STRESS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

DATE APPROVED:	**11 April 2017**
APPROVED BY:	**Workforce Development Group**
IMPLEMENTATION DATE:	**April 2017**
REVIEW DATE:	**May 2020**
LEAD DIRECTOR:	**Director of Workforce & Organisational Development**
IMPACT ASSESSMENT STATEMENT:	**No Adverse Impact on Equality & Diversity**

Document Reference Number:	**HR – Policy – 008 (Version 8)**

Change Control:

Document Number	HR-Policy-008
Document	Stress Policy and Procedure
Version	Eight
Owner	Director of Workforce and Organisational Development
Distribution list	All
Issue Date	April 2017
Next Review Date	May 2020
File Reference	PO-008
Author	Head of HR

Change History:

Date	Change	Authorised by
For previous change history, please consult version 7 of this document from the Document Control Officer		
January 2017	Reviewed	Head of HR
16 March 2017	Minor changes, approved	Policy Group
11 April 2017	Agreed	Workforce Development Group
19 April 2017	Advised for assurance	Resources Committee
26 April 2017	For information	Regional Partnership Forum

CONTENTS

1   Introduction

    1.1 West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust (WMAS) is committed to supporting all employees throughout their working life with the organisation. The Trust recognises its legal, moral and ethical duty of care to its employees and appreciates this duty of care applies equally to physical or mental health problems that can be caused or aggravated by work.

    1.2 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as "the adverse reaction that people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. This makes an important distinction between pressure which can be a positive state if managed correctly and stress which always has a negative effect and can be detrimental to health"

2   Statement

    2.1 The Trust is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees.

    2.2 The Trust recognises that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors. This policy applies to all employees.

    2.3 Managers are responsible for the implementation of the policy and the Trust is responsible for providing the necessary resources to ensure effective implementation. All staff also have a responsibility to address both theirs and others health and safety at work.

3   The Legal Position

    3.1 Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 employers have a duty to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees.

    3.2 Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 employers have a duty to assess the health and safety risks to which their employees are exposed to at work.

    3.3 Under the Equality Act 2010 employers have a duty not to discriminate against employees on account of their disability as defined under the Act. Long-term ill health arising from, or exacerbated by, stress at work may constitute a disability under the Act. An employer has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to an individual's working conditions/environment where possible if required.

3.4   Under the Employee Rights Act 1996 employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the rights that most employees are protected by employee contracts.

3.5   Under the HSE Management Standards on Stress 2004, employers have a duty to represent a set of conditions that reflect a high level of well being. An employer also has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to individuals working conditions/environment where practicable possible if required.

4   **Key Principles**

4.1   The Trust will commit to any organisationally feasible action that is proposed to prevent stress in the workplace, which will be discussed in consultation with Staff Side Representatives before being implemented.

4.2   The Trust will increase general awareness of stress and methods to prevent and combat harmful, excessive work place stress through training initiatives for all staff.

4.3   The Trust will take action to combat and prevent workplace stressors (risk assessment).

4.4   The Trust will assist staff in managing stress in others and themselves.

4.5   The Trust will manage concerns that occur and provide confidential referral services.

4.6   The Trust will support and manage the return to work of those who have had stress related problems.

4.7   The Trust will monitor and evaluate stress indicators.

5   **Objectives of the Stress Policy**

5.1   To offer a consistent and thorough guide to all employees on how to prevent and deal with stress in the workplace.

5.2   To encourage a culture of open communication which is supportive and non-judgemental of those suffering from stress.

