

MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE & STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Version control table	
Original version published:	New
Current version number:	Version 1
Current date	July 2021
Date current version published:	3 rd March 2021 (Lexi HSMS 2.13.01.01.PA) July 2021 (HR PPG)
Due date for next review:	March 2023
Author:	Human Resources & Health & Safety Team
Contact details:	Human Resources Scottish Borders Council Headquarters Old School Building Newtown St Boswells Melrose TD6 0SA ☎ Tel 01835 825052/3 (HR reception) ✉ askhr@scotborders.gov.uk
This is an electronically retained document. All printed copies are uncontrolled.	

This document can be made available **in an alternative format or language**. For further details please contact Human Resources (as above).

MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE & STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

Contents Page:

		Page No.
1	<u>Introduction</u>	3
2	<u>Scope</u>	3
3	<u>Legal Aspects</u>	3
4	<u>Definitions</u>	4
5	<u>Roles and Responsibilities</u>	5
6	<u>Policy Statement</u>	8
7	<u>Mental Health</u>	8
8	<u>Mental Health Support</u>	9
9	<u>Mental Health Crisis And Mental Health First Aid</u>	11
10	<u>Major / Critical Incident Counselling And Debrief</u>	11
11	<u>Training</u>	11
12	<u>Stress Management</u>	12
13	<u>Evaluation Of Stress Management Policy And Practices</u>	13
14	<u>Links To Other Policies</u>	13
15	<u>References</u>	13
16	<u>Document Changes</u>	14

MENTALLY HEALTHY WORKPLACE & STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

1 Introduction

- 1.1 One of the founding principles of occupational safety and health is to put in place preventative controls to avoid harm being caused. Scottish Borders Council and SB Cares recognises that to ensure mental wellness is preserved and promoted in the workplace its organisational arrangements need to include a number of elements focused on preventing mental harm.
- 1.2 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem at some stage in their lives, at some point we all experience situations which can have a negative impact on our mental wellbeing. All such issues can have an impact on employee productivity and ability to carry out their day to day work. It is known that supportive management practices help foster a working environment that promotes good mental health in the workplace.
- 1.3 One of the primary responsibilities of the organisation is to the physical and mental health of its staff whilst they are at work. As one of its main assets the organisation views promoting the wellbeing of its staff as one of its primary duties as well as being essential to the delivery of corporate priorities and ensuring a high performing workforce and quality service for the public.
- 1.4 The organisation is committed to provide leadership and drive to maintain positive change in the workplace. Management commitment will be demonstrated by measuring performance and supporting promotional and developmental activity to improve the standards achieved.
- 1.5 The aim of this policy is to provide the organisation with an appropriately designed mental wellness system to achieve a mentally healthy workplace and support employees who are having difficulties with their mental health and wellbeing.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies across all Services of Scottish Borders Council and SB Cares and to all of their operations, activities and employees including temporary workers and those undertaking placements and similar roles, and elected members of the Council.

3 Legal Aspects

- 3.1 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities, as with any other hazard.
- 3.2 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires an employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all his employees. This includes their mental health.

- 3.3 The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires an employer to take measures to control risks to health and safety arising from work activities.
- 3.4 The Equality Act 2010 (EA) defines disability as: “a physical or **mental impairment** which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.” In respect of people with mental health problems, employers should be aware that a person may be disabled even when this is not obvious.
- 3.5 Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA).
- 3.6 The Safety Representatives and Safety Committee Regulations 1977 give Safety Representatives the right to investigate potential hazards in the workplace which includes those related to stress and mental health in the workplace.

4 Definitions

- 4.1 **Stress** - The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as "The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work."
“Stress is not an illness – it is a state. However, if stress becomes too excessive and prolonged, mental and physical illness may develop.” – Health and Safety Executive.
- 4.2 **Mental Health** - a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.
“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization 2014).
- 4.3 **Mental Wellbeing** -There are many different definitions of mental wellbeing but they generally include areas such as: life satisfaction, optimism, self-esteem, mastery and feeling in control, having a purpose in life, and a sense of belonging and support.
- 4.4 **Mental illness/disorder/ill health** - Mental disorders comprise a broad range of problems, with different symptoms. However, they are generally characterized by some combination of abnormal thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others. Examples are schizophrenia, depression, mental retardation and disorders due to drug abuse. Most of these disorders can be successfully treated. (World Health Organisation - WHO).
- 4.5 **Mental Health First Aid** – the help offered to someone developing a mental health problem, experiencing a worsening of an existing mental illness, a mental health crisis or emotional distress. Mental Health First Aid is given until appropriate help is received, or the crisis is resolved.
- 4.6 **Mental Health Champion** – individuals who have attended the one day mental health awareness and skills course, giving them an understanding of how to help build a mentally healthy team in their workplace, challenge stigma and support positive wellbeing and

knowledge and confidence to provide Mental Health First Aid for the most common mental health issues.

