LEAFLET 25

STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Para

        OCCUPATIONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Annex

OCCUPATIONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1   The Secretary of State for Defence in his Health and Safety Policy Statement makes clear his commitment to protecting the health, safety and welfare of all members of HM Forces and all civilian employees of the Ministry of Defence. This commitment extends to all aspects of occupational health and safety including the effects of excessive pressure or stress.

2   The Ministry of Defence accepts that, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence, it has a duty to take reasonable care to ensure that employees' health is not placed at risk through excessive and sustained levels of stress arising from the way work is organised, the way people deal with others in the workplace, or from day to day demands placed on its staff. The nature of the activities of the Department also make it possible that some employees, will at some point, be subject to traumatic incidents as a result of accidents or military operations.

3   The aim of these guidelines is to improve understanding of the effects of work-related stress in the workforce and to promote good management as a means of dealing with stress, thus reducing its impact on employees in the course of their employment and so meet the requirements to assess the risk from the stress hazard required by the Management of Heath and Safety at Work Regulations. In addition where stressful situations have arisen, be they through accident in the workplace, or military operations, guidelines on how to reduce the impact on individuals is also contained in this leaflet.

DEFINITION

4   The Health and Safety Executive have published their definition of stress in the working environment. This is not the only definition used, a MOD definition for operational stress is given in Annex D to this leaflet

5   HSE definition of Stress: Stress is the adverse reaction a person has to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed upon them

STRESS

6   We all need some degree of pressure or stimulation to achieve our best performance, but, when the pressure becomes excessive, work performance and the health of individuals can be adversely affected. It especially arises when individuals worry that they cannot cope. Stress as a work problem cannot be dismissed and line managers should recognise that those who cannot cope with excessive stress are neither weak nor ineffective.

7   Individuals are routinely confronted by a variety of pressures or demands (stressors). These stressors may arise from either personal sources, e.g. ill health, marital discord, family problems, financial uncertainty, or from work-related sources, e.g. work over-load or under-load, role conflict, lack of control, uncertainty, contradictory priorities, uncomfortable physical conditions and lack of sufficient personal space. Interpersonal conflicts and breakdown of relationships both at work and at home can also be a significant stressor

8   There is no simple way of predicting what will cause harmful levels of stressors and who will be affected. Individual personality, experience, motivation and the support available from colleagues, family or friends will all have an effect on ability to deal with stress both at work and at home. Although some factors are beyond the MOD's responsibilities or control, managers should be aware of them, since they may make employees more vulnerable to stress at work, thereby affecting performance and judgement.

EFFECTS OF STRESS

9   Excessive pressure in the workplace or at home can manifest itself in physical, behavioural, mental or emotional effects. These effects are normally short-lived and cause no lasting harm. When the pressures recede, there is a quick return to normal. Stress is not, therefore, the same as ill health. It is only when pressures are intense and prolonged that the effects of stress can become more sustained and damaging, leading to longer-term psychological problems and physical ill health.

10   Long-term stress has been associated with high blood pressure, anxiety and depression. These conditions may arise from other causes and, if a particular individual is suffering from one or more of these disorders, it will be for an occupational health practitioner to advise on the extent to which it is work related.

LEGISLATION

11   Provisions that relate to managing stress at work are included in the:

- Health and Safety at Work Etc Act

- Disability Discrimination Act

- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations

- Employer's common law 'duty of care'

POLICY

12   The Ministry of Defence is required to manage stress and this will be achieved by use of the strategy set out below on which greater guidance is outlined in Annex A to this leaflet.

13   The Strategy can be applied at all levels of the organisation from TLB to Management Groups to Individual Sections. The nature of stress is that an assessment (Strategy Step 3) carried out at high level may conclude that a problem does not exist, but within the group there may be isolated pockets that do have stress related issues that require to be managed.

14   The Strategy is recommended to be applied at a 1* level, which is considered the most appropriate management level to use the new approach. This level will ensure senior management commitment, to the assessment process, and behind the achievement of the resulting actions plans. The size of the 1* staff numbers and location will determine the method used to achieve assessment of all staff. The results of the assessment being brigaded up the chain of command to TLB level. The recording of the findings and action plan production at the higher organisational levels (HLB or TLB) should only be required if there is need for more strategic actions, such as monitoring the success of subordinate budgetary levels in delivery of their action plans. Each 1* should determine how to undertake the stress assessment for their domain. Guidance on this issue is given in Annex A.

DUTIES

15   Directors, 1* Officers, are to ensure the legal requirement to assess the risk from stress is undertaken within the sections covered by their authority, and that appropriate actions are taken with the outcome. This can be achieved, by appropriate delegation of duties through Heads of Establishments or Unit Commanding Officers. Failure to protect employees from workplace stress, to provide them with information and to allow opportunities to access appropriate support as a result of workplace stress may result in a reduction in productivity and operational capability, and a legal decision against the MOD as a result of compensation claims.

16   Managers and supervisors are required to identify and manage stress in the workplace. They are responsible for assisting with risk assessments by identify excessively stressful situations, and the signs and symptoms of stress amongst staff. Managers at all levels should co-operate with actions required to avoid or reduce stress at work so far as is reasonably practicable in their areas of responsibility by:

- Conducting and implementing recommendations of risks assessments within their jurisdiction.

- Ensuring good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.

- Ensuring staff are fully trained to discharge their duties.

- Ensuring staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.

- Monitoring workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded or under-loaded.

- Monitoring working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking. Monitoring holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement.

- Ensuring that bullying and harassment is not tolerated.

- Being vigilant and offering additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

17   Individual members of staff are both encouraged to inform line management if the effects of stress interfere with their or their colleague's ability to work effectively, and to seek help from their General Practitioner (GP) or Defence Medical Service, Occupational Welfare Service, Trades Union, Occupational Health or Personnel manager if symptoms of stress are identified.

STRATEGY

18   The first stage is to produce the 1* plan to indicate how the assessment/s will be conducted and by whom within the 1* management area.

19   The following steps shall be undertaken by the assessors:

- Step 1 - Identify the hazards ~ Find out what's causing stress in your workplace.

- Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how ~ All employees could suffer from work-related stress

- Step 3 - Evaluate the risk and take or recommend action ~ How well are you doing

- Step 4 - Record your findings and produce action plan ~ Make a plan and stick with it

20   The next stage is for the 1* to agree the action plan and ensure step 5 is undertaken

- Step 5 - Monitor and review ~ Measure and share your success

REFERENCES

21   Tackling work-related stress: A manager's guide to improving and maintaining employee health and well-being HSG218 HSEBooks 2001 ISBN 0717620.

LEAFLET 25 ANNEX A

STRESS MANAGEMENT

CONTENTS

GUIDANCE ON MOD STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

INTRODUCTION

1   The Health and Safety Executive have defined stress as "the adverse reaction a person has to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them". We can all feel stressed at times when we feel as though everything becomes too much, when things get on top of us, or when we feel as though we are unable to cope. It affects us in different ways at different times and is often the result of a combination of factors in our personal and working lives. There is a difference between stress and pressure. We all experience pressure on a daily basis, and need it to motivate us and enable us to perform at our best. It's when we experience too much pressure without the opportunity to recover that we start to experience stress.

