and escalate as required.
- Check on individual team members' wellbeing regularly, particularly after an accident or incident.
- Encourage a culture within the service or team that is supportive and open.
- Use guidance and tools to support open conversations.
- Role model practices that promote positive behaviour toward wellbeing and reduce the risk of work-related stress occurring.
- Treat each situation on a case-by-case basis and recognise that the same solution will not work for everyone.
- Contact Human Resources for advice or support as required.
- Signpost employees to support for work-related stress as needed.
- Monitor sickness and absence of their team.
- Manage team workloads appropriately to reduce the risk of work-related stress.
- Where required, use resources provided by The Health and Safety Service to risk assess the impact of stress on an employee. **(Insert links prior to publishing)**
- Use the appraisal process and other performance review meetings to enquire how work is affecting an employee's levels of wellbeing.
- Ensure health, safety and wellbeing is a standard agenda item at team meetings.

Employees Should:

- Report issues of concern to their line manager so that any problems can be addressed and, where possible prevented.
- Accept that they have a responsibility for managing their own stress levels, by helping themselves where possible and actively participating in management processes/arrangements which are designed to be supportive of their health and wellbeing.
- Complete relevant e-learning training via the [Learning Centre](#) when requested, so that they can learn to recognise the signs of stress in themselves and others and be aware of effective techniques to keep stress to a minimum.

Human Resources will:

- Advocate working practices that reduce the risk of stress within the working environment.
- Maintain confidentiality as appropriate when supporting employees.
- Escalate issues as appropriate.
- Support employees in accessing appropriate support.

- Provide support to managers and staff and encourage referrals to specialist counsellors where appropriate.
- Deliver the organisational Wellbeing Strategy.
- Support in the provision of information and training for work-related stress.
- Provide and maintain a dedicated [wellbeing site](#).
- Support managers in supporting employees who declare work-related stress or mental ill health.
- Support service directors in implementing strategy considering the possible effect on employee wellbeing (HR Business Partners).

The Health and Safety Service will:

- Advocate working practices that reduce the risk of stress within the working environment through risk assessment.
- Offer advice to managers regarding this policy.
- Maintain & communicate this policy.
- Review this policy at intervals not exceeding three years.
- Liaise with other agencies or authorities when required.
- Liaise with HR and the Wellbeing Team when reviewing or implementing changes to policy or guidance.

Governance Arrangements

Policy Compliance

If any employee is found to have breached this policy, they may be subject to Somerset Council's [disciplinary procedure](#).

Policy Governance

The following table identifies who within Somerset Council is Accountable, Responsible, Informed or Consulted with regards to this policy. The following definitions apply:

- **Responsible** – the person(s) responsible for developing and publishing the policy.
- **Accountable** – the person who has ultimate accountability and authority for the policy.
- **Consulted** – the person(s) or groups to be consulted prior to final policy implementation.
- **Informed** – the person(s) or groups to be informed after policy implementation.

Responsible	Health and Safety Service
Accountable	Chief Executive
Consulted	JNF Trade Union Group, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Steering Group (HSWSG), HR Committee
Informed	All members, employees, volunteers, and 3 rd parties (on request)

Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed as it is deemed appropriate, for instance when there is a change in statutory requirements and/or HSE guidance is revised, but no less frequently than every 36 months. Policy review will be undertaken by rolling programme established by The Health and Safety Service and agreed by the Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Steering Group.

Version History

Revision Date	Author	Version	Description of Revision
June 2014	Brian Oldham	V01	First Revision
26/07/2017	Fiona Packer	V02	Scheduled Review
05/03/2018	Fiona Packer	V03	Amended to reflect B-Safe (new H&S management system) & revised links to OH Assist
24/10/2019	Julie Rutter	V04	Amended to provide reference to a generic OH provider
31/03/2020	Julie Rutter	V05	Amended text and links within document
27/03/2024	Charlotte Strang	V06	Scheduled Review.

Document Notification

Approval	Name	Date
Corporate Health and Safety Advisor	Daniel Thomas	
Executive Director of Strategy, Workforce, and Localities	Alyn Jones	
HR Committee	Committee	