



STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

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AUTHORISATION

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VERSION HISTORY

VERSION	DATE	PREPARED BY	CHANGES & REASONS FOR CHANGE
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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The health, safety and welfare of our employees is important to Invenio and we are driven to ensuring this is met. We are committed to identifying and reducing the causes of workplace stress, as we acknowledge that this is an important health and safety issue.

This policy is applicable to all employees. It is the manager's responsibility to implement the policy, and it is the Company's responsibility to provide the necessary resources.

2. DEFINITION

Stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". There is a distinct difference between stress and pressure, as if managed correctly pressure can have a positive effect on an employee, whereas stress can be seen as detrimental to their well-being.

The effects of long-term stress can be seen in physical, intellectual, emotional and behavioural signs. These can include headaches, nausea, tiredness, palpitations, worrying, making mistakes, anger, irritability, and job dissatisfaction.

3. MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Managers play an important role in facilitating and supporting staff to carry out their jobs effectively. To minimise the risk of work-related stress, managers should:

- ensure clear communication between management and employees, specifically on organisational changes that may affect an individual personally;
- ensure that jobs are properly designed, with realistic demands and workload, and that expectations and job roles are clear;
- ensure staff are trained to undertake the demands of individual jobs and are able to contribute to decisions about how the job is done;
- ensure there are developmental opportunities available to all staff;
- ensure that there are regular opportunities to discuss the work and obtain feedback on performance, e.g. regular one-to-one meetings and/or team meetings;
- ensure that there is a zero tolerance on bullying and harassment;
- monitor working hours and holidays to ensure that staff are not overworking and are taking appropriate breaks;
- identify or respond to issues of concern promptly and seek constructive solutions;
- offer additional support to members of staff who are experiencing stress outside work such as bereavement or separation.

4. HR RESPONSIBILITY

The responsibilities of HR are to:

- provide guidance on the stress policy to managers;
- provide support to staff and management;
- to encourage referrals to occupational workplace counsellors if appropriate.

5. EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY

Individuals need to be aware of their own range of feelings and reactions to stressful situations and their personal methods of coping. They should also endeavour to recognise the warning signs of excessive stress being suffered by colleagues.

Individuals should seek professional advice and support from their GP where possible for work related and personal related stress illnesses.

Excessive pressure and personal stress are not always evident in individuals, and managers may not be aware of the stressors or triggers that affect their staff. Employees have a level of responsibility in maintaining their own health and well-being and have a duty to inform their managers when workplace pressure is excessive so that reasonable steps can be taken to reduce this wherever possible. Likewise, where a stress related illness is diagnosed by a GP, staff are encouraged to inform their manager.

Employees can take further steps to avoid or reduce stressors and prevent the stress of others by:

- Understanding and recognising the signs of stress in others and themselves;
- Raising concerns about stress in the workplace in a timely and appropriate manner;
- Being sensitive and supportive to other colleagues;
- Taking personal responsibility in managing own stress (e.g., taking regular exercise, ensuring lunch breaks are taken, using annual leave entitlement, ensuring you actively include positive interludes in what might otherwise be a negative day, making use of the support available at an early stage etc.);
- Avoiding the misuse of alcohol and drugs;
- Not being a cause of stress to other colleagues.

Employees who do not feel able to speak to their manager, or who feel that their manager is not adequately addressing their concerns should speak to HR.

6. PROCESS FOR MANAGING STRESS

Despite the best efforts of all concerned, it may be that some employees do experience stress at work. When an employee exhibits signs of excessive stress, it is essential to identify occupational stressors.

Prompt and sensitive action should be taken once it is known that an employee may be suffering from stress. A manager will work with the individual to minimise the effects of stress and develop an action plan that identifies:

- what the problem is
- how it was identified
- the proposed solution/s
- actions to be taken to achieve the solution/s
- dates by which each action should be achieved
- how individuals will be kept informed on progress
- a date to review the plan and see if it has achieved its aim.

The manager will agree regular contact (review) with the individual on an informal basis, either via telephone, face to face or through informal chats in the workplace. If the employee is absent from work, an agreed date and time for contact should be made via telephone. Once solutions have been implemented, the review should check that agreed actions have been done and evaluate how effective these have been.

Where it is possible to identify a work-related problem, a manager (in discussion with the team member) should consider what support or changes would rectify the situation. They could be temporary or permanent. Usually small, simple changes to working arrangements or responsibilities will help ease pressures affecting the team member.

Even if the cause of stress may not be work-related, changes to the team member's working arrangements may help reduce some of the pressure they are experiencing. For example, temporarily changing their working hours may reduce stress caused by caring responsibilities for an ill-relative.

7. MANAGING THE RETURN TO WORK

In the event an employee has had time off work due to suffering or recovering from a stress related illness, managers will show a supportive, non-judgmental attitude on their return to work. They should ensure flexibility and sensitivity in arranging a realistic, structured return to work rehabilitation plan. It may be helpful to request a report from Occupational Health about the employee's fitness to identify any areas of work that should be avoided in the rehabilitation process.

Managers will take all reasonable steps so that any employee returning to work after absence due to stress related illness is not exposed to the same levels or stressors or triggers that caused the illness.

Returning to full health and productivity can be a lengthy process. The employee may need regular reviews of the progress made, and managers may need to make reasonable adjustments within their team to redistribute work, or redesign processes to avoid further episodes of stress related illnesses in the team.