RISK FACTORS

2   MOD has a duty of care to protect the health, safety and welfare of all employees while at work. This includes the risks arising from work-related stress. The basis of managing any health and safety issue is to assess the risks and introduce appropriate control measures. To help understand how a risk assessment for work-related stress can be undertaken six key areas (or "risk factors") that can be the cause of work-related stress have been identified by the Health and Safety Executive. These are:

- the **demands** of the individual's job

- the **control** each person has over their work

- the **support** given to individual's from their managers and colleagues

- individual's **relationships** at work

- an individual's **role in the organisation**

- **change at work** and how it's managed

3   MOD needs to gain a detailed understanding of how to recognise these risk factors at the local levels, identify which areas may be presenting problems, and work with employees and, where appropriate, their representatives to take action to reduce these problems. To assist with this, each risk factor has been afforded a Management Standard as a target for MOD to aim towards.

STRATEGY

4   The Health and Safety Executive who enforce safety legislation do not expect every employer to meet all the Management Standards at their first attempt. The Standards are goals that MOD should be working towards through an ongoing process of assessment and improvement through the adoption of action plans. An understanding of the Standards is needed before applying them in your organisation.

5   Employees and employee representatives should be involved in taking the work forward and kept in touch with developments at each step of the strategy.

INITIAL PLANNING STAGE

6   The Policy laid down in leaflet 25 places responsibility on 1* managers to implement a stress management programme. The programme will be determined on two main factors.

Assessment Coverage

7   1* managers in MOD can have a vast difference in the numbers of staff under their control and also a vast difference in the number of locations in which their staff are working. A 1* Policy role could have a staff of 50 located in one building, while a 1* military officer could have a staff of 1000 in 10 locations. Locations in this context can also include different areas on a single establishment. Therefore it is not possible to dictate how the division of a 1* organisation should be structured to undertake stress management assessments.

8   The following criteria should be considered when determining the structure to be used.

- Numbers of persons to be included, an assessment handling greater than 100 is not recommended as some individuals can be overlooked.

- The difference in location may in itself be a stressor, and the local management style may vary.

- All staff within the selected assessment area should be considered.

- If a large number of assessments are needed to cover a 1* organisation the outcomes of each assessment should be reviewed by a single authority.

Assessment Approach

9   The decision as to the assessment approach will depend on the complexity of the workforce and the assessor's knowledge of them and their work. It may be that a single person has the necessary skills. It would be difficult to undertake an assessment without the knowledge indicated and hence to enable consistency to be achieved an individual may need to visit a number of locations to carry out the process. Support from the local management, staff and unions, is essential.

10   The skills and attributes required of a stress assessor or as part of a team undertaking the assessment including the following:

- Ability to have understood the 6 stress standards and the requirement to be achieved (See Paragraphs 12 to 19 below)

- Ability to communicate and gain commitment with staff at all levels.

- Appreciation that individuals may be at risk.

- Understands the physical and physiological symptoms of stress recognition. (See Para 23 to 25 below).

- Has an enquiring mind.

STEP 1 - IDENTIFY THE HAZARDS

11   As with any risk assessment it is crucial to know what the hazards likely to harm are before you can determine the degree of risk that they pose to your organisation. This can be achieved by taking the following risk factor standards, each of which will act as a stress reducer when achieved, and compare each to the status that exists in the organisation at the time of assessment.

Management Standards

12   Each of the risk factor standards has a clearly defined position at which the standard is met. There is also an additional standard, which is common to all risk factor areas. This standard will impact on MODs ability to improve its performance to help it meet each of the other standards:

MOD has systems and processes in place locally to respond to any individual's concerns.

NOTES

(1)   In the above statement "in place locally" will apply to all systems processes to which the employees have access to assist them overcome problems, whether the system or process is operated at a Unit, HLB, TLB, or MOD level.

(2)   In the following paragraphs the word organisation refers to whichever level of the MOD has decided to own the risk assessment and action plan for stress management in their domain and can be as small as a branch or as large as a TLB.

13   Standard for **DEMANDS** Includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment.

13.1   States to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work;

- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;

- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and

- Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

13.2   For Demands the standard is achieved when

Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs.

14   Standard for **CONTROL** is concerned with how much say the person has in the way they do their work.

14.1   States to be achieved:

- Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work;

- Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work;

- Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work;

- The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills;

- Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and

- Employees are consulted over their work patterns.

14.2   For Control the standard is achieved when

Employees indicate that they are able to influence the way they do their work.

15   Standard for **SUPPORT** includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues

15.1   States to be achieved:

- The organisation has and implements policies and procedures to support employees adequately;

- Systems and processes are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff;

- Systems and processes are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;

- Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it;

- Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job.

- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback from their managers.

15.2   For Support the standard is achieved when

Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and their managers.

16   Standard for **RELATIONSHIPS** includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behavior such as bullying, intimidation, and violence.

16.1   States to be achieved:

- The organisation promotes positive behaviors at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;

- Employees share information relevant to their work;

- The organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behavior;

- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behavior;

- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behavior.

16.2   For Relationships the standard is achieved when

Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviors.

17   Standard for **ROLE** is concerned with whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

17.1   States to be achieved:

- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible;

- The organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;

- The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear;

- Systems and processes are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

17.2   For Role the standard is achieved when

Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities.

18   Standard for **CHANGE** concerns how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organization

18.1   States to be achieved:

- The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes;

- The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals;

- Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs;

- Employees are aware of timetables for changes;

- Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

18.2   For Change the standard is achieved when

Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing organisational changes.

19   Each of the individual Standards is reliant on a response from the employees to enable the organisation to determine if the standards have been achieved. Where staff attitude surveys are conducted on a regular basis they should be considered as a means of collecting the data from employees. Additional guidance on staff stress surveys is given in Appendix 1.

STEP 2 - DECIDE WHO MIGHT BE HARMED AND HOW

20   Work-related stress can affect any member of a team, even though some may cope better with work pressures than others. In particular, it might affect those exposed to excessive pressures in the six areas covered by the Standards. At particular times, staff may be more vulnerable to work-related stress. For example, those returning to work after a stress-related illness, or those who have experienced a personal or family problem, such as bereavement. Of particular concern should be the staff who have a history of mental ill health problems.

21   Finding out how the factors are affecting employees requires a partnership approach, based on openness, honesty and trust, which explores what the main effects of work are on staff and what areas should be targeted first. Each member of staff may exhibit signs that they are suffering with the pressure they are under, and hence may require special consideration.

22   Pressure can manifest itself in physical, behavioral, or emotional effects. These effects are normally short-lived and cause no lasting harm. When the pressures recede, there is a quick return to normal. Stress is not, therefore, the same as ill health. It is only when pressures are intense and prolonged that the effects of stress can become more sustained and damaging, leading to longer-term psychological problems and physical ill health.

Stress Recognition

23   Long-term stress has been associated with high blood pressure, anxiety and depression. These conditions may arise from other causes and, if a particular individual is suffering from one or more of these disorders, it may require an occupational health practitioner to advise on the extent to which it is work related.

24   At the individual level the following physical, behavioral and emotional signs may be apparent:

- Dry throat, muscle tension, headaches, indigestion, insomnia, high blood pressure;

- Irritability, impulsive behavior, difficulty making decisions, sudden increase in smoking or alcohol use;

- Excessive worrying, feelings of worthlessness, brooding, forgetfulness, easily startled, daydreaming.

25   At the workplace level, high levels of absenteeism, work accidents (including minor ones) are often linked to stressful situations. Low production levels, poor quality production, frequent breakdown of equipment and difficult inter-personal relationships may also be associated with stress. Other indicators are:

- Working long hours, insufficient work, job insecurity, short conflicting deadlines, quantitative and qualitative work overload.

STEP 3 - EVALUATE THE RISK AND TAKE ACTION WHERE REQUIRED

26   The group or persons, or person, undertaking the assessment should, having studied the information available, determine the existing situation in relation to the standards expected for the areas where there may be a risk to individuals.

