Liberty Academy Trust

Stress Management Policy

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Written By	CEO
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1 Introduction and Legislative Compliance

1.1 At Liberty Academy Trust, we are committed to promoting the health, safety, and welfare of our employees. We recognise that negative workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing negative workplace stress.

1.2 Liberty has a legal duty of care towards the wellbeing of all individuals, as specified in the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999). This duty of care relates to:

- Assessing the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities; and
- Taking measures to control that risk.

1.3 This policy applies to all employees across the Trust.

2 Management Standards

2.1 In 2005 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) introduced *Tackling Stress: The Management Standards Approach*. The Management Standards cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and wellbeing, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. In other words, the Standards cover the primary sources of negative stress at work. These are:

- **Demands** – such as workload, work patterns, and the work environment
- **Control** – such as how much say the person has in the way they work
- **Support** – such as the encouragement and resources provided by the organisation, line management, and colleagues
- **Relationships** – such as promoting positive working which avoids conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- **Role** – such as whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that roles are not conflicting
- **Change** – such as how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

3 Definitions of Stress

3.1 The HSE confirms that there is a difference between **stress** and **pressure**. We all experience pressure on a daily basis and need it to motivate us and enable us to perform at our best.

3.2 It is when we experience too much pressure without the opportunity to recover that we start to experience negative stress. The HSE definition of negative stress is "the adverse reaction people have to executive pressure or other types of demand placed on them".

3.3 This makes an important distinction between positive stress or pressure, which can be positive if managed correctly, and negative stress or distress, which can be detrimental to health.

3.4 An individual can experience excessive pressure and demands outside work just as much as they can at work. Negative stress tends to build up over time because of a combination of factors that may not all be work related. Conflicting demands at work and home can also cause excessive negative stress.

3.5 Psychologist, Richard Lazarus (1983) defines negative stress as "a state of anxiety produced when events and responsibilities exceed one's coping abilities".

3.6 Negative stress can affect us in a number of ways, both physically and emotionally, and in varying intensities.

4 Signs of Stress

4.1 Some common individual and organisational signs of negative stress are provided below:

4.2 Individual Indicators

- Headaches
- Lethargy
- Interrupted sleep patterns, insomnia
- Anxiety
- Blurred vision
- Increased heart rate
- Aching muscles, particularly neck and shoulders
- Reduced immunity to infection
- Inability to cope with normal tasks and situations
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Reduced confidence
- Feeling impatient and irritable
- Increased reliance on alcohol, caffeine, or cigarettes
- Mood swings
- Lack of motivation and good will

4.3 Organisational Indicators

- Increased sickness absence
- High staff turnover
- Increase in accident levels
- Increase in number of disputes / grievances / complaints
- Noticeable reduction in performance levels

5 Roles and Responsibilities

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

5.1 The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has overall day-to-day responsibility for health and safety matters across the Trust. The CEO delegates responsibility for undertaking aspects of these duties through line management and identified roles.

5.2 The following people are identified as having responsibility for managing work related negative stress in those areas, and for those relevant persons, that fall under their control.

The Executive Board

5.3 The Executive Board is responsible for ensuring that adequate resources are available within the Human Resources (HR) function to advise and support the Trust to manage work related negative stress effectively and efficiently.

The Head of Human Resources (HR)

5.4 The Head of HR is responsible for:

5.4.1 The development and provision of HR policy, guidance and advice to support the Trust in delivering policy

5.4.2 Ensuring that appropriate support mechanisms are in place for employees who may be reporting symptoms of work-related negative stress

5.4.3 Putting systems in place to actively monitor negative stress related sickness absence and to identify potential issues across the Trust

5.4.4 Advising the Trust on health and safety legislation in relation to the management of work-related negative stress

Principals and Senior Leaders

5.5 Principals and Senior Leaders are responsible for ensuring that:

5.5.1 Work related negative stress assessments are prepared for members of academy staff, **as per appendix 1**, HSE Example Risk Assessment Template

5.5.2 Any significant findings of work-related negative stress risk assessments are addressed by the implementation of suitable and sufficient control measures

5.5.3 Risk assessments are periodically monitored, and corrective action taken where work-related negative stress risks are not being adequately controlled.

