



Work-related Stress Policy

Introduction

1. Health and Safety at work is considered to be of paramount importance. Northwards recognises its duty to provide each Employee with a safe system and place of work, which promotes a healthy working environment.
2. Northwards intend to honour its obligations under the Health & Safety at Work Act and this has been enshrined in our Health & Safety Policy.

What is work-related stress?

3. The Health & Safety Executive define work-related stress as, '*the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed on them. It arises when they worry they cannot cope.*' Stress arises when there is a perceived imbalance between the demands made on an individual, including self-imposed ones, and the personal and environmental resources available to meet those demands.

What are the causes of stress?

4. The causes of stress in the workplace can vary from poor relationships to lack of training. Some of the outward signs of stress in Employees may be noticeable to Managers and work colleagues. Some examples include:-
 - 4.1 Excessive smoking and/or use of alcohol/drugs;
 - 4.2 Erratic or poor timekeeping;
 - 4.3 Nail biting;
 - 4.4 Inability to deal calmly with everyday tasks and situations;
 - 4.5 Poor decision making;
 - 4.6 Reduction in work output or activity; and
 - 4.7 Tension and conflict between colleagues.

What is the role of the Manager?

5. The role of the Manager is vital in seeking to prevent, identify and deal with the effects of stress.
6. It is Northwards' intention that all Managers promote a supportive team atmosphere in which Employees feel comfortable to talk about stress, without fear or stigma. Managers will take the time to listen to concerns and encourage open communication.
7. If a complaint of work-related stress is received the Manager, with assistance from Human Resources, will investigate the causes of the work-related stress and immediate action, so far as is reasonably practicable, will be taken to remove, or reduce the factors producing the stress. Reasonable adjustments, which alleviate the causes of the work-related stress, will be considered

including transferring employees to another position, temporarily or permanently, where possible.

8. All Employees will be treated sympathetically and encouraged to discuss the symptoms and causes, constructively. They will be reassured that recognising that they are suffering from excessive stress, and raising concerns with management, will not be seen as a sign of weakness and that no detrimental action will be taken against them.
9. Where appropriate Employees will be required to undergo a medical examination and/or to seek medical advice.
10. Managers will endeavour to carry out a risk assessment of the type of work which is being undertaken, the causes of the stress, suggest ways of dealing with the issues causing the stress in a suggested time frame which will be implemented with employees' help.

What is the role of the Employee?

11. Northwards recognise that it may be difficult for its Employees to accept they are feeling stressed at work. This is because symptoms of stress can be seen as a sign of weakness. Any information disclosed to a Manager and/or Human Resources will be treated in the strictest confidence.
12. The first step is for the Employee to inform their Manager and/or Human Resources if they believe that they are suffering from work-related stress and the reasons for this. Whilst the signs of work-related stress will become apparent over a period of time (e.g. sickness absence, poor performance, etc) if identified early it is more likely that the causes of the work-related stress can be dealt with in a more effective way.
13. If employees know that a work colleague is suffering from work-related stress they should encourage them to speak to their Manager and/or Human Resources.

Maintaining the health of our Employees has wider implications for Northwards Housing's continued success; we take our obligations and duty to protect the health and safety of our Employees seriously.