27   The areas where improvements may be needed should then be considered and recommendations made as to what actions may be taken to reduce the risk and improve stress management. There may be some actions that will improve management across a number of the standards areas, others may only impact on one.

28   This is the most difficult step in the strategy. Now decisions will have to be taken on the likelihood of the hazards identified through the study of the standards in Step 1 impacting on the persons identified in Step 2 and also how severe the impact is likely to be. The more likely a person already identified as at risk is to be affected by a failure to achieve a standard, will impact on the Actions to be taken. A way to help decide the risk to your organisation is to create a document which can demonstrate the whole strategy of stress management. This is the Stress Management Record (Leaflet 25 Annex B).

Considerations

29   When undertaking the evaluation there are a number of points that an organisation should be considering:

- Is it reasonably foreseeable that an employee may be harmed?

- Foresight depends on what the organisation knows or should know about the individual employee. Unless a particular problem is known about an employee the organisation is entitled to assume that an employee is capable of withstanding the normal pressures of the job.

- No occupation should be regarded as being inherently dangerous to mental health.

- An organisation is entitled to take what they are told by the employee at face value. Further enquiries need only be made if there is good reason to doubt what the employee has offered.

- There is a duty to take steps, to mitigate risk, if the impending harm is obvious enough for any reasonable manager to realise that he should do something about it. MOD will only be in breach of this duty if management failed to take reasonable steps in the circumstances, taking into account the gravity of the harm, the costs and practicability of preventing the harm, and the justifications for running the risk.

Prevention Actions

30   The following actions may be considered to reduce the risk to staff.

- Allow and encourage staff to attend Defence Management Training (DMT) and other seminars to identify indicators of stress in themselves and others and to manage it effectively. Seminars should be held even if staff are not showing any signs of over-stress in their work performance or well-being

- Provide appropriate job-related 'skills' training to enable work to be done most effectively

- Consult with all staff to identify stressors in the workplace

- Encourage an environment in which staff collaborate in organisational decision making

- Encourage an environment in which staff exercise as much autonomy and control as possible

- Carefully match people to jobs by considering their individual skills, capabilities and needs

- Consider job design, job descriptions and performance targets with the aim of reducing unnecessary stressors

- Provide accurate, fair and prompt feedback on performance – praise staff for work well done and give constructive criticism where work does not meet the required standard

- Promote activities to make the workplace healthier, more stimulating and more fun

31   Some of the elements of the standards can be achieved by implementing systems and processes such as Investors in People (IIP), many MOD organisations have already introduced this initiative. However, just because an organisation has IIP status, there will still be a need, during the evaluation stage, to determine if the initiative is working and being applied.

Early Intervention

32   If during the assessment stress is identified the following actions should be considered:

- Act immediately if a staff member seems overly stressed – do not ignore the signs

- Explore whether any episodes of stress are work related (e.g. at the return to work interview). Discuss ways of alleviating it in the short and long term

- Short term solutions include sharing tasks amongst other staff, adopting flexible or reduced hours and taking leave

- Long term solutions should aim to eliminate or minimise the cause of stress wherever possible

Self Help actions

33   Reducing stress at work can be achieved without the need for major expenditure and initiatives. The support of colleagues and staff making changes to their own working methods can have beneficial results. Some of these actions are as follows:

34   Supporting Colleagues

- Listen carefully with care and empathy if a colleague confides in you

- Try to talk to your colleague if you believe he/she is stressed; or

- Encourage your colleague to talk to his/her manager, a personnel officer, an Occupational Welfare Officer or someone from occupational health

- Discuss sources of work related stress with the manager if possible and appropriate

35   Helping yourself

- Realistically prioritise your tasks

- Manage your work so you work on the most important tasks

- Take regular breaks during the day

- Take all your annual leave

- Discuss the issues that are causing you stress with your manager along with any suggested solutions

- Seek advice and help from others – partners, friends, colleagues, personnel, welfare or occupational health

- Learn a relaxation technique – and allow yourself time to use it

- Take regular exercise – this will help you to cope better with stress

- Cut down on stimulants (especially caffeine) and depressants (especially alcohol)

- Use the official 'Grievance Procedure' for resolving industrial relations problems that cannot be resolved at local level

36   General Procedures

- Stress should be recognised as a potential psychological hazard and managed as any other health and safety issue. Stress should be considered, where appropriate, during all risk assessments and safety audits and particularly during periods of restructuring, changing employment conditions or workplace conflict

- Managers should regard institutional features that create stress as problems to be reported to senior managers in the same way as any other problem that cannot be resolved locally

- Where problems have developed, staff and managers are encouraged to use the Occupational Welfare Service and occupational health. The Harassment Procedures should be used if any form of harassment is the underlying source of distress

STEP 4 - RECORD YOUR FINDINGS

37   The Stress Management Record (Leaflet 25 Annex B) enables the recording of the identification of hazards and any persons who may be at greater risk. It enables the actions to be taken to be recorded together with any time frames required and also indicates how the actions will be monitored and the output reviewed.

NOTE

It is important not to record personal details on the Stress Management Record as this is likely to be read by a number of managers and union officials. Where individuals are identified as part of the assessment process as being at risk every effort should be made to shield their identity from persons who have no involvement with the necessary corrective actions to be taken.

38   The Stress Management Record can be used to record not only the findings of the assessment but the whole process of stress management. The actions that come out of the assessment process should be taken forward in an action plan which includes the monitoring element of the strategy. The stress action plan should be integrated into an organisations existing Health and Safety Action Plan or Management Plan. (An example of a Stress Management Record is at Annex A Appendix 2).

39   Some of the actions required from the assessment may not be possible to tackle immediately. As part of the evaluation of the hazards it should be established which are the identified hazards form the most significant risks (most highly likely to cause stress) and it is these that the action plans should tackle first.

40   The MOD 1* Manager who has instigated the assessment process, should then consider the recommendations i.e. actions required, and determine what actions will be taken to improve stress management and reduce the risk. These actions should then be transferred to the Action Plan.

41   When transferring the actions to the Action Plan it enables the time frame for the actions to be considered. Not all the actions may be possible in the immediate time frame. The actions that can be introduced within the management control (of the 1* organisation undertaking the assessment) would normally be on short time frames, but those that may require TLB policy changes or involve dealing with other stakeholders may have to be phased over a longer period.

42   The population covered by the assessment and the resulting action plan, should be informed of the outcome and the actions being taken.

STEP 5 - MONITOR AND REVIEW

43   The Stress Management Action Plan should be completed and accepted by the Organisation 1*. Each action should have a person nominated to keep the action monitored and report to the 1*, at regular intervals, on progress. Alternatively if Actions are to be undertaken in a specific year consideration should be given to transferring the in year actions to the Organisation's Health and Safety Action Plan. The actions could then be monitored by the Chairman of the Organisations Health and Safety Committee.

44   When actions have been completed the assessment process should be repeated to determine the success or otherwise of the actions taken and to determine if any other issues have developed since the last review.

45   A review should also be undertaken at any time there is a major change in circumstances surrounding the organisations work. (e.g. amalgamation with another organisation, reductions in staff, forming an agency).

LEAFLET 25 ANNEX A APPENDIX 1

STRESS MANAGEMENT

CONTENTS

Para

     GUIDANCE ON STRESS ASSESSMENT STAFF SURVEYS

GUIDANCE ON STRESS ASSESSMENT STAFF SURVEYS

INTRODUCTION

1   To obtain information, use can be made of questionnaires or surveys. The Health and Safety Executive have developed a question set with an analytical tool that can highlight where there is a need for improvement in any organisation. The question set is set out in Table 1. The analytical tool is available from the HSE stress web site.

