



Cyngor Sir  
**CEREDIGION**  
County Council

# Prevention & Management of Stress Policy



People & Organisation Service  
January 2024



**DYSGU PERTHYN LLWYDDO BYW**  
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# 1. Policy

## 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Ceredigion County Council's (the Council) is committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees. The Council is committed to creating a healthy workplace and a culture where employees talk openly about their health and wellbeing and ask for support without fear of judgement or reprisal.
- 1.1.2 The Council has a duty of care to ensure employees are not knowingly subjected to circumstances in which their ability to maintain their mental and physical wellbeing is compromised.
- 1.1.3 The Council recognises that work-related stress can place immense demands on an employee's physical and mental health. It can impact behaviour, performance and relationships with colleagues, as well as leading to long-term absence from work.
- 1.1.4 Knowing how to identify, manage and prevent the factors that can cause work-related stress is key to managing people effectively and ensuring a healthy workplace.
- 1.1.5 The Council recognises stress from outside of the working environment can also impact an employee's physical and mental health. Whilst stress of this kind is beyond the Council's control, as part of our commitment to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees, the Council will offer support, through appropriate resources.

## 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish an effective and consistent approach to the prevention of work-related stress and to provide supporting services where cases of work-related and non-work-related stress are identified.
- Help managers and employees recognise and manage stress in a pro-active manner.

## 1.3 Scope

This policy applies to all employees other than those who are employed by School Governing Bodies.

## 1.4 Definition of Stress

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as "the adverse reaction 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 can be detrimental to a person's mental and physical health.

## 1.5 Legislative Context

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. The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 requires an employer to take measures to control that risk.

## 1.6 Roles and Responsibilities

### 1.6.1 Employees

All employees are responsible for:

- Raising issues of concern with their manager or another manager within their service who they feel comfortable to express their concerns with.
- Considering opportunities for counselling and support when offered and recommended.
- Employees are not obliged to complete an Individual stress risk assessment, however doing so can help them and their manager to work together to assess and take appropriate action on removing or reducing the triggers of excessive pressure from the workplace which are affecting the employee.
- Participating in stress awareness workshops and training that may be offered.

### 1.6.2 Line Managers

Line Managers are responsible for:

- Monitoring workloads to ensure that people are not having to consistently work at unmanageable levels.
- Attending the training offered for managers in the management of staff mental health and wellbeing and recognising and managing stress.
- Initiating Stress Risk Assessments and responding to them in a timely and supportive manner.

### 1.6.3 The Employee Health and Wellbeing Officer

The Employee Health and Wellbeing Officer is responsible for:

- Giving guidance to managers on the application of this Policy including the completion of the various stress risk assessments.
- Providing specialist advice and awareness training on recognising and managing stress, including how to support employees experiencing poor mental health from stress.
- Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress.
- Informing the Health and Wellbeing steering group of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work, along with any emerging trends and areas of concern within the organisation.

### 1.6.4 Human Resources

Human Resources are responsible for:

- Signposting managers to this policy and associated risk assessments and toolkit.

- Encouraging referrals to Occupational Health and raising awareness of the Council's Employee Assistance Programme and/or the Employee Health and Wellbeing Officer where appropriate.

#### **1.6.5 Health and Safety Team**

The Health and Safety team are responsible for:

- Consulting with colleagues on the issue of stress including providing advice and guidance on carrying out stress risk assessment.
- The Health and Safety team should conduct joint inspections of the workplace to ensure that environmental stressors are properly controlled.

#### **1.6.6 Health and Wellbeing Steering Group**

The steering group will be responsible for:

- Overseeing and monitoring of the efficacy of this policy and procedure as well as other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.
- Carrying out an advisory role in the prevention and management of stress in the workforce.

## 2. Procedure

### 2.1 Introduction

This procedure should be read in conjunction with the prevention and management of stress guidance found on CeriNet.

### 2.2 Stress Risk Assessment Framework

2.2.1 The Council has a legal obligation to assess the risk of stress-related ill-health arising from work activities and to take measures to control that risk.

2.2.2 The Council is also committed to approaching stress management proactively, focusing on prevention and early intervention.

2.2.3 In response to this, the Council will apply a multi-level stress risk assessment framework which consists of the following tiers:

- Workforce Risk Assessment
- Team Stress Risk Assessment
- Individual Stress Risk Assessment

2.2.4 The Health & Safety Executive's (HSE) 'Management Standards' will form the foundation of this framework. The 'Management Standards' cover the following six areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are identified as the most significant contributors to workplace stress:

- **Demands:** Includes workload, work patterns and the work environment
- **Control:** The influence a person has in the way they do their work
- **Support:** Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
- **Role:** Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles
- **Change:** How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.
- **Relationships:** Promoting positive working to avoid conflicting and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

### 2.3 Workforce Risk Assessment

2.3.1 Workforce stress levels will be annually risk assessed using findings from the Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey conducted in alignment with HSE 'Management Standards'

2.3.2 The survey will be anonymous, but participants can choose to identify their service area and Corporate Manager.

2.3.3 Survey findings will guide both workforce-wide stress prevention and management initiatives, as well as inform the need for further risk assessment in specific service areas or teams, allowing for targeted interventions.