Line Managers

5.6 Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that negative stress risk assessments are followed within the team(s) or directorate(s) falling under their control. Where there are issues with compliance, such as a lack of available resources or support, then these should be escalated up the line management chain.

5.7 **Line Managers** are also responsible for identifying, where possible, and responding appropriately to work-related negative stress issues within their teams or directorates. These may include:

5.7.1 Promoting and encouraging team members to access health and wellbeing initiatives.

5.7.2 Empowering team members to be able to influence where, when, and how work is done to sufficiently feel in control of their workload, within the remit of the role.

5.7.3 Being cognisant of pressures outside of work, such as bereavement, financial or marital difficulties, serious illness etc and offer appropriate levels of support.

5.7.4 Identifying and addressing potential workplace stressors, including stressors specifically associated with their team's work.

5.7.5 Taking appropriate action when a member of their team indicates that they, or a colleague, may be experiencing symptoms of work-related negative stress.

5.7.6 Signposting available support to any of their team members who may be reporting that they are experiencing negative stress outside work.

5.7.7 Proactively managing staff performance, attendance and sickness absence in accordance with HR policy and practice and where necessary seeking advice and support from HR.

5.7.8 Routinely monitoring workload and working time to ensure a fair distribution and balance with appropriate downtime.

All Employees

5.8 All employees have a general responsibility to take reasonable care whilst at work to secure their own health and safety and the health and safety of others who may be affected by their actions or inaction. In the context of this policy, this means:

5.8.1 Informing their line manager if they believe they are experiencing symptoms of work-related negative stress or have similar concerns about their work colleagues. All concerns raised are to be handled in a supportive and sympathetic way.

5.8.2 Working with their line manager to identify workplace stressors and to implement any control measures that might be put in place to reduce work-related negative stress.

5.8.3 Cooperating with referrals to Occupational Health and participating in Counselling if recommended by a health professional.

5.8.4 Exploring health and wellbeing opportunities in order to promote self care in relation to physical and mental health.

6 Sources of Support

6.1 Liberty Academy Trust offers a range of support for employees who may be experiencing negative stress, including work-related negative stress. Examples of such support include the provision of Occupational Health Services and Counselling, accessed through the **Employee Assistance Programme**:

- Schools Advisory Service: SAS on 01773 814403 or email nurse@uk-sas.co.uk

6.2 There is no compulsion on employees to take up offers of such support, but the Trust strongly encourages affected employees to do so and will actively provide opportunities for employees to access these services.

6.3 Employees who do not feel able to speak to their line manager, or who do not feel that their line manager is adequately addressing their concerns, should seek to raise these with their line managers' manager. If this is also a problem, employees may speak directly to HR.

6.4 Employees may also seek advice and support from their Trades Union representative.

Appendix: Risk assessment template

Company name: **Assessment carried out by:**
Date of next review: **Date assessment was carried out:**

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing to control the risks?	What further action do you need to take to control the risks?	Who needs to carry out the action?	When is the action needed by?	Done

More information on managing risk: www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/

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Further Information and Resources

Anxiety UK runs a helpline staffed by volunteers with personal experience of anxiety from 09:30 – 17:30, Monday to Friday. Call: 03444 775 774 or Text: 07537 416905

https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 December 2024]

Health and Safety Executive; *Working Together to Reduce Stress at Work – A Guide for Employees* Available from: https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg424.pdf [Accessed 13 December 2024]

Health and Safety Executive; *Stress Talking Toolkit* Available from: https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/stress-talking-toolkit.pdf [Accessed 13 December 2024]

Health and Safety Executive; *Education Talking Toolkit* Available from: https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/talking-toolkit-education.pdf [Accessed 13 December 2024]

Mental Health Foundation has been leading the UK in building good mental health since 1949. It is the home of Mental Health Awareness Week. Access help from: https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/getting-help-your-mental-health [Accessed 13 December 2024]

MIND Infoline provides information on a range of mental health topics to support people in their own areas from 09:00-18:00, Monday to Friday. Call: 0300 123 3393 or email: info@mind.org.uk

NHS Every Mind Matters wellbeing and mental health support available at: https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/ [Accessed 13 December 2024]

Samaritans offer emotional support 24 hours a day and in full confidence. Call: 116 123 or Text: *shout* to 85258 or Email: jo@samaritans.org