SURVEYS

2   Obtaining a high response rate is important to ensure your results are representative of the population you are investigating. As a very crude rule of thumb for a survey of this nature a response rate of over 50% could be considered adequate, over 60% reasonable and over 70% good and more than 80% very good. There are several things you can do to increase your chances of a good response rate before you start. Employees should feel the questionnaire is important, and that their views matter and will be acted on.

3   It is crucial to publicise the survey within your organisation, including endorsements from senior management and employee representatives before it is distributed. (Ensure Point 4.6 below is mentioned).

4   It is important to explain to all staff:

    4.1   The purpose of the survey;

    4.2   How actions will be taken to address survey findings;

    4.3   How and when staff will be receiving a questionnaire; and

    4.4   How and when staff will get feedback on results.

    4.5   When and how the results will be communicated to all staff.

    4.6   Ensure anonymity of responses. This will encourage employees to give frank and accurate responses. A formal statement of anonymity at the beginning of the survey is the best way to do this.

5   When conducting the survey:

    5.1   Consider what the best medium is for distributing, and returning the survey to your staff (e.g. paper based, staff intranet). If possible, it may be useful to offer different formats so individuals can select the most convenient for them, while maintaining their anonymity.

5.2   Use up to date and accurate records to distribute questionnaires to ensure they do not go to the wrong locations.

5.3   Provide appropriate instructions on completion and a contact for support for completion if required.

5.4   Give people enough time to complete and return questionnaires.

5.5   Ensure managers consider that the process is important and encourage their staff to take time to complete questionnaires.

5.6   It is worth noting that those organisations that allow staff surveys to be completed in work time get a much better response rate.

5.7   Have one or two reminders before the completion date.

5.8   If possible, provide some sort of incentive for completing the survey.

6   The Trade Union Safety Representative or Employee safety representatives can assist in the planning and introduction of a survey and their involvement may increase the response rate.

7   The Health and Safety Executive apply weightings to the answers to the questions in Table 1 and their analysis tool uses the weightings to determine the current level of risk within the target population. Some units will experience difficulty in downloading this analytical tool due to the security fire walls.

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
I am clear what is expected of me at work					
I can decide when to take a break					
Different groups at work demand things from me that are hard to combine					
I know how to go about getting my job done					
I am subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behavior					
I have unachievable deadlines					
If work gets difficult, my colleagues will help me					
I am given supportive feedback on the work I do					
I have to work very intensively					
I have a say in my own work speed					
I am clear what my duties and responsibilities are					
I have to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do					
I am clear about the goals and objectives for my Department					
There is friction or anger between colleagues					
I have a choice in deciding how I do my work					
I am unable to take sufficient breaks					
I understand how my work fits into the overall aim of the organisation					
I am pressured to work long hours					
I have a choice in deciding what I do at work					
I have to work very fast					
I am subject to bullying at work					
I have unrealistic time pressures					
I can rely on my line manager to help me out with A work problem					
I get help and support I need from colleagues					
I have some say over the way I work					
I have sufficient opportunities to question managers about change at work					
I receive the respect at work I deserve from my Colleagues					
Staff are always consulted about change at work					
I can talk to my line manager about something that has upset or annoyed me about work					
My working time can be flexible					
My colleagues are willing to listen to my work related Problems					
When changes are made at work, I am clear how they will work out in practice					
I am supported during emotionally demanding Work					
Relationships at work are strained					
My line manager encourages me at work					

Table 1 Questions for use in a Staff Survey

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LEAFLET 25 ANNEX A APPENDIX 2

STRESS MANAGEMENT

PARTIAL WORKED EXAMPLE OF A STRESS MANAGEMENT RECORD

EXAMPLE MOD STRESS ASSESSMENT RECORD

(To be attached to Forms 1a to f and Form 2)

MOD STRESS ASSESSMENT RECORD (This section can be used to indicate any reference that is appropriate (File No etc))
DIRECTORATE/BRANCH/SECTION (States for which MOD division branch or section the assessment covers) **e.g. D Def Sy/computer audit**
LOCATIONS COVERED (If the branch or section is located over multiple sites a separate assessment should be made for each site) **e.g. RAF Brampton**

NUMBER AND GRADES OF STAFF INVOLVED (approximate numbers of and class or grades covered by the assessment)		
4X C1	**2xWng Cmdr**	
5X C2	**1 x Sq Ldr**	**1x Major**
1x D		
2xE1		
1XE2		

Hazard review undertaken by (Person or Persons) (This section should indicate who undertook the assessment more guidance on this is given under assessment process notes later in this appendix) **e.g. Assessment undertaken by a team consisting of** **Branch Safety Advisor** **Branch Personnel Admin** **Senior Officer on Site** **Local TU Safety Rep/ or an employee rep**
Date Assessment Started collecting data and establishing what is available may make it impossible to do the work in a day
Date Assessment Complete (Date the assessment forms (1a to 1f) have been completed and Actions Plans produced on Form 2)
Action Plan checked by (Position of Person who reviews the outcome of the assessment) **e.g. Director D Def/Sy**
Action Plan Agreed by (|Position of Person who reviews the outcome of the assessment) Some of the action plans requirements may need assistance from within the Units higher management) i.e this could either be the same person who checked the Action Plan if they have authority to implement all the actions required of a higher position manager **e.g. DGSS**

Dates Action Plan Reviewed	**1st** first date to be entered by the person agreeing the Action Plan
Dates and signature	**2nd**

EXAMPLE MOD STRESS AT WORK ASSESSMENT FORM 1B

	STEP
Hazard (states to be achieved from the Standards that are not in place and being achieved) **CONTROL** is concerned with how much say the person has in the way they do their work. What should be happening / states to be achieved: • Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work; **The section head is often set tight targets by political masters over which there is no control** • Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work; **The Section actively encourage GEMS suggestions and regularly make small bonus payments to encourage staff to think of new improved work methods** • Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work; **Section has two training days allocated to each individual each year to be used for personal development** • The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills; **Over and above the two days personal training above staff can apply for longer courses relevant to their role in our Section to develop i.e professional qualifications** • Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and **There is a team spirit in the Section and all work well with each other. Breaks are taken sensibly** • Employees are consulted over their work patterns. **The PAR system is used to consult on the work patterns and set new targets which impact on work patterns This is done twice a year.**	1&4
The Standard Required The standard is that: • Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work. • Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	
Current Position **The IIP accreditation awarded to the Directorate, and operating in the Section together with the Staff reporting PAR system, enables the Section Staff to have a degree of control over their working conditions. In general this standard area of stress management is not likely to give rise, in this section, to a significant risk.**	1&4
Employee at greater risk (No names to be used) **Section head with ministerial work**	2&4
Actions required. **Section Head Direct line manager to monitor monthly throughput of ministerial work**	3&4
Action to be taken **1* for Unit to have a monthly list of Parliamentary work undertaken, and desk officer replying, to Identify early an individual consistently working to tight dead lines. System to be put in place by Directors Admin**	3&4

REPEAT FOR FORMS 1a, 1c,1d, 1e, and 1f

EXAMPLE MOD STRESS ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN FORM 2

Action to be taken To be entered from Forms 1a to 1f	BY WHO	Completion date	To be Monitored by	To be reviewed By and When
STEP 3 **STEP 4**	STEP 3 **STEP 4**	STEP 3 STEP 4	**STEP 4** STEP 5	**STEP 4** STEP 5
CONTROL STANDARD ACTION 1* for Unit to have a monthly list of Parliamentary work undertaken, and desk officer replying, to Identify early an individual consistently working to tight dead lines. Others added if identified from DEMAND STANDARD SUPPORT STANDARD RELATIONSHIP STANDARD ROLE STANDARD CHANGE STANDARD	**System to be put in place by Directorate Admin Cell**	**1 Month**	**Directorate 1***	**2* Quarterly Management Meeting**