- 2.3.4 The People & Organisation Service is responsible for coordinating the annual survey and sharing survey findings with:
- Leadership Group
  - the workforce
  - the Employee Health and Wellbeing Steering Group
  - the Health & Safety Forum
  - Service Areas and Corporate Managers
- 2.3.5 The People & Organisation Service is responsible for completing a risk assessment form to ensure any stressors, existing precautions and any further actions and review dates are recorded.
- 2.3.6 In the event that participation rates in the annual Health and Wellbeing Survey are so low that findings cannot be relied upon, for example under 15%, then it may be necessary to conduct a Team Risk Assessment.

## 2.4 Team Risk Assessment

- 2.4.1 There will be occasions where it will be necessary to conduct a stress risk assessment on groups of employees. For example, this may be in response to:
- significant planned change e.g. restructure, changes in working practices
  - Employee Health and Wellbeing Survey findings
  - increased sickness absence or staff turnover
  - concerns raised by team members, the Employee Health & Wellbeing Officer, Health & Safety Officers, Human Resources, Occupational Health or Trade Union representatives.
- 2.4.2 Managers play a crucial role in identifying and mitigating stress risks within their teams. It is their responsibility to lead the risk assessment process and ensure its timely and thorough completion.
- 2.4.3 To conduct a comprehensive risk assessment, managers must proactively identify potential workplace stressors and root causes. This can be achieved by conducting a team stress survey (template available on Ceri Net), team discussions, or holding a focus group with employee representatives.
- 2.4.4 When ready to conduct the risk assessment the 'Stress Risk Assessment Form' available on CeriNet should be followed. This will ensure any stressors, existing precautions, necessary actions and their ownership are recorded.
- 2.4.5 It will be necessary to set a review date for all actions, ensuring review dates reflect the severity of the risk (see guidance on CeriNet).
- 2.4.6 The completed Stress Risk Assessment Form should be forwarded to the Employee Health and Wellbeing Officer for recording purposes and where necessary, to agree any further actions.
- 2.4.7 Managers should share any plan of action with the group of employees.

## 2.5 Individual Risk Assessment

- 2.5.1 All employees may experience periods of pressure at work or their personal lives, and short periods of pressure are not necessarily of concern. Stress however can negatively impact an individual's health and wellbeing. Stress is not a sign of weakness and anybody at any time may experience stress for a variety of reasons.
- 2.5.2 Where it has been identified that an employee is suffering with symptoms of stress, or an employee has advised they are suffering from stress, an individual stress risk assessment process must be initiated by the manager to identify the root causes of the stress and to implement effective actions to mitigate and alleviate them.
- 2.5.3 The stress risk assessment process should be initiated as soon possible (and no later the 5 working days in all but exceptional circumstances).
- 2.5.4 Prior to undertaking the stress risk assessment process, managers should refer to the prevention and management of stress guidance found on CeriNet.
- 2.5.5 **Initial meeting:**  
Prior to conducting the stress risk assessment, managers should meet with the individual to:
- explain the Stress Risk Assessment process, emphasising its collaborative and supportive nature.
  - signpost the employee to the Council's internal sources of advice and support.
  - ask the employee to complete the Employee Stress Self-Assessment Form (available on CeriNet) and agree the date for returning the form to the manager.
  - Agree a date to hold the Stress Risk Assessment meeting.
- 2.5.6 **Stress Risk Assessment meeting:**
- 2.5.6.1 Managers must be sensitive to the importance of ensuring the individual feels comfortable in discussing any health and wellbeing issues. As such, managers may need to consider additional support or adjustments, for example:
- sharing the Stress Risk Assessment template beforehand and signposting the employee to the employee guidance available on CeriNet.
  - allowing the employee to be supported by a colleague or Trade Union representative.
  - changing the physical arrangements of the meeting, for example, arranging to meet in person or through Teams depending on the employee's preference.
- 2.5.6.2 Managers should use the Stress Risk Assessment Form available on CeriNet to complete the risk assessment.
- 2.5.6.3 The risk assessment should be completed jointly by the manager and employee, and an action plan developed and agreed.
- 2.5.6.4 Where it is found that personal stress is having an adverse effect on the individual, they should be encouraged to access support through the



Employee Assistance Programme, their GP or alternatively they may wish to seek advice from the Employee Health and Wellbeing Officer.

**2.5.7 Actions/Support Measures:**

- 2.5.7.1 Having completed the risk assessment form it is imperative that both the Manager and the individual take responsibility for implementing all agreed actions.
- 2.5.7.2 A copy of the agreed Stress Risk Assessment Form should be provided to the individual and a copy shared with the Health and Safety team for reviewing and recording purposes and, where necessary, to agree any further actions.
- 2.5.7.3 Regular reviews should be conducted to monitor the efficacy of the support measures identified. They should be mutually agreed and diarised for a minimum of three months following the initial completion of the risk assessment.
- 2.5.7.4 The risk assessment should be repeated if the employee continues to experience stress at work, so as to provide the opportunity to explore alternative or additional solutions and support.



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[cerinet.ceredigion.gov.uk](http://cerinet.ceredigion.gov.uk)

01970 633949

[humanresources@ceredigion.gov.uk](mailto:humanresources@ceredigion.gov.uk)

[healthandwellbeing@ceredigion.gov.uk](mailto:healthandwellbeing@ceredigion.gov.uk)



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