



## Cloch Housing Association

# Stress, Mental Health & Wellbeing

<b>Policy Name</b>	Stress, Mental Health & Wellbeing
<b>Policy Category</b>	Corporate & Governance
<b>Policy Number</b>	009
<b>Approved by</b>	Board or F&CS Sub-Committee
<b>Responsibility of</b>	Corporate Services Officer
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<b>Equalities Impact Assessment Required</b>	No
<b>Link to other policies</b>	Employee Privacy Notice H&S Manual (Section 3.16; attached as Appendix 2).
<b>Consultation</b>	No
<b>Need for Procedure</b>	No

## **Introduction**

Cloch Housing Association is committed to reducing and where possible eliminating stress for its employees. Although stress in itself is not an illness, it can be a contributory factor in many conditions and can cause both physical and mental illnesses.

Stress on its own can also result in poor mental health of employees even if the effects are not severe enough to result in a medical diagnosis. Cloch Housing Association recognises the need to promote a culture of good mental and physical health in its duty of care under the requirement of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

## **Background**

Stress in the workplace is not new. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) introduced Stress Management Standards a number of years ago and implemented tools to accompany them which have developed over the years. The management standards cover six key areas :

- Demands
- Support
- Change
- Control
- Role
- Relationships

Full descriptions of the standards and typical behaviours which can be a sign of stress are available from the HSE website [[www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)].

It is important to distinguish the difference between stress and pressure. In most work situations some pressure is healthy, but stress is when a person experiences too much pressure and the effect of the pressure becomes negative.

## **Policy Aims**

This policy aims to:

- Promote a culture of mental and physical wellbeing;
- Increase awareness of stress;
- Provide managers with a clear process to use should an employee report that they are experiencing symptoms of stress;
- Provide details of the proactive measures Cloch Housing Association will implement to help reduce and, where possible, eliminate stress and its causes.

## Legal Framework

Although there is no specific legislation on stress the following are relevant through case law.

- *Health & Safety at Work Act 1974*

Under section 2 (1), employers have a duty to 'ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees'

- *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*

Requires that employers make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the H&S of its employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work and this includes stress.

## Definitions

The following are definitions which will be applied in the context of this policy:-

- **Stress:** the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them
- **Proactive measures:** aims to prevent the harm caused by stress by taking action before it occurs
- **Reactive measures:** actions which will respond to any stress related situation to minimise harm once it has occurred and assist in preventing it occurring again.

## Confidentiality

Cloch Housing Association will ensure that employees experiencing stress are dealt with in the strictest of confidence.

The organisation will treat your personal data in line with our obligations under the current data protection regulations and our own Privacy Notice. Information regarding how your data will be used and the basis for processing your data is provided in Cloch Housing Association's Employee Privacy Notice.

## Line Manager Responsibilities

Line managers play a key role in managing stress within the workplace. It is vital to the success of a Stress Policy that managers have a thorough understanding of what stress is, what the causes and early signs are.

The line manager's responsibilities include:

- Attending stress awareness training;
- To be aware of the signs of stress and intervene where necessary;

- Promote the organisations culture of a physically and mentally healthy organisation;
- To manage staff effectively to minimise them experiencing stress;
- Where issues of stress arise, intervene as early as possible;
- To ensure that a stress risk assessment is conducted with their staff on a routine basis;
- Ensure staff contribute to the organisation's stress questionnaires when necessary;
- To take steps to assist employees maintain a state of good mental health e.g. encourage rest breaks, fresh air, and holidays.

### **Employee Responsibilities**

- To raise any concerns they may have regarding stress at the earliest opportunity;
- To participate in Cloch Housing Association's measures to assist in reducing or eliminating stress;
- To be aware of the HSE Risk Management standards and the signs of stress;
- To raise any concerns they may have for their colleagues in regard to stress with a manager.

### **Managing Stress**

#### ***Proactive Measures***

To support the organisation's commitment in reducing the risk of stress occurring, Cloch Housing Association will ensure that the following initiatives will be implemented and adopted.