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LEAFLET 25 ANNEX B

STRESS MANAGEMENT

STRESS MANAGEMENT RECORD (INCLUDING ASSESSMENT)

MOD STRESS MANAGEMENT RECORD

(To be attached to assessment Forms (1a to 1f) and Action Plan Form (2)

MOD STRESS ASSESSMENT RECORD	
DIRECTORATE/BRANCH/SECTION	
LOCATIONS COVERED	
NUMBER AND GRADES OF STAFF INVOLVED	
Hazard review undertaken by (Person or Persons)	
Date Assessment Started	
Date Assessment Complete	
Action Plan checked by	
Action Plan Agreed by	
Dates Action Plan Reviewed	1st
Dates and signature	2nd
	3rd
	4th

MOD STRESS AT WORK ASSESSMENT FORM 1A

Hazard (states to be achieved from the Standards that are not in place and being achieved)	STEP
DEMANDS Includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment What should be happening / states to be achieved: • The organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work; • People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands; • Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and • Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.	1&4
The Standard Required The standard is that: • Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs. • Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	
Current Position	1&4
Employee at greater risk (No names to be used)	2&4
Actions required.	3&4
Action to be taken	3&4

MOD STRESS AT WORK ASSESSMENT FORM 1B

Hazard (states to be achieved from the Standards that are not in place and being achieved) **CONTROL** is concerned with how much say the person has in the way they do their work. What should be happening / states to be achieved: • Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work; • Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work; • Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work; • The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills; • Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and • Employees are consulted over their work patterns.	STEP 1&4
The Standard Required The standard is that: • Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work. • Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	
Current Position	1&4
Employee at greater risk (No names to be used)	2&4
Actions required.	3&4
Action to be taken	3&4

MOD STRESS AT WORK ASSESSMENT FORM 1C

Hazard (states to be achieved from the Standards that are not in place and being achieved)	STEP
SUPPORT includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues What should be happening / states to be achieved: • The organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees; • Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff; • Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues; • Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it; • Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job. • Employees receive regular and constructive feedback.	1&4
The Standard Required The standard is that: • Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors. • Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	
Current Position	1&4
Employee at greater risk (No names to be used)	2&4
Actions required.	3&4
Action to be taken	3&4

MOD STRESS AT WORK ASSESSMENT FORM 1D

Hazard (states to be achieved from the Standards that are not in place and being achieved)	STEP
RELATIONSHIPS includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour. What should be happening / states to be achieved: • The organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness; • Employees share information relevant to their work; • The organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour; • Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; • Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.	1&4
The Standard Required The standard is that: . • Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying . • Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	
Current Position	1&4
Employee at greater risk (No names to be used)	2&4
Actions required.	3&4
Action to be taken	3&4

MOD STRESS AT WORK ASSESSMENT FORM 1E

Hazard (states to be achieved from the Standards that are not in place and being achieved)	STEP
ROLE whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles. What should be happening / states to be achieved: • The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible; • The organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities; • The organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear; • Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.	1&4
The Standard Required The standard is that: • Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; • Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	
Current Position	1&4
Employee at greater risk (No names to be used)	2&4
Actions required.	3&4
Action to be taken	3&4

MOD STRESS AT WORK ASSESSMENT FORM 1F

Hazard (states to be achieved from the Standards that are not in place and being achieved)	STEP
CHANGE how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organization What should be happening / states to be achieved: • The organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes; • The organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals; • Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs; • Employees are aware of timetables for changes; • Employees have access to relevant support during changes.	1&4
The Standard Required The standard is that: • Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change; • Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	
Current Position	1&4
Employee at greater risk (No names to be used)	2&4
Actions required.	3&4
Action to be taken	3&4

MOD STRESS ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN FORM 2

Action to be taken To be entered from Forms 1a to 1f	BY WHO	Completion date	To be Monitored by	To be reviewed By and When
STEP 3 STEP 4	STEP 3 STEP 4	STEP 3 STEP 4	STEP 4 STEP 5	STEP 4 STEP 5

LEAFLET 25 ANNEX C

STRESS MANAGEMENT

CONTENTS

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING TRAUMATIC INCIDENTS AT WORK FOR CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES

INTRODUCTION

1   The Ministry of Defence (MOD) recognises that traumatic incidents in the workplace have the potential to cause acute stress reactions and distress to the workers involved and to disturb workplace functioning, both in the short and long term. The negative consequences of traumatic incidents can be managed and minimised by timely, well organised and systematic processes and procedures that are aimed at:

- Minimising the risk of traumatic incidents occurring

- Reducing the severity and impact of a traumatic incident when it occurs

- Assisting employees to return to normal function as quickly as possible following a traumatic incident

2   The strategy outlined in these guidelines will help to prevent or minimise the detrimental effects of traumatic incidents on civilian MOD employees. There are six elements to the strategy:

- Risk Assessment – identification and assessment of potential risks of a traumatic incident

- Pre-crisis preparation – this includes stress management education, stress resistance and crisis training for both individuals and the organisation

- Traumatic incident crisis support – including informal briefings, staff support and planned stand-down

- Defusing – loosely structured group discussions for the purposes of assessment, triaging and acute symptom mitigation

- Post Trauma Support - education of causes and symptoms of post trauma stress, sources of help and when to seek them

- Follow-up and referral – checking on progress back to full function and identifying anyone needing further treatment

SCOPE

3   This document is concerned with the management plan for minimising stress reactions (real or potential) following a traumatic workplace event. Such reactions will vary for different individuals and work groups and be directly affected by both situational and interpersonal demands occurring at the time.

DEFINITION OF THE TERM "TRAUMATIC INCIDENT"

4   A traumatic incident as referred to in this document is one that results in employees becoming unusually distressed by the nature of the event or an accumulation of events. This unusually strong emotional reaction has the potential to interfere with their ability to function at the scene or later. As individual reactions to traumatic events will vary, there is limited value in blanket statements about which events qualify as traumatising. However, some events may result in distress for most employees, such as:

- Major disasters,

- Handling or witnessing severe injury,

- Incidents which involve severely injured children and babies,

- Emergencies which exhaust employees both physically and emotionally,

- Being subject to personal violence,

- Witnessing violent death of another,

- Or any event in which there was a real or potential threat to one's life.

5   The key factor in deciding whether an employee or work group experiences psychological distress is when such employees perceive that the event made unusual demands on mental, emotional and coping capabilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Authority

6   Provisions that relate to managing traumatic incidents are included in the:

- Health and Safety at Work Etc Act

- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations

- Employer's common law 'duty of care'

7   It is the responsibility of Directors and Heads of Establishments of the MOD to ensure responsibilities are appropriately delegated for the implementation of these guidelines in all work areas, and especially where there is significant risk of exposure. Failure to provide employees with information and opportunities to access appropriate support following a traumatic or distressing event may result in a legal decision against the MOD as a result of compensation claims.

Managers and Supervisors Responsibilities

8   All managers and supervisors are responsible for implementing procedures for managing traumatic incidents in the workplace. Managers and supervisors should:

- Allow and encourage employees to attend appropriate training and staff development courses designed to prepare individuals and work groups for managing traumatic events;

- Provide employees with information about procedures for accessing support following a traumatic incident;

- Foster a work environment where employees are encouraged to access support and actively support one another;

- Provide feedback to senior management and the Occupational Welfare Service (OWS) about the effects of traumatic events on employees and workplace functioning;

- Maintain confidentiality as appropriate;

- In conjunction with occupational health, safety and OWS adopt a risk management approach in controlling the incidence and effects of traumatic events in the workplace;

- Ensure that a timely and systematic process is followed to manage any traumatic or distressing incident and its effects in the workplace.