5.3   To increase awareness of work related stress and effective methods to tackle this.

5.4   To provide useful and confidential support to those suffering from or experiencing stress related issues.

5.5   To offer a proactive approach to dealing with potential stressors in the workplace.

5.6   To promote a healthy and safe working environment.

Procedures for the Management of Stress

6   Introduction

6.1   The following guidance is designed to help in the management of stress and will address:

6.1.1   Common causes of stress

6.1.2   Typical signs of stress

6.1.3   Methods of preventing stress in the workplace

6.1.4   Support mechanisms available for tackling stress

6.1.5   Evaluation and monitoring

7   Roles and Responsibilities

7.1   Chief Executive, Trust Board and Directors

The Chief Executive, Board of Directors have ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this policy, which is delegated to Line Managers within their particular areas of responsibility. It is the role of every manager to support staff and seek to reduce the risks and threat of Occupational Stress.

7.2   Health and Wellbeing Group (HWB)

7.2.1   The Health and Wellbeing Group will perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented. It will also oversee the monitoring of efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety. This group should maintain both the Trust's and employee's sense of involvement in the topic of stress.

7.2.2   Objectives for the Health and Wellbeing Group in supporting the management of stress are detailed within the HWB strategy.

7.3   Managers

7.3.1   Ensure open communication between management and staff, particularly in times of change.

7.3.2   Ensure all employees are fully trained to undertake their duties correctly.

7.3.3 Provide opportunities for staff development.

7.3.4 Monitor workloads and working hours to ensure that individuals achieve a healthy work-life balance.

7.3.5 Attend appropriate training and keep informed of changes in policies and procedures.

7.3.6 Be vigilant to ensure there is a zero tolerance in respect of bullying and harassment encouraging individuals to report promptly using the approved procedures, i.e. ER54 form and the Trust's Dignity at Work Policy.

7.3.7 Be proactive in offering additional support to any member of staff who is perceived to be experiencing stress.

7.3.8 Provide and/or refer any member of staff suffering with stress to the appropriate department.

7.3.9 Promote the staff support services available to employees and encourage employees to access such support as and when they feel the need to do so.

7.3.10 Monitoring of incident reports that may cause stress in line with incident investigation policy.

7.3.11 Follow Sickness Absence Management Policy with regards to sickness absence for stress.

7.3.12 Follow the Dignity at Work policy where stress is perceived to be caused by bullying and harassment.

7.3.13 Provide confidential support to staff.

7.3.14 Process for identifying an individual's work place stressors; where an individual raises stress concerns, or you notice unusual behaviours in individuals, offer to undertake with them an individual stress risk assessment. The risk assessment must be undertaken jointly between the manager and individual to ensure that the manager understands the causes and knows how they can best support the individual, and that unreasonable requests or expectations can be managed (appendix 1).

7.4 **Governance, Safety & Risk Managers**

Undertake and review where applicable Risk Assessments in line with current Risk Management Strategy to prevent and/or address stress issues.

7.5 Human Resources

7.5.1 Offer guidance to managers and employees on the stress policy and procedure.

7.5.2 Help to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the stress policy and procedure at reducing occurrences of stress through sickness absence statistics, staff feedback, trends (time of year, similar issues), resolved problems.

7.5.3 Where necessary refer individuals to specialists' i.e. Occupational Health department.

7.5.4 Provide ongoing support to managers, individuals and where appropriate encourage referral to Occupational Health department, Staff Advice and Liaison Service or counselling.

7.5.5 Provide analytical data trends regarding stress as and when required.

7.6 Training Department

The Trust, as part of its ongoing process, has developed a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) which identifies statutory and mandatory training. This training may be in a variety of formats (e.g. in-house, external, work-based, briefing, e-learning etc.)
The Trust's TNA for statutory and mandatory training is the source document. Any requirement for training to deliver this policy will be notified to the Head of Education and Training, so as to be included in the TNA. Head of HR and/or HR Manager will provide expert advice to inform the TNA.

7.7 Staff Advice and Liaison Service (SALS)

7.7.1 Provide individual and specialist advice on stress.

7.7.2 Deliver training sessions to Confidential Advisors and support management with advice and guidance where needed.

7.7.3 Support individuals who have been absent due to stress.

7.7.4 Help to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the stress policy and procedure at reducing occurrences of stress by providing anonymised referral statistics.