#### ***Managers training***

- Cloch Housing Association will ensure that all line managers attend stress awareness training and subsequent refreshers at appropriate intervals.

#### ***Stress Risk Assessments***

- Cloch Housing Association will commit to conducting a stress risk assessment among staff on a periodic basis to help inform the team/department risk assessment. This will assist in identifying any 'at risk' areas within the organisation.

### *Analysing Information*

- Commitment will be given that Cloch Housing Association will review appropriate data e.g. absence, employee concerns, employee questionnaires to identify areas where stress is or could be a risk.

### *Risk Assessments*

- Stress risk assessments will be conducted on a periodic basis (these can be carried out organisation wide or at department level; whichever is deemed necessary).

### *Promoting the Wellbeing of Employees*

- Cloch Housing Association is committed to facilitating a culture of promoting physical and mental health in the following ways:
  - ⇒ Progression and regular monitoring of the new 3-year Wellbeing Strategy.
  - ⇒ Provide stress awareness sessions for staff.
  - ⇒ Ensure that staff taken any allocated breaks.
  - ⇒ Manage staff holiday entitlement in order that leave is taken throughout the year at reasonable intervals.
  - ⇒ Promote the benefits of physical activity for both physical and mental health through our healthcare scheme.
  - ⇒ Ensure that staff are not working excessive hours on a regular and prolonged basis.
  - ⇒ Provide opportunities for employees to be active throughout their working day where possible and appropriate.

### *Reactive Measures*

Stress is a very individualised condition and, as a result, it is unfortunate that even with the above measures being put in place some employees may nonetheless find themselves experiencing a stressful period in their lives. This may be caused by work or personal circumstances or a combination of both.

### *Managing Individual Stress Concerns*

The following details the process that will be used by Cloch Housing Association should an employee raise concerns of stress:-

- ⇒ Manager becomes aware that an employee is experiencing stress.
- ⇒ The manager should arrange to meet with the staff member within 3 days to discuss the issues.

- ⇒ The line manager will give the employee a stress questionnaire to complete and agrees when the employee should return the questionnaire by (Appendix 1).
- ⇒ The employee completes the questionnaire and returns this to the line manager.
- ⇒ A second meeting is arranged to discuss the questionnaire, identify ways of managing the issues and any support or interim arrangements that may assist the employee.
- ⇒ If appropriate the employee may be referred to an occupational health specialist, counselling, or any other appropriate service.
- ⇒ During this meeting an action plan will be developed to summarise discussions and lay out actions that will be taken by the organisation, line manager and employee.
- ⇒ If the employee is absent as a result of stress, the absence will continue to be managed in line with Cloch Housing Association's absence management procedures, as well as providing the employee with the questionnaire to complete.

NB: If the employee's line manager is a contributing factor to the employee's stress, another appropriate manager e.g. a manager one level above will conduct the meetings.

If it is identified that the stress is being caused by another employee, then appropriate investigations may be required in line with Cloch Housing Association's Grievance Policy.

If through discussions with an employee a line manager becomes aware of a stress risk, they will raise this in the appropriate way to ensure it is addressed at an organisational level. This will be done while maintaining the employee's confidentiality.

### **Occupational Health**

If deemed appropriate an employee may be referred to an occupational health specialist to help identify any actions that could be taken to assist in the employee's recovery.

### **Counselling Service**

This is provided through the employee's healthcare account.

### **Additional Sources of Information**

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/workplace-mental-health/work-and-stress/>

## Individual Employee Stress Questionnaire

You have been given this questionnaire to complete as it has been highlighted to your line manager that you are or may be feeling stressed. The purpose of this questionnaire is for you to identify what factors may be contributing to you feeling stressed, and for you to think about, and detail what you feel would help you manage your current situation. Once you have completed the form, please return it to your line manager who will then arrange a meeting with you to discuss your stressors and what support may be available. If, due to the circumstances it would be better to discuss your current situation with an alternative manager this can be arranged.