Employee Responsibilities

9   Employees should:

- Seek support following a traumatic event and early resolution of problems which disrupt their own productivity;

- Attend and participate in staff development courses designed to prepare them to manage traumatic events;

- Provide information to managers and supervisors about the effects of particular traumatic events on work group functioning;

- In collaboration with management, occupational health, safety and OWS adopt a risk management approach for controlling the incidence and effects of traumatic events in the workplace.

Collective Responsibilities of Work Groups, Teams and Units

10   All employees should:

- Create a work atmosphere of professional responsibility towards the well being of colleagues and to maintain high workplace morale and functioning following the impact of a traumatic event;

- Provide emotional and practical support to colleagues, and actively seek to remove any stigma associated with the use of post-trauma psychological support systems;

- Participate in creating a best practice response to traumatic events that meets the needs of individuals and work groups.

HOW PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED BY TRAUMATIC INCIDENTS.

General Information

11   People involved in traumatic incidents will experience a stress reaction, the strength of which may range from mild or virtually unnoticeable to substantial and quite distressing. Some people will become distressed about their reaction to the incident in addition to becoming distressed about the incident itself. Other factors can influence the reaction to traumatic events such as major current life stressors, history of previous trauma, previous mental illness, repeated exposure to similar events, and absence of social and family support.

Reactions

12   It is normal to experience reactions to traumatic events. Reactions that are commonly experienced are:

- Shock – feelings of disbelief, numbness and difficulty comprehending what has happened;

- Fear - for personal safety and safety of others, recurrence of the event, and panicky and irrational feelings;

- Anger – generalised anger and frustration, outrage, feelings of the senselessness and injustice of the event;

- Helplessness;

- Sadness – grief and loss;

- Guilt/shame – for vulnerability and not acting as well as one would have liked, survivor guilt.

Coping

13   In the aftermath of a traumatic or distressing incident people progress through a series of attempts to cope with the event and adapt to its consequences. This usually occurs gradually, in increments rather than all at once. Shortly after the intense demands arising from the event abate, people often feel bewildered and disbelieving. In a major incident, such feelings can lead to a loss of sense of self and/or reality. After the event, a range of physical, mental and emotional reactions (as identified in Para 12) can occur.

14   It is normal to re-experience unbidden thoughts and sensations. Avoidance of thinking about the incident is also common and protects the person from the distress of revisiting the event. All individuals will feel jittery and on edge for some time. This should settle in six to twelve weeks.

15   In time the individual will have to accept, assimilate and accommodate to the changes wrought by their experiences. In essence they will have to find meaning in their experiences and stop avoiding contemplation of the event for fear of distress. Whilst all are changed by their experience, only a minority will develop longer-term problems. A minority will cope well at the time and for varying periods afterwards but present with problems later, sometimes up to several years later.

Long Term Consequences

16   In a similar way to bereavement, the full range of reactions may take some time to diminish and whilst there may be some residual reactions, most should settle in 6-12 weeks. An unknown percentage of individuals will go on to develop post traumatic mental health problems or disorders such as anxiety, depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder that will need professional assessment. Many employees experience damage to their health and well-being and disruption in their quality of relationships at work and home. Such disruptions can be significant, and only augmented where there are inadequate or inappropriate workplace responses to traumatic events. As well as the health and personal costs to the employee, the workplace suffers costs associated with increases in sick leave, absenteeism, staff turnover, declining productivity and workplace morale, and possibly legal claims against the organisation.

STEPS IN MINIMISING AND MANAGING TRAUMATIC INCIDENTS AT WORK.

17   A planned strategic approach to minimising and managing traumatic and distressing incidents in the workplace includes the following six steps.

STEP 1: Risk Assessment and Management

18   It is recommended that every Director and Head of Establishment identifies the type and nature of traumatic incidents that are likely to occur in their workplace. This can be achieved by:

- Reviewing statistics of workplace injuries and incidents:

- Observing the work environment and processes:

- Consulting with line managers, workers, neighbouring enterprises and clients on potential major incidents.

19   Once potential risks of traumatic incidents have been identified, a risk assessment should be conducted to determine the significance of the risk. A risk assessment should balance the likelihood of an event occurring with the severity of the impact of the event. It is important to note that while the probability of some incidents occurring is small, the consequences of the incident can be significant. An example of a low probability/high severity incident could be a crisis threatening the life of a staff member in the workplace.

20   Outcomes from the risk assessment of each particular workplace are used to guide the development of specific procedures that will help to minimise the risks associated with that workplace (a Traumatic Incident or Major Incident Plan). It is important to note strategies consisting of reactive elements only have limited effectiveness and that proactive elements must be integral. One of the major risk factors associated with traumatic incidents is the level of uncertainty and confusion that occurs when an incident is happening and immediately after an incident. Appropriate workplace based procedures should assist to:

- Guide people's actions during and after an incident, thus reducing the level of uncertainty and confusion associated with an incident; and

- Decrease the likelihood of traumatic incidents occurring or, escalating further if they do occur.

STEP 2: Pre-crisis Preparation

21   It is essential that Directors and Heads of Establishments have assured access to up-to-date next of kin details for all their staff to facilitate 'kin forming' in the event of an incident involving death or serious injury. Line managers should also be encouraged to keep up-to-date details of staff and next of kin/person to be contacted in the event of an emergency both at work and at a secure location elsewhere in case the workplace is inaccessible as a result of the incident. The consent of staff should be obtained and they should be informed of the purpose for holding this information before these lists are made. These lists are in addition to the requirement for next of kin details to be held safely within a branch/unit.

22   Experience has shown that training and educating staff in the processes to follow when an incident occurs can have a significant impact on the level of distress experienced by a person following a traumatic or distressing incident. This occurs because training assists to:

- Raise staff awareness of traumatic and distressing incidents and their impact;

- Ensure staff are adequately trained and briefed to identify incidents that may develop into a traumatic or distressing incident and respond appropriately;

- Develop a workplace culture where staff are aware that emotional and psychological reactions to traumatic and distressing incidents are normal and not something to be ignored or dismissed as indicating weakness (social and cultural diversity factors also play a part here);

- Familiarise all staff with their responsibilities relating to managing traumatic and distressing incidents before, during, and after events occurring.

23   The type of training will relate to the level of risk exposure as determined by the risk assessment. High-risk workplaces and workgroups should be given priority and training tailored to the specific needs of the group.

24   Stress management and education is the initial step to prepare the individual for the effects of traumatic incidents through knowledge, preparation and training. If people know the signs and symptoms that follow a stressful event, and that the stress reaction following a traumatic event is entirely normal, they can more easily accept the internalised feelings and deal with them. It also means the individual will be able to employ stress relieving techniques after the event in an attempt to regain equilibrium.

25   As well as education about the signs and symptoms following a traumatic event, many trauma experts recommend 'stress inoculation' that includes watching films/videos of traumatic events and regularly practicing major accident procedures. This embodies the concept of an individual developing skills that may help them monitor feelings and behaviour. If they can respond to a stressful incident by activating appropriate coping resources, this might enable them to deal with a given situation more effectively by reducing overall stress. Also, by practicing major accident procedures in advance, individuals are more aware of their roles in the event of a real incident.