7.7.5 Contact with a Confidential Advisor who is part of the SALS network and all contact is strictly confidential.

7.8 Employees

7.8.1 Responsible for raising issues of concern with Health and Safety Representative, Line Manager, Human Resources,

Confidential Advisor or Occupational Health.

7.8.2 Complete incident report forms (ER54) following any reportable incidents and near misses in line with incident reporting policy.

7.8.3 Consider opportunities for counselling.

7.8.4 Consider an element of responsibility for their health and welfare with regards to their diet, fitness, working hours etc.

7.8.5 Consider any recommendations to engage in the process of completing an individual stress risk assessment.

7.9 Staff Representatives

7.9.1 Staff representatives to be consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that precipitates stress.

7.9.2 Staff representatives will be able to consult with members regarding any issues regarding stress.

7.10 Occupational Health Department

7.10.1 To provide specialist advice and awareness on stress.

7.10.2 Advise employees and management of support available when absent due to stress and/or upon return to work where appropriate.

7.10.3 Refer to appropriate sources of workplace counselling or specialist agencies as required.

7.10.4 Seek employees consent prior to the disclosure of any health assessment prior to its issue.

8 Guidance on How to Deal with Stress

8.1 Raise the issue with line manager, who will be able to offer you support and put you in contact with relevant sources of advice and help if necessary in line with current practices.

8.2 Contact HR, Occupational Health, Confidential Advisors or staff side Representative who will be able to talk through your options with you.

9   Potential Cause of Stress

- Lack of control/understanding
- Uneven Work/Life balance
- Major life events
- Pressure to perform
- Increase in workload/responsibilities/working practices
- Organisational change
- Doing mundane tasks below capabilities
- Lack of resources
- Increase in demands/ patients' expectations
- Post traumatic stress due to type of incidents staff are faced with
- Organisational confusion/'right' and 'wrong' channels
- Isolation from other team members/ bullying
- Lack of management support
- Unrealistic targets
- Stress is often the culmination of a number of different pressures that build to create a situation where the individual feels out of control and unable to cope.

  This list is not exhaustive.

10   Symptoms

10.1   Ill health resulting from stress caused at work has to be treated in the same way as ill health due to physical causes in the workplace. This means that employers have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that health is not put at risk through excessive and/or sustained levels of stress arising from the way work is organised, or from the day-to-day demands placed on their workforce.

10.2   Symptoms of stress can include:

- Mental
- Emotional
- Physical
- Behavioural

10.3   Any changes in 'normal' behaviour pattern could be caused by stress; however it is important to remember that it could just be a natural change. In the longer term, stress can raise your blood pressure, trigger heart attacks, strokes and loss of libido.

11   Behavioural Changes

Stress can cause an individual to behave differently, for example, character can change completely. Individuals may become emotional, withdrawn, indecisive, more irritable or inflexible and may make the individual become verbally or physically aggressive.

12   Preventions

12.1   A certain amount of pressure at work can have a positive effect, it helps to keep individuals motivated and potentially perform better, but if the pressure becomes excessive, individuals may begin to feel stressed.

12.2   The first step in dealing with negative stress is to recognise that the stress is causing problems. It can affect the mind, body and behaviour. Getting away from the source of stress even for just 5 minutes, with deep breathing, calming thoughts and trying to relax muscles, can help.

12.3   Identifying the causes of stress can help in the ability to overcome or prevent the issues from becoming stressful. Stress is not just something that occurs at work but can also occur at home. It may therefore be necessary to review the whole lifestyle to identify what is causing stress. This can be done by incorporating a healthy lifestyle into your everyday routine through exercise and a healthy diet. You should not rely on caffeine, alcohol, medication etc. to combat negative stress.