- 4.7 **Mental Health First Aider** - individuals who have attended the two day Scotland's Mental Health First Aid course and are trained to: Ask relevant questions, Listen non-judgmentally, Give reassurance and information, Encourage the person to get professional help and encourage self-help strategies. Mental Health First Aid is the first step in helping a person experiencing a mental health crisis, and is intended to be used until other help arrives, it is NOT about treating mental health problems.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 Chief Executive

Is responsible for ensuring that the Council's Health and Safety statutory obligations are met in line with the Health and Safety Policy.

5.2 Service Directors / Executive Directors

Are responsible for ensuring the Mentally Healthy Workplace & Stress Management Policy is effectively resourced, supported, applied and implemented, with a "top down" commitment approach in their areas of responsibility.

They will undertake training in line with the recommendations for line managers below.

They have a key role in the promotion and development of a culture of respect and support for those with mental health problems, reducing stigma and discrimination and ensuring that this policy is implemented in their area of responsibility by the provision of adequate resources and training to their management teams.

They will ensure that their management teams fully engage with the Stress Risk Assessment process and will nominate one of their management team to act as the Champion for their Service Directorate's "Stress Focus Group" (see [12 below](#)).

5.3 Line Managers

Are responsible for implementing this policy in their area of responsibility by minimising / eliminating the risk to their employees from work related stress and recognising signs which may indicate a stress or mental health problem.

Line managers are strongly recommended to undertake awareness training in mental health and stress awareness and provide support for staff that are experiencing mental health problems. They will also be expected to foster a culture within their departments that is supportive of those who need help. Line managers should ensure that staff in their areas of responsibility undertake appropriate training / awareness of Mental Health issues and have access to support services made available by the organisation.

They must also take appropriate action to reduce stress in the workplace by the use of general / specific risk assessments and stress risk assessment techniques plus the effective use of the support services provided by the organisation.

The Stress Assessment Checklist tool available on Assure (Lexi), which is based upon the HSE's Management Standards Indicator Tool, should be used to inform Service/ Section based Stress Risk Assessments. The Tool forms part of the HSE's 5 Steps to Risk Assessment approach for Stress Risk Assessments.

The Stress Risk Assessment should be reviewed at least on a biannual basis see section 12 for a summary of the process.

Service, Section and Team managers shall cooperate with the Health and Safety Team in the implementation and delivery of a planned programme of Stress Risk Assessments including ensuring their employees complete The Stress Assessment Checklist on Assure (Lexi).

Line managers should implement the agreed actions to address results / findings from stress assessment surveys.

They should also be aware of and communicate this policy, the HSE Management Standards and other relevant documents / guidance to their employees.

Managers should have an overview of absence within their area to allow them to identify areas of high anxiety/stress/depression absence and to take appropriate action.

Managers must ensure employees who submit fit notes showing the cause of absence as "work related stress" complete the "Stress Assessment Tool" on the Assure (Lexi) Portal. This form utilises the HSE's Management Standards Tool questionnaire to identify the priority stressor groups for action. The form will be processed by the Health and Safety Team to provide a report for relevant persons to action.

Managers must ensure that employees who submit fit notes showing the cause of absence as "work related stress" must complete an AM3 – Stress Management Report Form and send this to HR (askhr@scotborders.gov.uk/ Case Management Team, Human Resources, Old School Building, Council Headquarters, Newtown St.Boswells TD6 0SA.) The form can be found with the Attendance Management Policy in the Human Resources Policies, Procedures & Guidelines on the Intranet and on the Employees page on the Scottish Borders Council website. This form can also be used when the employee is not absent from work.

5.4 Human Resources

Are responsible for the provision of professional advice and assistance in relation to stress management and will, where necessary seek specialist support from the Council's Occupational Health provider and Health and Safety Team.

