



Bingham Town Council

Stress Management Policy

The Council is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees and to promoting a positive work environment. The Council recognises that work-related stress can affect mental and physical health and that work-related stress is a health and safety issue which the Council will address by identifying and reducing workplace stressors and developing good working practices.

This Council recognises its duty under the Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its employees. This includes taking reasonable steps to prevent them from suffering stress-related illness as a result of their work.

This policy will apply to everyone in the organisation including temporary staff.

Definition of Stress

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”.

The Council understands that the HSE clearly links work-related stress to factors such as: excessive work demands, overwork, lack of control over work, bullying and harassment, lack of support from colleagues, or Councillors, and lack of adequate training, unclear job roles or job role conflict and change.

Effects of Stress

The Council recognises that stress can have a number of negative effects on an individual, including:

- Fatigue
- anxiety and depression
- low self-esteem
- adverse effects on performance
- problems sleeping
- other health problems, such as migraine, raised blood pressure, increased alcohol use, etc
- “burnout” — physical and emotional exhaustion caused by severe or prolonged stress.

Stress can also have the following effects on the organisation:

- high levels of absenteeism and staff sickness
- increased staff turnover
- low staff morale
- increased number of accidents and mistakes
- high levels of conflict
- increased incidence of accidents.

Policy

In order to combat work-related stress:

- a positive workplace culture will be encouraged where staff wellbeing is prioritised and staff develop an increased awareness and understanding of stress at work issues
- local support will be provided for employees who are experiencing work-related stress to enable them to remain in work wherever possible or support them in returning to work
- wherever the Clerk perceives stress to be a potential problem for a member of staff — commonly during or as a follow-up to a period of sickness — that Clerk will talk to the member of staff in strict confidence and see if they require additional support
- the Clerk will take all reasonable actions to support members of staff — typical long-term support might include a temporary or permanent adjustment in workload, or a phased return to work, etc
- prompt access to confidential occupational health support will be provided for any employees affected by stress and health assured is available for all staff
- the Clerk will work with staff to conduct appropriate risk assessments and identify all workplace factors that could be contributing to unacceptable levels of stress at work
- any risk assessments required will include a review of the effectiveness of current measures taken to reduce workplace stress — these will be adapted and new control measures introduced wherever necessary to eliminate stress or reduce the risks from stress to acceptable levels
- the risk assessment will be regularly reviewed, particularly during periods of significant workplace or workforce change or where stress is identified as a particular issue
- regular staff meetings will help the Clerk to help identify and assess levels of staff wellbeing and identify if stress is an issue of concern for individual staff or in the workforce in general
- the Clerk will regularly monitor and review sickness absence rates and data to look for trends that could indicate stress as a contributory cause

Responsibilities

The Clerk will:

- ensure good two-way communication between themselves and staff, particularly when major organisational or procedural changes are occurring
- ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their area of responsibility
- monitor workloads and working hours to ensure that staff are not overloaded or overworking
- monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement
- ensure staff have adequate opportunities for rest, meals and refreshments
- attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety

- ensure staff are fully trained to carry out their duties
- ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities
- ensure that staff experiencing stress have access to appropriate sources of advice and support
- ensure lone workers are provided with effective supervision and support
- offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work, should it be appropriate
- encourage a culture where stress is not regarded as a weakness
- support staff who have been off work due to stress and create a planned return to work.

Employees will:

- attend preventative stress awareness sessions, if requested, so that they can learn to recognise the signs of stress in themselves and others and be aware of effective strategies to keep stress to the minimum
- report issues of concern to the Clerk.
- accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.
- access Health Assured to gain additional support and advice

This Stress Management Policy was adopted by Bingham Town Council at its meeting on 16 May 2023

Minute Reference: 22