12.4   In situations of excessive workload, try and divide up your workload, by delegating and/or sharing your responsibilities, aiming to become more assertive and try not to agree to taking things on that you know you may struggle with or is not your responsibility. Raise concerns with your line manager.

12.5   Having good night's sleep and getting enough rest can help ensure that you are not pushing your mind and body too much.

12.6   Communication is also a key factor of dealing with stress, whether it is talking to friends and family or taking advantage of the policy in place here. Talking to your manager also helps.

12.7   However the best antidote for preventing stress is to relax, doing activities you have fun with and having a positive attitude to life.

12.8   Analyse feedback from the staff survey to highlight potential stressors that in turn, can be addressed by staff and managers.

13 **What Facilities / Processes Are Currently Available**

13.1 Information is available regarding "stress" and supportive resources on the Health and Wellbeing Intranet pages.

13.2 Social, Emotional and Educational Support (SEES) meeting is offered when anyone raises a concern about themselves or a colleague following an incident.

13.3 SALS offer 24 hour helpline; initial counselling; SEES meetings; face to face communications and peer support. SALS can be contacted via the EOC response Desk or direct on 01384 215880 (24 hours)

13.4 Occupational Health referrals, which can be through a self-referral via your local HR department.

13.5 Where necessary providing external specialist support, via the HR department.

13.6 There is a documented process for ensuring that all staff involved in traumatic/stressful incidents complaints or claims are adequately supported and that process is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis; appendix 2.

14 **Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Statement**

The Equal Opportunities policy applies to all employees of the Trust. Individuals from diverse cultures, religions, or those of who adopt a variety of different lifestyles may unconsciously be subject to stress if attempting to conform to organisational or other accepted 'norms'. Hence it is important to be aware of equality, diversity and human rights issues. The policy is also designed to protect and support individual human rights within the workplace.

15 **Implementation Plan**

15.1 The Director of Workforce and Organisational Development will be responsible for implementing and distributing the policy.

15.2 The policy will be posted on the Trust intranet site.

15.3 The policy will be implemented within one month of Board approval.

16 **Communication, Monitoring & Training**

16.1 All employees will have access to the full Policy through the intranet, their Line Manager, Human Resources Department, or staff side representative.

16.2 Directors, Managers, members of the SALS and staff side representatives will be given appropriate training in dealing with harassment issues, as training needs are identified.

16.3 The Director of Workforce and OD will monitor through:

- reports no less than twice a year from internal and external support functions (OH, SALS) to enable monitoring;
- annual monitoring of staff survey for improvement by the staff survey monitoring group, they will provide a report to the Director of HR;
- management responsibilities assessed such as part of their annual review by their line manager

16.4 The Policy will be monitored through a report issued to the Workforce Development Committee on stress cases. This will include a quantitative report, and a qualitative report detailing shared learning from the experiences of the cases, and what actions have been taken.

16.5 The Director of Workforce and OD will, through the HR Team, monitor the implementation of this Policy, including the minimum requirements of the NHS Litigation Authority Risk Management Standards, and take assurance and exceptions to the Workforce Development Group.

17 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in two years from the date of approval. The Health and Well being group will review the policy on a six monthly basis. Any changes are fed through the various Trust committees to obtain approval of the revised policy.

Appendix 1: Checklist for identifying an individual's work place stressors

INDIVIDUAL STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT

If a member of staff appears to be subject to stress or formally reports feeling stressed, the manager should meet with the individual and use this checklist as an aid to identify any points which may be causing concerns. The checklist will aid them to identify perceived stress related issues, agree action and then enable appropriate follow up action to take place.

Employees have a responsibility to be honest when undertaking this process and to undertake any appropriate recommendations or interventions.

Timescales for review should also be agreed to ensure the agreed action is appropriate and effective.

It may be appropriate to refer the individual to Occupational Health to provide additional support, guidance and advice.

It is also important to recognise that some issues may be out of the control of the individual, manager or department and the manager may need to seek additional advice or support.

