

GREENHEAD COLLEGE

STRESS POLICY

DECEMBER 2007

1 Introduction

The Health & Safety Executive's definition of workplace stress is:

the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.

There is no specific legislation on controlling stress at work, but the College has a moral and common-law duty of care to provide a safe system of work, and under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 it has duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety welfare of all its employees. Also, under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Regulation 3, the College has a duty to assess the nature and scale of the risk, both psychological and physical, to the health of its employees in order to take appropriate preventative and protective steps.

2 Causes of Stress

Some of the most common causes of stress include:

- too much work
- disharmony with colleagues
- concerns which have not been addressed about workplace risks or problems
- job insecurity
- rapid change without sufficient support
- long working hours
- difficulty in balancing home and work life
- managers who have unrealistic expectations of staff
- poor management
- changing skill requirements without adequate re-training
- unrealistic targets/deadlines
- bullying
- harassment
- working with stressed colleagues
- technology problems.

3 Who is at risk?

Every individual will react differently to stress – what is an exciting challenge to one person may be a depressingly daunting task causing a negative stress reaction for another. Additionally what is stressful at one time in an individual's life may be a positive challenge and opportunity to shine at another time. There are, however, some common risk factors which managers should be aware of in monitoring stress levels in their staff. Those who are most at risk from suffering negative stress reactions are those who may exhibit, at some time, some of the following:

- have a negative self-image
- lack self-confidence
- have difficulty saying 'no'
- are perfectionists
- taking a conscientious and professional approach to all tasks
- are inflexible
- need to be the best
- need to be constantly recognised
- have unrealistic expectations of their own ability
- compare themselves inappropriately with others
- take on responsibility for other people's problems
- have a need for complete control
- dislike change.

4 Assessing the Risk

The College has a Risk Assessment programme whereby all areas are assessed by a manager to identify risks to health & safety, and to put in place control or prevention measures. At the individual level the staff review interview provides a regular mechanism whereby any stress factors can be identified and dealt with. Staff are also encouraged to discuss with their managers at any time any issue which might be causing them stress so that a solution may be found.

5 Prevention

The College operates three levels of measure for the prevention and handling of stress:

5.1 Primary Prevention Measures

The College recognises that good management systems can do a great deal to avoid the major causes of stress. To this end the College seeks to maintain the following:

- Clear college objectives, as set out in the Development Plan
- Clear goals and operating statements for staff teams, and job descriptions for individuals

- Clear policies and procedures including those which focus on well-being and safety
- A supportive management structure
- Effective consultation and communication with staff
- Appropriate training and development of staff
- Effective personnel policies and in particular effective recruitment policies to ensure that recruits have the correct skills for a job, or are capable of developing those skills.

5.2 Secondary Prevention Measures

Training

- The College is committed to supporting all staff training and also to running in-house training.

Management Action

Managers have a crucial role in identifying and preventing stress. It is the role of managers to:

- Listen to staff who are expressing concerns and be supportive
- Carry out regular consultation with their staff both individually and as a group
- Regularly assess the volume of work and difficulty of tasks placed on individual staff using mechanism such as SAR, Annual Reviews, Performance Management Reviews etc.
- Ensure staff have realistic goals and deadlines
- Ensure staff are capable of carrying out the tasks they have been given.

5.3 Tertiary Prevention

The third level of prevention is to help employees who are feeling the impact of stress factors. The College offers staff confidential access to counselling and advice services to discuss any personal problems which may be affecting their work performance and stress levels. Confidential advice can also be provided to both managers and staff in how to deal with stress.

6 What to do if stress results in illness

The College will do all it can under the preventative measures above to avoid a staff member becoming ill through stress, whatever its causes. However where an employee is unable to work, or to work to full capacity, through stress the situation will be dealt with sensitively and fairly through the agreed College Sickness Procedures.