### Stressors

Please list the factors that you feel are contributing to you feeling stressed, once you have done this, please rank them from 1-10 with 10 having the biggest impact on you and 1 the least. The factors detailed may be within or out with the workplace.

<b>Stressor</b>	<b>Stress Factor Rating (1-10)</b>
<b>Workplace factors</b> – e.g. Workload/working relationships/work/life balance	
<b>External factors</b> – e.g. Home life/family/financial	

### Moving Forward

Taking each stressor in turn please complete the below section prior to the meeting. Section 3 & 4 will be completed at the meeting with your line manager.

**Stressor 1 – Outline the background**

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**How do you see the situation being resolved**

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**Stressor 2 – Outline the background**

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**How do you see the situation being resolved**

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**Stressor 3 – Outline the background**

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**How do you see the situation being resolved**

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*This section below will be completed with your line manager at the meeting*

**Section 3 - Agreed Actions**

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**Section 4 – Review Date**

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\_\_\_\_\_  
**Employee signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Line managers signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## Excerpt from the H&amp;S Manual – Section 3.16

Subject	Stress, Mental Health and Wellbeing
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**Purpose**

- 1) To take reasonable steps to assess the risks and reduce the likelihood of employees suffering from work-related stress and other adverse mental health conditions.
- 2) To help staff to understand the wider issues associated with mental health, its management, the identification of problems (including the possible effects of health on work and work on health) and appropriate coping mechanisms.
- 3) To develop and promote an open culture of mental health and physical wellbeing awareness, communication and risk management.

**References**

- 1) Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- 2) Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999, as amended
- 3) HSE Management Standards for Work Related Stress
- 4) INDG430 How to Tackle Work Related Stress
- 5) EVH Model Attendance and Absence Management Policy
- 7) Working for a Healthier Tomorrow, Dame Carol Black 2008
- 8) ISO 26000:2010 Guidance on Social Responsibility, November 2010
- 9) Health and wellbeing at work 2023, CPD
- 10) Sickness Absence in the Labour Market, April 2023, Office for National Statistics
- 11) Health & Safety Statistics (HSE annual publication)

**Key Legal Requirements**

See summary at [Section 8](#) – see EVH website – [www.evh.org.uk](http://www.evh.org.uk)

**Definitions**

- 1) **Health:** “A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not just the absence of disease or infirmity.” (World Health Organisation)
- 2) **Occupational Health:** “...the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations by preventing

departures from health, controlling risks and the adaption of work to people and people to their jobs". (International Labour Organisation ILO/WHO 1950)

- 3) **Wellbeing:** "...a state of being with others, where human needs are met, where one can act meaningfully to pursue one's goals, and where one enjoys a satisfactory quality of life." (Economic and Social Research Council)
- 4) **Stress** "In a medical or biological context [stress](#) is a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. Stresses can be external (from the environment, psychological, or social situations) or internal (illness, or from a medical procedure)." ([William C. Shiel](#), MD)
- 5) The HSE's formal definition of **work-related stress** is "The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work".
- 6) Sutherland -v- Hatton (2002) pronounced that the legal test for cases of alleged ill-health caused by occupational stress is "*whether this kind of harm to this particular employee was reasonably foreseeable*".
- 7) Barber -v- Somerset Council (2004) concluded that an employer was only fulfilling [their] duty of care if [they] "*kept actively and reasonably up to date with developments in Health & Safety and guidance on stress*".

## Statistics

- 1) The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) estimates that within the UK:
  - 1.8 million workers suffering from work-related ill health (new or long-standing) in 2022/23
  - 875,000 workers suffered from work related stress, depression, or anxiety (new or long standing) in 2022/23
  - 338,000 workers suffered from a new case of work-related stress, depression, or anxiety in 2022/23.
  - 17.1 million working days were lost due to work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2022/23

## Procedures

- 1) The Organisation operates an 'Occupation Health' regime and this is defined in Section 3.19 of the Control Manual. Whereas the Occupational Health policy deals primarily with health surveillance and the management of occupational illnesses and absences, this 'Stress, Mental Health & Wellbeing' Policy is intended to **proactively** manage mental health and general wellbeing amongst employees.
- 2) The Organisation recognises that certain employees may suffer ill-health as a result of undue stress at work or from external factors. However, the Organisation will generally assume that an employee can withstand the normal pressures of the job for which they are employed unless the employee indicates otherwise or there are plain indications (e.g. from colleagues or other initiatives detailed within this policy) of occupational stress or other mental health considerations. All information provided by an employee in terms of their ability

to cope with the demands of the job will be taken at face value, unless there is good reason to think to the contrary.

