
Revised Stress & Mental Well-being Policy (Staff)

Committee considering report: Personnel Committee on 15 October 2019

Portfolio Member: Councillor Howard Woollaston

Date Portfolio Member agreed report: 16 September 2019

Report Author: Rebecca Bird

Forward Plan Ref: PC3826

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 To seek comments and approval of the revised Stress and Mental Well-being Policy, which would apply to all corporate staff of West Berkshire Council.

2. Recommendation

2.1 To approve the policy.

3. Implications

3.1 **Financial:** None

3.2 **Policy:** This policy would replace the current Organisational Stress Management Policy.

3.3 **Personnel:** The policy should be beneficial to staff and provide additional guidance to managers.

3.4 **Legal:** None

3.5 **Risk Management:** We believe the revised policy will have a positive impact on risk management e.g. staff absence related to stress and mental health.

3.6 **Property:** None

3.7 **Other:** None

4. Other options considered

4.1 We considered continuing the commitment for stress audits but the recommendation is not to do this. There has been very little demand for the audits and it is difficult to maintain the required skills amongst the HR team.

Executive Summary

5. Introduction / Background

- 5.1 “Stress and mental health” is the most common reason for sickness absence of council staff. In 2018/19 this accounted for 25.3% of all sickness absence, or 3,708 working days lost. The LGA’s Local Government Workforce Survey for 2016/17 Research Report (June 2018) states that “stress, depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue” is the most common cause of absence for local government employees in England, accounting for 28.9% of all absence in 2016/17.
- 5.2 The council’s current Organisational Stress Management Policy dates from 2009 with some minor revisions since then. We believe that the policy is no longer fit for purpose. Feedback from managers and our observations on employment casework indicates that line managers would appreciate more practical guidance on managing stress and mental health in their teams.
- 5.3 HR have worked together with Mike Lindburn, Health and Safety Manager, to review the policy. We consulted with a group of managers about the kind of guidance they would find useful. We consulted the Public Health team about best practice and also considered HSE advice and best practice.
- 5.4 The new Stress and Mental Well-being Policy and Guidance aims to maintain the clear commitment of the council to the safeguarding the well-being of staff whilst offering guidance to managers about dealing with particular staffing situations linked to stress and mental health. The emphasis is on supporting and responding to all staff experiencing stress or mental health challenges, whether these are caused by work-related stress or personal stressors.
- 5.5 The appendices include both new and improved tools for managers and guidance on conducting stress risk assessments. There is also signposting for staff to additional sources of information and advice.
- 5.6 Failure to comply with this policy and guidance may lead to employees being exposed to unnecessary or avoidable stress at work. Stress at work may lead to increased staff absence rates, underperformance and/or increased employee turnover, putting service delivery at risk. This may have an effect on meeting objectives set in the Council Strategy and service plans.
- 5.7 The managers we consulted and trade unions have largely welcomed the proposed policy and guidance.

6. Proposals

- 6.1 We propose that the revised policy should replace the current Organisational Stress Management Policy. The key changes are:
 - (1) Improved guidance for managers on dealing with a variety of staffing situations linked to stress or mental health concerns;
 - (2) Improved guidance for staff encouraging an open dialogue with managers

- (3) New and improved tools for managers e.g. individual risk assessment form
- (4) Signposting to other sources of support and guidance for managers and staff.
- (5) Removal of specific commitment to service stress risk assessments and replacement with more general advice on responding to different examples of stress or mental health from groups or individuals.

6.2 It is proposed that the policy should be considered by Corporate Board and Operations Board before being approved by Personnel Committee. It will also be discussed by the new Workforce Board and any minor changes suggested may be approved by the Chief Executive under his delegated powers.

7. Conclusion

7.1 We believe the revised policy and approach will benefit staff and provide welcome guidance for managers in responding to stress and mental health concerns.

8. Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Data Protection Impact Assessment
- 8.2 Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment
- 8.3 Appendix C – Stress & Mental Well-being Policy & Guidance

Appendix A

Data Protection Impact Assessment – Stage One

The General Data Protection Regulations require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) for certain projects that have a significant impact on the rights of data subjects.

Should you require additional guidance in completing this assessment, please refer to the Information Management Officer via dp@westberks.gov.uk

Directorate:	Resources
Service:	HR
Team:	Strategy & Operations
Lead Officer:	Rebecca Bird
Title of Project/System:	Stress and Mental Well-being Policy
Date of Assessment:	13 th September 2019

Do you need to do a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)?