They will also provide reports to line managers, via Business World, when an employee hits one of the trigger points for absence contained in the [Attendance Management Policy](#).

Will liaise with the Health and Safety Team, for the provision of a range of suitable internal or external training courses/ workshops and other learning experiences to enable the implementation and delivery of this policy.

Will provide annual statistical summaries of Mental Health absence to the Health and Safety Team to allow proactive provision of support and targeted intervention.

5.5 Employees

Are responsible for their own health safety and welfare and should report any work related concerns which cause an adverse effect upon their health and wellbeing to their line manager. They also have a duty to cooperate with their employer with regards to health and safety compliance. Employees should ensure that they are aware of and understand this policy.

Employees who submit fit notes showing the cause of absence as “work related stress” must complete an AM3 – Stress Management Report Form and send this to HR (askhr@scotborders.gov.uk/ Case Management Team, Human Resources, Old School Building, Council Headquarters, Newtown St.Boswells TD6 0SA.) The form can be found with the Attendance Management Policy in the Human Resources Policies, Procedures & Guidelines on the Intranet and on the [Employee page on the Scottish Borders Council website](#). This form can also be used when the employee is not absent from work.

5.6 Health & Safety Team

The section provides competent advice and information across the Council to employees and line managers with regard to management of stress, mental health and Mental Health First Aid.

Shall in consultation with services develop a planned programme of Stress Risk Assessment following the HSE’s Management Standards making use of the Stress Assessment Checklist tool available on Assure (Lexi). This programme should cover the entire organisation in a repeating period of 2 years.

Will support Services, Sections and Teams with the identification of, evaluation and management of stress in the workplace following HSE’s Management Standards approach and the completion of Service/ Section/ Team level Stress Risk Assessments through utilisation of the HSE’s Management Standards approach and the Stress Assessment Checklist tool available on Assure (Lexi).

Review submitted individual stress assessment forms as a result of absence to provide a report highlighting the target areas for improvement.

The Health and Safety Team will organise and manage the communication methods (Telephone, email, Web Chat) for the Mental Health First Aiders ensuring they are up to date and employees are aware.

The Health and Safety Team will carry out Mental Health First Aid Needs Assessments using the First Aid Needs Assessment form on Assure (Lexi) to determine the minimum levels of Mental Health First Aider support required corporately.

5.7 Unions / Union safety representatives

These groups have a key role in providing a link to the support services available from SBC for employees.

5.8 Mental Health First Aiders

Will be the first point of contact for persons in crisis and encourage them to get professional support. They should complete a “Mental Health First Aid Conversation Record” on the Assure (Lexi) portal ([Link to Assure \(Lexi\) Portal](#)) following provision of support. This record is anonymous but allows the organisation to monitor the issues and identify where improvements can be made in its support to employees.

5.9 Elected Members

Have a responsibility to ensure they understand this policy and implement it effectively when they are involved.