- 3) The Organisation will aim to develop a system and culture of supervision, teamwork and staff interaction which aims to support and protect all employees and take a **proactive** approach to reducing stress and promoting mental health and wellbeing awareness in the workplace. To this end, all Managers and staff will be made aware of the following indicators of mental health issues (including stress) within individuals and groups:

Indicators of mental health issues in individuals	Indicators of stress or conditions not conducive to good mental health within groups / departments
<p>1) Emotional – Negative or depressive feelings, disappointment with self, increased emotional reactions, loneliness or withdrawn, loss of motivation commitment and confidence, mood swings.</p> <p>2) Mental – Confusion, indecision, inability to concentrate, poor memory, significant decrease in productivity, decrease in motivation, decrease in enjoyment of life.</p> <p>3) Changes from normal behaviour – Changes in eating habits, increased smoking, drinking or drug taking 'to cope', mood swings effecting behaviour, changes in sleep patterns, twitchy nervous behaviour, changes in attendance.</p>	<p>1) Disputes and disaffection within the group</p> <p>2) Increase in staff turnover</p> <p>3) Increase in complaints and grievances</p> <p>4) Increased sickness absence</p> <p>5) Increased reports of stress</p> <p>6) Difficulty in attracting new staff</p> <p>7) Poor performance</p> <p>8) Customer dissatisfaction or complaints</p>

- 4) Employees will be encouraged to:
- raise any concerns regarding stress or perceived mental health or general wellbeing issues affecting themselves or colleagues at the earliest opportunity
  - participate in the Organisation's measures to assist in reducing stress and improving the mental health and wellbeing culture
  - be aware of the HSE Management Standards on Work Related Stress (see [Appendix 19](#))
  - inform Management staff of any work process that appears to be putting undue stress on staff.
- 5) A 'mental health' training needs analysis will be carried out and appropriate training provided to individuals and groups of employees. This will include consideration of:
- General mental health awareness training for all staff
  - 'Mental Health First-Aider' training for a key person(s)

- 6) The Organisation will conduct and review **Stress Risk Assessments** on a periodic basis, based on the **HSE's Management Standards on Work Related Stress**. The risk assessment will incorporate the primary sources of stress at work as defined within the Management Standards:
  - Demands
  - Control
  - Support
  - Relationships
  - Role
  - Change
- 7) The Organisation will incorporate the **EVH Model Policy – Stress Management** (available on the EVH website) into its overall arrangements to manage stress and improve mental health awareness and general wellbeing amongst its employees.
- 8) The Organisation will analyse staff absence data and other HR employee reports on a regular basis as a means of early identification of where stress or mental health issues may be a contributory factor to the absences.
- 9) When mental health issues are identified or suspected amongst employees, due consideration will be given to control measures such as the provision of professional support, flexible working, changing roles, changing workloads, changing responsibilities, etc. External specialist advice and support will be sought where appropriate.
- 10) The Organisation will aim to achieve continual improvement in the area of 'employee wellbeing' which, in its widest sense, will be considered to include a range of employee health, welfare and wellbeing topics such as:
  - Stress, mental and emotional health
  - Physical health
  - Social inclusion
  - Disease prevention and management
  - Work-life balance
  - Personal development, etc.

To this end, consideration will be given to the development of a Wellbeing Management System (policies, procedures and models), training programmes, awareness raising campaigns and the membership of external schemes (e.g. *Healthy Working Lives*).