	Yes	No
<p>Will you be processing SENSITIVE or “special category” personal data?</p> <p>Note – sensitive personal data is described as “<i>data revealing racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, or trade union membership, and the processing of genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person, data concerning health or data concerning a natural person’s sex life or sexual orientation</i>”</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
<p>Will you be processing data on a large scale?</p> <p>Note – Large scale might apply to the number of individuals affected OR the volume of data you are processing OR both</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
<p>Will your project or system have a “social media” dimension?</p> <p>Note – will it have an interactive element which allows users to communicate directly with one another?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
<p>Will any decisions be automated?</p> <p>Note – does your system or process involve circumstances where an individual’s input is “scored” or assessed without intervention/review/checking by a human being? Will there be any “profiling” of data subjects?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
<p>Will your project/system involve CCTV or monitoring of an area accessible to the public?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
<p>Will you be using the data you collect to match or cross-reference against another existing set of data?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
<p>Will you be using any novel, or technologically advanced systems or processes?</p> <p>Note – this could include biometrics, “internet of things” connectivity or anything that is currently not widely utilised</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

If you answer “Yes” to any of the above, you will probably need to complete [Data Protection Impact Assessment - Stage Two](#). If you are unsure, please consult with the Information Management Officer before proceeding.

Appendix B

Equality Impact Assessment - Stage One

We need to ensure that our strategies, policies, functions and services, current and proposed have given due regard to equality and diversity as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act), which states:

- “(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:**
- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;**
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; This includes the need to:**
 - (i) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;**
 - (ii) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;**
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, with due regard, in particular, to the need to be aware that compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.**
- (2) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.**
- (3) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others.”**

The following list of questions may help to establish whether the decision is relevant to equality:

- Does the decision affect service users, employees or the wider community?
- (The relevance of a decision to equality depends not just on the number of those affected but on the significance of the impact on them)
- Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?
- Is it a major policy, or a major change to an existing policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?
- Will the decision have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?
- Does the decision relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?
- Does the decision relate to an area with known inequalities?
- Does the decision relate to any equality objectives that have been set by the council?

Please complete the following questions to determine whether a full Stage Two, Equality Impact Assessment is required.

What is the proposed decision that you are asking the Executive to make:	NB not going to Executive – CB/ OB/ Personnel Committee. Seeking approval of the revised Stress and Mental Well-being Policy
Summary of relevant legislation:	Health and Safety at Work Act.
Does the proposed decision conflict with any of the Council’s key strategy priorities?	No
Name of assessor:	Rebecca Bird
Date of assessment:	13 th September 2019

Is this a:		Is this:	
Policy	Yes	New or proposed	No
Strategy	No	Already exists and is being reviewed	Yes
Function	No	Is changing	Yes
Service	No		

1 What are the main aims, objectives and intended outcomes of the proposed decision and who is likely to benefit from it?	
Aims:	To improve staff management of stress and mental health across the council workforce.
Objectives:	To increase management understanding of stress and mental health. To provide guidance to managers on dealing with particular staffing situations.
Outcomes:	Improved staff attendance and morale.
Benefits:	Improved service delivery and lower costs related to sickness absence. Lower risk of employee claims related to stress.

2 Note which groups may be affected by the proposed decision. Consider how they may be affected, whether it is positively or negatively and what sources of information have been used to determine this.		
(Please demonstrate consideration of all strands – Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.)		
Group Affected	What might be the effect?	Information to support this

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Age	None	
Disability	Improve management of stress and mental health, which may include those with a disability related to a mental health condition.	Policy provides guidance and tools for managers to support improved management.
Gender Reassignment	None	
Marriage and Civil Partnership	None	
Pregnancy and Maternity	None	
Race	None	
Religion or Belief	None	
Sex	None	
Sexual Orientation	None	
Further Comments relating to the item:		
3 Result		
Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could contribute to inequality?		No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: The aim is to improve management for those in the workforce who might experience stress or mental health concerns, including those with a disability.		
Will the proposed decision have an adverse impact upon the lives of people, including employees and service users?		No
Please provide an explanation for your answer: See above		

If your answers to question 2 have identified potential adverse impacts and you have answered 'yes' to either of the sections at question 3, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

If a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment is required, before proceeding you should discuss the scope of the Assessment with service managers in your area. You will also need to refer to the [Equality Impact Assessment guidance and Stage Two template](#).

Name: Rebecca Bird

Date: 13th September 2019

Please now forward this completed form to Rachel Craggs, Principal Policy Officer (Equality and Diversity) (rachel.craggs@westberks.gov.uk), for publication on the WBC website.