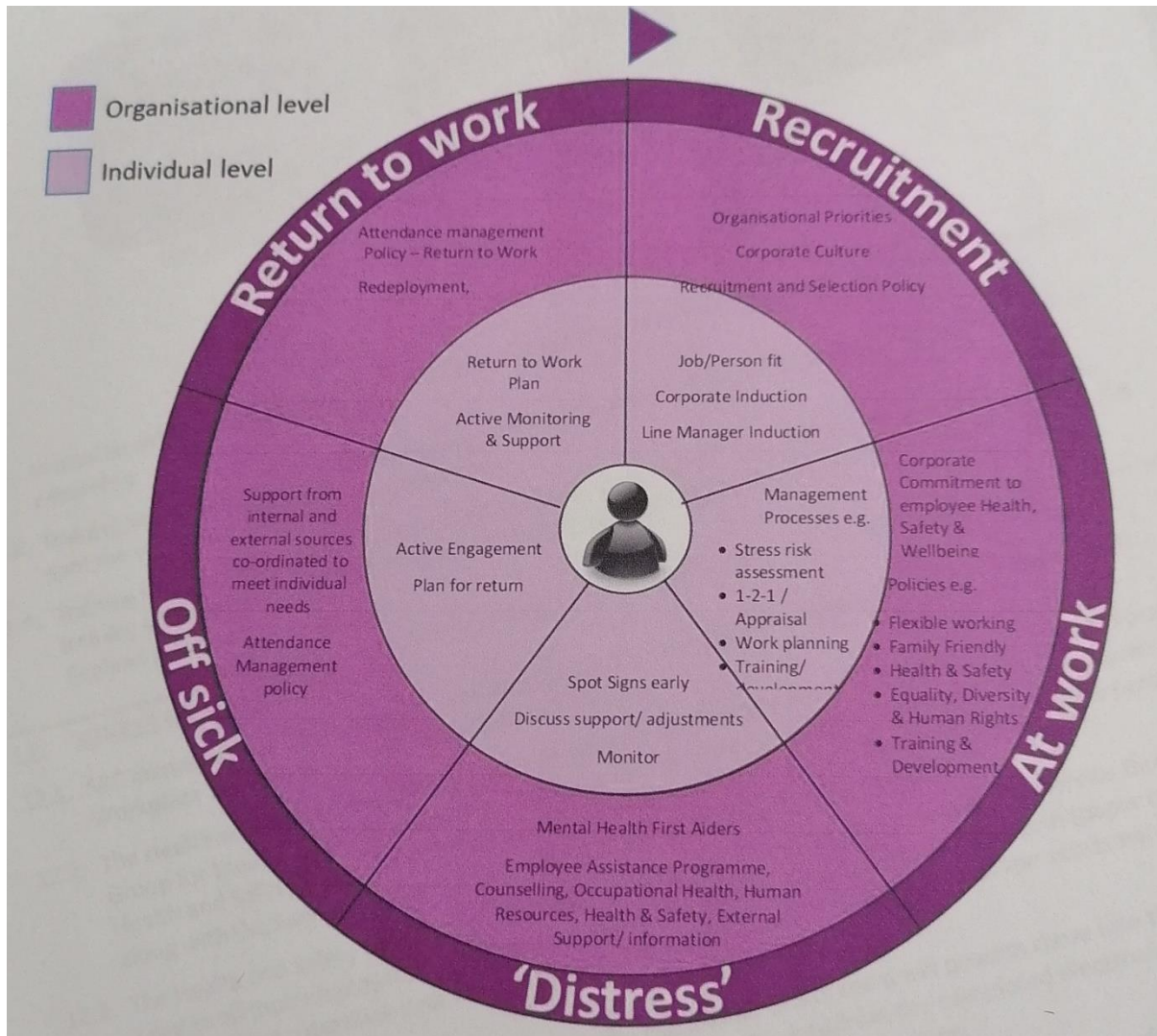
6 Policy Statement

- 6.1 The organisation is committed to the protection and promotion of the mental health and wellbeing of all staff.
- 6.2 The organisation shall continuously strive to improve the mental health environment and culture of the organisation by identifying, eliminating, or minimising all harmful processes, procedures and behaviours that may cause psychological harm or illness to its employees.
- 6.3 The organisation shall continuously strive, as far as is reasonably practicable, to promote mental health throughout the organisation by establishing and maintaining processes that enhance mental health and wellbeing and providing suitable training for all staff and elected members.
- 6.4 The organisation and its managers shall be supportive of staff who want to be Mental Health First Aiders.
- 6.5 Mental Health First Aiders will be required to go through a selection process to ensure suitability. This will be coordinated by the Health and Safety Team.
- 6.6 The organisation and its managers are committed to supporting its Mental Health First Aiders through:
 - Training and Refresher training
 - Further development if relevant and wanted such as ASSIST training
 - Buddy support
 - Regular Mental Health First Aider support groups
- 6.7 The Organisation is committed to the promotion of awareness of Mental Health, Sources of Support for Mental Health; Mental Health Champions and Mental Health First Aiders.
- 6.8 The organisation’s Recruitment and Selection and Reasonable Adjustments Policies encourages, supports and provides reasonable adjustments for applicants with mental health issues.

7 Mental Health

7.1 A Holistic Approach

- 7.1.1 Scottish Borders Council utilises a holistic approach to Mental Health Management ensuring that from the start of the recruitment process, through time at work, in the early stages of distress, if they go off work and for return to work Mental Health is appropriately managed. This is summarised in the chart below.