STEP 3: Traumatic Incident Crisis Support

26   It is important for managers to stay firmly in charge following a traumatic incident. Managers represent the MOD to their staff and a caring presence can mean a great deal in helping them feel supported. Managers should be visible to their subordinates and take time to ask them how they are doing. Efforts should be made to avoid a manager leaving their workforce unsupported for any period of time during a traumatic event.

Immediately an incident has occurred managers should:

- Establish control of the situation and take whatever action is necessary to ensure the continuing health and safety of all involved; (e.g. Initiate planned emergency response, evacuation, containment of incident, and communication protocols.)

- Establish the basic facts of the incident to use when communicating with emergency services and/or next of kin;

- Contact agencies as appropriate (e.g. Emergency Services, OWS, Senior Management, MOD local or regional press office [the latter only after all necessary emergency or immediate action has been taken]). The Police may need to be notified of certain incidents.

27   Managers need to care for their own staff first. They should locate all their staff and ensure they have any necessary medical care, food, shelter and any other necessities. The basic needs of all staff and casualties should be provided for in the following rank order:

- Security is of paramount importance if a threat remains – staff not involved in actually dealing with the incident should be moved to a place of safety as soon as possible.

- Physiological needs – these are the basic biological needs of food, fluids, shelter and warmth.

- Emotional needs – are catered for by human contact, empathy, encouragement and care.

<u>Within the First Few Hours:</u>

28   There should be a primary scan of the environment and situation to determine immediate responses and includes the following actions:

- Identify all those directly involved in the incident (including witnesses). At this stage identify the most obviously affected in order to initiate psychological first aid.

- Ensure action has been taken by the relevant persons to notify families of distressed, injured or deceased staff.

- Ensure adequate physical and emotional support for evacuated persons. This may include communication with family and sharing information with displaced staff about the progress of the incident.

- Plan for persons to leave the workplace. It is important to ensure that staff:

    - Are assisted to get home safely. Arrange transport and replacement clothing if necessary, and

    - Have adequate support at home. Check if there is someone at home with them or do they need to call someone to be with them.

- Wherever possible, arrange for defusing sessions to be conducted before people leave (However, in the event of incidents involving serious injury it must be accepted that the priority is dealing with injured persons and defusing may need to be delayed.) Defusing is best done by a suitably trained welfare officer, however if this is not possible it is important that an appropriate (trained) person:

    - Speaks to each individual affected person and checks they are alright;

    - Makes arrangements to contact them the next day, and

    - Provides them with contact details of welfare support in case they need it before further support is arranged.

STEP 4: Defusing

29   Immediately following a traumatic incident there should be an opportunity for all those involved to get together and informally talk through what has happened. Even in an unstructured setting this may provide an environment that is conducive to allowing individuals to realise they are not alone and may facilitate the building of natural supporting mechanisms within the group. With the help of a trained defuser it may be possible to defuse and re-frame some of the misconceptions that lead to negative reactions like anger and guilt mentioned in Para 12. Defusing should happen as soon as practically possible after the traumatic event – preferably before staff are sent home. Such a mechanism will prevent anyone from leaving the work setting before the support they need has been offered. However, the Director, Head of Establishment or local manager must ensure that defusing does not take place until police or Board of Inquiry have sanctioned it due to the risk of 'contaminating' evidence.

STEP 5: Post Trauma Support

30   Until recently it was common practice to have a psychological debriefing session 48 to 72 hours after a traumatic incident. However, there is accumulating scientific evidence that single episode intervention ('psychological' or 'critical incident' debriefing) is of little clinical value and may be harmful in some cases. As a result, the Surgeon General has issued an instruction that the technique should no longer be practiced or taught. The OWS has responded to the Surgeon General's instruction by producing a modified programme termed 'Post Trauma Support' based on the original Mitchell/Dyregrov debriefing model, but significantly reducing the parts thought to be harmful (in depth discussion of the facts of the incident) and accentuating the educational and normalisation parts. The programme also includes a second opportunity to use defusing and re-framing techniques. Although there is no evidence that this 'modified' post trauma support prevents the development of post traumatic mental illness, we believe it meets the requirement to provide support and information for those involved in traumatic events.

31   Post Trauma Support is voluntary and can be done individually or in groups. Whenever possible everyone involved in the crisis should be encouraged (but not compelled) to attend. The OWS needs to be contacted as soon as possible after the traumatic incident in order to make arrangements to provide the necessary staff. A location that is large enough to accommodate the group and can be secured so as to assure privacy is appropriate for a post trauma support session. A session may take several hours, and, so as to ensure no interruptions, refreshments should be supplied at the beginning of the session. Line managers should be especially careful to monitor staff who choose not to attend a post trauma support session in case their failure to attend is a symptom of avoidance and they may actually be in most need of support.

STEP 6: Follow-up and Referral

32   It is important to ensure ongoing emotional, physical and spiritual support is provided. This should include staff to visit work colleagues in hospital, attend funerals or attend memorial services. Staff should be encouraged to access welfare support where needed. Managers need to monitor the behaviour of staff affected and ensure adequate support, with the assistance of OWS if required. Managers must not forget to cater for the needs of persons who work off site, or those who are off site because of injury, or trauma. They should ensure all staff who were in any way involved have been contacted and offered assistance (including witnesses, switchboard operators and /or receptionists).

33   It is important to maintain communication regarding the progress of recovery operations. Respect for privacy and confidentiality is important if information about the condition of affected staff is released. Staff who are away from the workplace can benefit greatly from positive communication from their work colleagues. Keeping them informed assists in their transition back to work and their recovery.

34   In the aftermath of a traumatic incident it may be necessary to modify normal office rules and procedures. Dress codes, restrictions on using the telephone for personal business, etc. may need to be temporarily adjusted during the post disaster period. Post-disaster environments are often less safe and sanitary than normal, so workers need to exercise special care. It is particularly important to prevent overwork and exhaustion that tends to occur as people throw themselves into recovery operations. Exhaustion can lower resistance to disease, decrease alertness, impair judgment and make people more vulnerable to accidents. Managers will need to be vigilant and develop strategies to ensure people do not exhaust themselves.

35   Getting back to the daily routine can be a comforting experience, and most people can work productively while dealing with grief and trauma. However, the process of getting staff back to work is one which must be approached with great care and sensitivity. In particular, if anyone has died or been seriously injured, the process must be handled in a way that shows appropriate respect to them.

36   It is important to recognize any significant dates and events. This may include the anniversary of the event, release of investigation reports, significant media attention and memorial services.

REFERENCES

37   References:

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- C.   Meichenbaum, D. (1994) A clinical handbook/practical therapist manual for assessing and treating adults with post-traumatic stress disorder. Institute Press

- D.   Mitchell, J. and Everly, G. (1998) Critical Incident Stress Management: A new era in crisis intervention. Traumatic Stress Points, Vol. 12, No. 4.

- E.   Parkinson, F. (1993) Post Traumatic Stress: Insight Books.

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LEAFLET 25 ANNEX D

STRESS MANAGMENT

CONTENTS

Para

GUIDELINES FOR OPERATIONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

1   Following the Judgment in the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Hearing in May 2003, the MOD examined the lessons to be learnt from the case. An Overarching Review of Operational Stress Management was conducted to recommend tri-Service policy for the management of operational stress.

SCOPE

2   This document is concerned with the promulgation of guidance on operational stress management training and communication to military personnel in the Armed Forces, together with both Regular and Volunteer Reserves. This guidance extends also to all MOD employed civilians working with HM Forces on operations.

