Organisational Arrangements for the Management of Work-related Stress

Health and Safety Service

Document control information

Version 2.0
Approved by the College Health and Safety Committee – February 2019
For review February 2020
Introduction

Birkbeck College is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees. Workplace stress is recognised and a health and safety issue and the College will seek to identify and reduce workplace stressors so far as is reasonably practicable. The College recognises that everyone can be affected by stress and that nobody is “immune”.

These organisational arrangements form part of the College’s Health and Safety Policy and they apply to all Staff. Managers are responsible for their implementation and the College is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

Definitions

**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 health.

**Stressor** – an activity, event or other stimulus that causes stress.

**Risk assessment** – a careful examination of what could cause harm in the workplace and the identification of control measures to reduce risk to a reasonably acceptable level to prevent harm.

**Control measure** – a control measure is any measure taken to eliminate or reduce the risk of injury or harm, both physical and psychological.

**Health and Safety Executive’s Management Standards** – these define the culture of an organisation where the risk from work related stress are being effectively controlled. They cover the six primary areas that are stressors – work demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. The Standards represent a set of conditions that if present, reflect a high level of health, wellbeing and organisational performance.

Responsibilities

General responsibilities for the management of health and safety are outlined in the document “Organisational Arrangements for the Management of Health and Safety”.

The College shall:

- seek to identify workplace stressors and conduct an assessment of health risk from them and where necessary eliminate or control the risk. These assessments shall be regularly reviewed. A pro forma – “College Stress Risk Assessment Form” is available from the Safety Office website;
- consult with Trade Union Safety Representatives on proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress;
- provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices;
- provide confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors;
- provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the College’s stress management strategy.
Line Managers and Supervisory Staff shall
- ensure these arrangements are implemented at a local level;
- conduct and implement recommendations of risk assessments within their area of responsibility;
- ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational or procedural changes;
- ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties;
- ensure that staff are made aware of stress issues during the induction process;
- ensure staff are provided with meaningful development opportunities;
- monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded;
- monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking;
- monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement;
- attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety;
- ensure that bullying and harassment are not tolerated in their area of responsibility;
- be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

The Health and Safety Advisor shall
- provide or source specialist advice and awareness training on stress;
- train and support managers in implementing stress risk assessments;
- monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress;
- inform the employer and the health and safety committee of any changes or developments in the field of work-related stress;
- maintain a web-page on the College’s Safety Office website (www.bbk.ac.uk/so/) with resources and guidance on stress risk assessment and links to other resources to support individuals and managers.

The Occupational Health Unit shall
- support individuals who have been off sick with stress-related illness and advise them and their management on a planned return to work;
- refer staff to counsellors or specialist agencies as required.

Human Resources shall
- give guidance to managers on these arrangements including the risk assessment process;
- help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics and other data and feeding this back to the College Health and Safety Committee;
- advise managers and staff on training requirements;
- assist in the stress risk assessment process if there are conflicts of interest or difficulties between staff and senior / line managers;
- maintain copies of individual’s stress risk assessments (a pro forma is available from the Health and Safety Service website);
• provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to the occupational health unit or other support when appropriate;
• promote health and wellbeing within the workplace.

Employees:
• are encouraged to approach their line manager in the first instance if they wish to seek help;
• can talk to their trade union representative or human resources
• are encouraged to accept opportunities for counselling and support when recommended.

**Seeking help and support should be seen as a positive approach and is to be encouraged and not be seen as a sign of weakness.**

Health and Safety Committee shall
• ensure that these arrangements are implemented.
• oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.
• review these arrangements at least every two years.

All staff

In relation to stress all staff should:
• become familiar with these Organisational Arrangements
• be aware of the main stressors in the workplace.
• where possible, take action themselves to reduce or manage stress.
• report any illness or injury which may be caused or exacerbated by work stressors – this includes both physical and psychological ill-health.