8 Mental Health Support

- 8.1 There are many sources of support available to SBC employees in the early stages of mental ill health. The aim of all of these is to provide you with support at the earliest stage possible to help keep you in work and prevent further development of the symptoms.
- 8.2 The Stress Management Process outlined in Section 12 is built around the HSE's Management Standards approach to tackling work related stress. It is one of the priority means for enabling the organisation to manage stress and also due to the relationships between Stress, Anxiety and Depression etc. is very important for helping to prevent some of the instances of these.
- 8.3 **What To Do If You Are Feeling Mentally Unwell (Stress / Anxiety / Depression)**
- 8.3.1 Speak to your Line Manager, who should be able to offer you initial support and guidance in your workplace. Such support may be by means of flexible working, review of workloads, additional training, realignment of deadlines

and priorities, referral to Occupational Health, signposting to counselling support from the employee helpline. All help and support must be tailored to suit individual needs.

- 8.3.2 In the event that you feel unable to speak to your line manager then you can either:
- i. Speak to the HR Case Management Team who can offer advice, support and guidance.
 - ii. Speak to the Health and Safety team who can signpost you to other support
 - iii. Directly contact the Employee Helpline
 - iv. Speak to Remploy's Access to Work Mental Health Service or make an appointment to meet their SBC representative who will work with you to develop an action plan to help keep you in work
 - v. Speak to your Trade Union representative. Unions have access to a range of support information which is available to help members.
 - vi. Seek professional medical advice from a GP and/ or other support agencies such as Samaritans, Breathing space, Saneline etc. (see additional information below for contact telephone numbers).
- 8.3.3 All of the above services are totally confidential and can provide a variety of levels of information and support to help individuals.
- 8.3.4 Where employees have concerns for the welfare of other colleagues who they feel are showing signs /symptoms of suffering with stress related illness then it is essential that they talk about it to someone who will deal with the matter sympathetically and offer the appropriate support to the individual. This person could be a close friend of the individual, line manager, HR adviser, union rep or even the individual themselves. It is important that such conversations are not delayed by uncertainty of what to do.

8.4 Stress Management

- 8.4.1 Where an employee is off sick and their Fit Note states the cause as being work related stress then the employee should be provided the link to complete the "Stress Assessment Tool" on the Assure (Lexi) Portal or provided a paper version of the form for completion prior to their return to work. The form will be processed by the Health and Safety Team to provide a report for managers to create an action plan for the employee's successful and continuing return to work.
- 8.4.2 An employee, if they believe they are displaying symptoms of stress, and they believe the symptoms are work related must complete a **Stress Management Report Form (AM3)** and forward to HR. (askhr@acotborders.gov.uk/ Case Management Team, Human Resources, Old School Building, Council Headquarters, Newtown St.Boswells TD6 0SA.) The form can be found with the Attendance Management Policy in the Human Resources Policies, Procedures & Guidelines on the Intranet and on the Employees page on the Scottish Borders Council website.

HR will determine whether to pass the information to the Line Manager or to contact the employee direct to discuss any potential course of action. Should the symptoms be non-work-related then the AM3 form may still be used to enable the situation to be reviewed. A list of support agencies is attached to the AM3, and the employee is always encouraged to contact their GP. This form can also be used when the employee has not been absent from work.

9 Mental Health Crises and Mental Health First Aid

- 9.1 Whilst the primary focus of SBC's approach to Mental Health management is the prevention of crisis and keeping people in work, the organisation recognises that, as it does for people who are physically injured at work, then it has to have a first aid provision for those who are entering Mental Health Crisis.
- 9.2 The organisation has made provision for Mental Health First Aiders who can offer comfort and support in a crisis until appropriate or professional help arrives.
- 9.3 The role of a Mental Health First Aider is only essential in the very short term, until other help can be found. That other help can come in a variety of forms (person's friends or family, a GP, a telephone helpline, a hospital accident and emergency department, or an ambulance). Whilst they have been trained how to respond, they are never obliged to intervene and are not trained in treatment.
- 9.4 The organisation assists its Mental Health First Aiders in times of other employees' crises by supporting their absence from their day to day duties until other help arrives.
- 9.5 Level of Provision of Mental Health First Aiders will be assessed using the First Aid Needs Assessment form on Assure (Lexi). This will be undertaken by the Health and Safety Team.