The manager should be aware of their own interactions with the individual and be prepared to suggest an alternative manager to undertake this meeting if that is deemed appropriate.

Copies must be retained on the individuals' personal files and these may need to be made available for NHSLA audit purposes.

Could the stressors be personal or home related?

Discuss and consider whether the perceived stress may relate to difficulty with working hours or patterns, childcare concerns, personal relationship problems, debt, etc.

There are various measures or interventions that may be appropriate to consider, and may be agreed on a temporary basis, with review, to help alleviate the current situation.
- Flexible working (if suitable to service needs) – ref Flexible Working Policy
- Special Leave – ref Time off for Domestic reasons Policy
- Work adjustments – ref Absence Management Policy
- Referral to Occupational Health / Counselling

Issue identified, comments, notes, agreed actions	Date for Review

Could the current concerns relate to work?

This checklist is based on the Health and Safety Executive's Standards on Work related Stress. Discuss each area with the individual to assess where perceived stressors relate to

Standard	Issues identified	Action Agreed	Review Date
Demands Could any of the areas below be contributing?			
• Workload			
• Work patterns/hours			
• Working environment			
• Support systems			
• Skills to do the job			
Control How much say does the individual have in what they do, is this contributing to how they feel? eg:			
• Do they feel able to use skills and initiative?			
• Do they feel able to develop new skills? (where app)			
• Do they feel they have a say in what they do?			
• Are they able to take breaks?			
Support What support, resources and feedback is given to the individual, is this contributing to how they feel? eg:			

• Do they feel they receive encouragement from you/peers?			
• Do they feel information is regular and adequate?			
• Do they know about relevant policies and how to access them?			
• Do they receive regular feedback?			
Relationships Could there be relationship issues that may be contributing?			
• Is there any conflict currently?			
• Is there clarity on what is unacceptable /acceptable behaviour?			
• Are there perceived issues around harassment or bullying?			
Role Could role clarity be impacting on their current feelings?			
• Is there any conflict around roles in the team?			
• Do they understand their role and responsibilities?			
• Do they feel they can they raise concerns about their role?			
Change Is how change is managed a contributory factor, eg:			
• Do they understand the systems that are in place to respond to individual concerns about changes			
• Do they understand the reasons for proposed changes?			
• Do they understand how they can input to proposals and give feedback?			

• What is the probable impact of any changes on this individual?			
• Do they know how to access appropriate support during changes?			
• Do they have concerns re job security?			

Appendix 2 - Processes for ensuring that staff involved in traumatic/stressful incidents, complaints or complaints are adequately supported

Operational incidents

- Individual contacts EOC
- Individual requests to stand down and return to Hub / Base
- EOC contact an Officer –or on-call Tactical Officer if out of hours
- Relevant manager (i.e. on call Silver) makes contact with the individual at the time and agrees a relevant action plan. Tactical and Strategic on-call Officers of incident and any agreed actions. Information is logged on the regional Decisions Log.
- Relevant officer makes follow-up contact with the individual usually 1-2 days later and also in accordance with the agreed action plan

Complaints/Claims

In relation to complaints, staff are supported by the managers who are dealing with that specific complaint. Managers then acquire as much information as possible from the Patient Experience Team, HR, Occupational Health, SALS etc in order to determine in conjunction with the individual if any further formal or informal support is required by the individual.

Witness/Coroners court

1. Trust notified of appearance required as a witness.
   Individual notified of requirement to attend Coroners Court or to be a witness

2. Notify appropriate Line Manager

3. Manager arranges a meeting to discuss the matter and obtains relevant documentation e.g. PRF. If required to be interviewed by an external person then support will be provided to individual. If required to provide a statement or attend Court the appropriate manager will provide support and accompany them.

4. Attend Court – Manager will accompany or ensure another work colleague is able to attend.

5. Manager will maintain contact after the event to ensure the employee is provided with any further support they may require