3   Because of the nature of current and future military operations (limited wars of choice rather than wars of national survival) and evolving employment and human rights legislation, greater emphasis is now placed on the welfare and rights of the individual. Therefore, the MOD must evolve and employ tri-Service policies that deal effectively with operational stress. This policy must articulate that operational stress is an unavoidable part of military operations and requires a different approach to stress management that is distinct from civilian organisations.

DEFINTION OF THE TERM "OPERATIONAL STRESS"

4   Modifying the HSE definition of stress, the traditional UK military definition is that *"stress is the reaction people have when the pressures or other demands on them is excessive and results in a deleterious effect on health and capability that might reduce performance"*. Whilst this is an acceptable definition of workplace (occupational) stress, it does not capture the range of stresses likely to be faced by those on operations, nor does it recognise that stress can be a stimulator of good performance in some circumstances.

5   Given the unique pressures faced by MOD personnel on operations the definition of "operational stress" is as follows:

> **"an individual or group reaction to stressors relating to the operational context which, if not managed, may result in impaired performance and possible effects on health."**

6   The objective is to ensure, through the individual Service training systems, that at all stages of their career personnel are provided with the necessary knowledge to recognise the adverse effect of such stress in both themselves and others, and to know when and how to seek assistance from management.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Authority

7   Provisions that relate to the management of operational stress are a part of the employer's common law "duty of care" in so far as it is possible to extend such a statute into an operational situation or environment.

8   It is the responsibility of the three Armed Services and Directors and Head of Establishments of the MOD to ensure responsibilities are appropriately delegated for the implementation of these guidelines, especially where there is a significant risk of exposure to operational stress. Failure to provide personnel with training or access to appropriate support following deployment on operational duty could result in a legal decision against the MOD as a consequence of compensation claims.

Managers and Supervisors Responsibilities

9   The chain of command is responsible for implementing the training procedures needed for preparing personnel for operational deployments. Management should therefore:

9.1 Ensure that personnel attend appropriate training courses designed to prepare individuals and groups to deal with operational stress;

9.2 Provide personnel with information about procedures for accessing support whilst on operational deployment; and,

9.3 Promote an environment where personnel are encouraged to access support and actively support each other during and after operational deployments.

Individual Responsibility

10   Personnel should:

10.1   Attend and participate in training courses and higher management courses designed to help prepare them for operational deployment;

10.2   Provide information to the chain of command about the effects of particular operations on the way in which the group or individuals with whom they have been deployed might have been affected; and,

10.3   Be able to identify the symptoms of an adverse reaction to operational stress in themselves and their peers and know where to seek further help and guidance.

Collective Responsibility

11   All personnel should:

11.1   Promote an atmosphere of responsibility towards the well being of colleagues whilst engaged on operational duty and following post-operational recovery to the home base; and,

11.2   Provide emotional and practical support to colleagues and actively seek to remove any stigma associated with the adverse effects of operational stress either during or after deployment.

STEPS IN MANAGING OPERATIONAL STRESS

12   Implementation and delivery of operational stress is a single-Service activity, although clearly best practice should be developed and adopted whenever possible. This policy should take account of the needs of both the individual and the MOD, and be inclusive of families and dependents. Additionally, it was agreed this policy should, where practical, embrace MOD employed civilians deployed on operational duty. Furthermore, oversight of the management of operational stress was clearly identified as an issue for management, and not a medical responsibility.

13   MOD has decided that it should adopt a six-step approach to the improved management of operational stress, and that improvement would be achieved though better training and communication strategies, together with a high visibility strategy to try and reduce the stigma in both the Services and the community surrounding those suffering an adverse reaction to operational stress. The new operational stress management policy will be sufficiently flexible to cope with a range of situations that might arise for MOD personnel, and for management purposes, its delivery in training programmes will occur in accordance with the six-step approach from engagement to discharge.

Step 1 - Pre-Service Beliefs and Attitudes

14   Many of those who join the Armed Forces bring with them cultural "baggage" and negative attitudes gleaned from the civilian community towards those who suffer from mental ill-health. As individuals joining a "fighting" organisation there could be an erroneous perception that mental ill-health is not something they will encounter in the MOD, nor be susceptible to themselves. Consequently, right from the outset there is a need to address this issue as a matter of policy at recruitment and make applicants and candidates aware of the medical issues connected with both physical and mental good health. Awareness of these issues should enable them to have a better understanding of both occupational and operational stress.

Step 2 - In-Service Training and Promotion Courses for Career Development

15   On entry into service, education and training packages should cover awareness issues connected with stress in general and operational stress in particular, and the effect that this can have on families and dependants. This emphasis on education and training for dealing with operational stress management and its de-stigmatisation should continue as part of the career and promotion development package, because personnel spend far more time on training for military operations than actually being deployed on them. The education process should be focused on how to identify and cope with operational stressors and resulting stress, how to seek help and to know that help is available to assist those suffering and recovering from illness. Training and promotion courses should continually address the identification and management of operational stress so that managers receive the training to enable them to respond appropriately.

Step 3 - Pre-Deployment

16   As a continuation of the education and training awareness package and prior to deployment, personnel should be prepared to confront the issues they could face as a result of operational duty and be made well aware that, if such problems arose, medical support is on hand to deal with them. Of crucial importance is the need for the chain of command to provide guidance to personnel on the recognition and detection of stress in themselves and others, and to make personnel aware of where to go for treatment and aftercare.

Step 4 - Operational Deployment

17   There should be policy on the general support available to personnel during an operational deployment, together with advice on the specific support for those detected at high risk. This policy should also spell out the mechanisms for referral and treatment of those with symptoms of mental ill-health, and guidance should also be available to families and dependents of those diagnosed as being unwell.

Step 5 - Post-Operational Recovery

18   Policy guidance should also be available covering the detection and referral of those suffering from the results of operational stress, with details of how they can be referred for help and the treatment, vocational rehabilitation along with advice on the aftercare that is available to help them recover. Advice should also extend to families and dependents.

Step 6 - On Discharge from the Armed Forces

19   Similarly, for Service leavers there should be guidance on available services in the civilian community. This will include NHS mental health arrangements, how to access them and what services to expect, as well as advice on the ex-Service charities and the Veterans' Agency Helpline. Once again, such advice should be extended to families and dependents.

OTHER MOD PERSONNEL

20   The six-step training, education and communication strategy is well suited to Service personnel as part of their career progression. However, there is an increasing trend to make use of MOD civil servants and sponsored reserves on deployed operations, and it is essential that they also receive suitable induction training to equip them for the role that they will be undertaking. Additionally, to recognise that whilst on operations and after their return home that they could well have similar needs for mental health support as their Service colleagues because of their exposure to operational stress.

21   Furthermore, Service personnel who have served on operations may well subsequently find themselves working for MOD civilian line managers within the Department. It is important, therefore, that MOD civilian managers are given appropriate training to help them recognise symptoms of operational stress in military colleagues, and to know when to provide help and where to go for it.

IMPLEMENTATION

22   Implementation of the six-step training programme for operational stress management competency will be delivered at three levels throughout the Services as part of their career development. Training will therefore be provided for other ranks, NCO's and junior and middle ranking officers, and for senior commanders throughout the duration of their career. This education and training initiative should provide Service personnel with the knowledge and skills to recognise and deal with operational stress in themselves and others. Training in operational stress management will also be available to MOD civilians as and when required.

REFERENCES

23   References:

- SPB 21/03 : Lessons Learnt from the PTSD Hearing;

- SPB 22/03 : ToRs for the Overarching Review of Operational Stress Management;
- SPEG 19/04 Phase 1 (Policy) Report on the Overarching Review of Operational Stress Management, and
- SPEG 12/05 Phase 2 (Training and Communication Strategies) Report on the Overarching Review of Operational Stress Management

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