10 Major/Critical Incident Counselling and Debrief

- 10.1 In cases of major incidents (as defined in the Scottish Borders Council Major Incident Plan [BORDERS DISPLAN]) or other critical incidents (examples could be an assault by a client on an employee or the death of a school pupil) there will be a requirement to consider whether counselling support and advice for employees (and perhaps others) involved is required.
- 10.2 **Major Incidents**
- 10.2.1 Provision is made for a Support Team to deliver counselling and debriefing services in the 'Counselling and Support Services for People Involved in Major Incidents' draft plan produced jointly by Scottish Borders Council and NHS Borders. Further information regarding this provision is available from the Emergency Planning Section.
- 10.3 **Other Critical Incidents**
- 10.3.1 The counselling and/or debriefing response to a critical incident will obviously vary according to the nature of the incident. Where departments or individual employees require advice or assistance in respect of the provision of counselling support they should contact HR in the first instance.

11 Training

- 11.1 Training for Mental Health and Stress follows a tiered approach below:



- 11.2 Mental Health Awareness training will be provided as either a half day face to face or Teams session or by e-learning.
- 11.3 Training will be provided by the Health and Safety Team for Mental Health Champions to enable them to spot the early signs of stress or mental health
- 11.4 Training for Mental Health First Aiders will be organised by the HR Training Section. The syllabus for the training will cover the content of Scotland's Mental Health First Aid Manual or the Mental Health First Aid England syllabus.

12 Stress Management

- 12.1 SBC manages stress following the principles detailed in the HSE's Management Standards Approach to Workplace Stress. An overview of the process is below.
- 12.2 The Health and Safety Team will request the relevant Service Director appoints a lead for a Stress Focus Group for their directorate to oversee the Stress Risk Assessment Process. Upon receipt of this name the Health and Safety Team will organise a meeting with the lead to discuss the process so that this person along with the Service Director can ensure appropriate support for the process.
- 12.3 The Health and Safety team will provide a template email / letter to be sent out by the Service Director/ Lead to all their employees regarding the programme with a link to the assessment form (paper copy where relevant) and a deadline date for completion. They will also make paper copies of the assessment form available.
- 12.4 On receipt of any completed paper copies the Health and Safety team will process these into the Management Standards measurement tool along with the data from the completed electronic forms. This will be used to create the initial report highlighting the key areas for action.

- 12.5 The Lead for the focus group will invite a number of representatives from different areas of the service and who are at different employee levels to join the group ensuring a wide spread of views and knowledge. They will all be provided with copies of the report.
- 12.6 All persons working with or on the group will be expected to maintain a positive approach to developing improvements for all to achieve a healthier workplace.
- 12.7 The group will meet regularly as required to investigate improvements and to discuss their successes.
- 12.8 After a period of two years the exercise will be carried out again to measure the effect of the changes and identify the current target areas for improvement.
- 12.9 The Health and Safety Team will use the information gained to keep an overall stress risk assessment for the service up to date in the Assure (Lexi) system.

13 Evaluation Of Stress Management Policy And Practices

- 13.1 The organisation will regularly monitor and evaluate its policy and practices on stress management with a view to ensuring their effectiveness.
- 13.2 Departments are encouraged to periodically review any stress issues during team briefings or similar meetings, providing employees with an opportunity to discuss progress and raise any concerns.

14 Links With Other Policies

- 14.1 This policy is associated to the following key HR policies and where applicable should be cross referenced to gain further detail:
- Attendance Management
 - Dignity at Work
 - Disciplinary Policy
 - Equality, Diversity and Human Rights
 - Family Friendly
 - Flexible Working
 - Grievance Policy
 - Managing Work Performance
 - Reasonable Adjustments
 - Recruitment and Selection
 - Redeployment
 - Substance Misuse Policy
 - Training Policy

15 References

- 15.1 Scotland's Mental Health First Aid. Manual. NHS Scotland (2009) ISBN: 978-1-84485-287-1
- 15.2 IOSH Mental health in the workplace: benchmarking questions (2019)
- 15.3 Mentally Healthy Workplace Policy (to be withdrawn)
- 15.4 H&S Management of Stress in the Workplace Policy (to be withdrawn)
- 15.5 H&S Stress Management – Managers Good Practice Guide (to be withdrawn)

15.6 HR Policy And Guidelines On Managing Stress In The Workplace (to be withdrawn)

16 Document Changes

16.1 Complete rewrite to include the Health and Safety “Management of Stress in the Workplace Policy”, Health and Safety “Mentally Healthy Workplace Policy” and HR “Policy and Guidelines on Managing Stress in the Workplace”.