Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Category: Non-Statutory	Approved by: Full Governing Body
Approved: June 2022	Next Approval due: June 2025
Initial Review by: Head Teacher	Formal Review by: TLC (Teaching Learning & Care) Committee
Linked Policies: Health and Safety Policy	

Our Christian Vision:

Built on the rock of Christian faith, we work as a community to create an environment which enables all to flourish. Jesus welcomed everyone and we embrace diversity, celebrating our different gifts and successes. Like St Peter, we are motivated by our values, learn from our mistakes and strive for the best outcome for all.

Policy Statement

The Governing Body recognise that stress is potentially a major cause of ill health amongst its staff. Stress-related illness can be caused by work or by issues outside work. The Governing Body is committed to eliminating the foreseeable causes of stress at work, or if that is not possible, minimising or reducing the risk or work-related stress to employees to the lowest level.

The Local Authority, Governing Body and Headteacher recognise that the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty of care on employers to provide and maintain safe systems of work and a working environment which is, as far is reasonably practical, safe and without risks to health.

Further, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a duty of care to assess and manage all injury risks to employees health and safety and, where these risks cannot be eliminated, implement control measures to minimise or reduce risk.

With regard to the work-life balance, Regulation 5(2) of the School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009 clarifies that the Headteacher is responsible for the work-life balance of the staff, and the Governing Body is responsible for the work-life balance of the Headteacher.

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for agreeing and reviewing the Health and Safety policy, including issues relating to staff stress. On a day-to-day basis, the Headteacher has responsibility for taking requisite measures to deal with and alleviate any work-related stress where possible.

Other relevant legislation that has implications for managing stress at work includes the Employment Rights Act 1996, Public Order Act 1986, Protection from

Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1998, Equality Act 2010. There is also a duty of care for staff under common law. This policy is underpinned by the principles outlined in current case law.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Governing Body operates a fair, consistent and open approach to the issue of stress. The Governing Body, with the Headteacher will therefore:

- Agree and review the Health and Safety policy
- Seek to eliminate or, if not possible, reduce the causes of work-related stress through risk assessment.
- Investigate all reports of work-related stress and ensure remedial action is taken - developing safe systems of work and introducing practical preventative measures.
- Provide information and training for managers to help them recognise the symptoms of stress and give practical guidance on the measures that may be taken to assist individuals suffering from potentially stress related symptoms.
- Provide information and training to all employees to enable them to recognise the symptoms of stress and the appropriate measures that may be adopted.
- Support employees (including the Headteacher) to achieve healthy work-life balance.
- Take a supportive attitude towards individuals experiencing stress whatever the cause.
- Respect confidentiality at all times - with individual cases only being discussed in the appropriate forum.
- Monitor and evaluate absence levels due to stress related illnesses.
- Monitor, evaluate and review the effectiveness of the policy and procedures for the elimination and management of stress on a regular basis.

The Governing Body believe that the elimination and management of stress is an important management task and that it requires a tactful and diplomatic approach and the co-operation and involvement of managers, staff, the Local Authority and trade unions. The costs of not managing stress effectively are significant on both an individual and school.

Introduction

There is a need for schools to eliminate, or if not possible, reduce the causes of work-related stress and provide supportive strategies for staff. This will:

- Ensure good employment practice
- Ensure all legal obligations are met
- Reduce the direct and indirect costs of stress
- Help staff maintain a healthier work-life balance.

The Local Authority has overall responsibility for the health and safety of employees whilst at work. The responsibility for managing stress within school is delegated to the Governing Body and Headteacher.

A guide for employees is attached as Appendix 1 – Employees Guide to Managing Stress.

Definitions of Stress

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as

"the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed upon them".

Stress is part of everyday life and an individual's stress level can vary depending on their tolerance and threshold. However, there is an important distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge (which can be stimulating and motivating) and stress, which is the reaction to the demands that a person feels when they cannot cope at a given time.

Legal Responsibilities, Policies and Procedures

Health and Safety Legislation

Employers have a legal duty under Section 2 (1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practical, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. There is a general duty therefore to seek to protect employees from undue stress at work, dealing with stress related issues and taking appropriate action.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a duty on employers to assess and manage significant risks to health and safety and, where these risks cannot be eliminated, implement control measures to minimise or reduce the risk.

Also, employees have a duty under Section (7) of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Regulation 14 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions at work. This includes mental hazards such as work-place stress as well as physical hazards.

Governing Bodies and Headteachers have a responsibility under the School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009 to manage work life balance.

Liabilities in law arise where an employer does not demonstrate reasonable care towards an employee and it is reasonably foreseeable to the employer that injury will (and does) result as a consequence. Injury can be interpreted as either mental or physical and while stress is not an injury in itself a mental illness such as a nervous breakdown is.

Working Time Directive

The Working Time Directive came into force on 1 October 1998 aiming to limit the numbers of hours in an employees' working week, ensure adequate rest times, etc. When looking at the hazards relating to stress and the prevention and reduction of stress managers should consider working patterns and hours.

Equality Act

The Equality Act defines a 'disabled person' as someone who

has a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

Employees who experience temporary and short-term cases of stress related illness would therefore not fall within the scope of the Act. However, longer-term cases and other forms of stress related conditions such as past history of long term depression may be covered by the Act.

For those employees whose conditions do meet the provisions of the Act the school is required to make reasonable adjustments. Further advice on making reasonable adjustments can be sought from the school's HR advisor.

Case Law

There are increasing numbers of employment tribunal cases dealing with work related stress where employees have been awarded high levels of compensation:

- Walker v Northumberland County Council - awarded £175,000
- Lancaster v Birmingham City Council - awarded £67,000
- Benson v Metropolitan Borough of Wirral - awarded £47,000

Policies and Procedures

There are certain established policies and procedures within school that may need to be considered when dealing with stress. These include:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Capability of staff procedure
- Code of conduct for school staff
- Staff disciplinary / Staff grievance policies
- Statement of allegations of abuse
- Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure
- Leave of absence

Teacher Work-Load Issues

Further advice can be sought from the school's HR Advisor and school improvement advisor.

The Causes of Stress

Causes of an individuals stress may be work-related or non-work related and it may not be possible to predict how or when a person will be adversely affected by the pressures they experience. Within school there are times that are particularly stressful for staff e.g. Ofsted inspections, HMI Inspection, school re-organisations/closures, but there are many on-going, continual factors that may cause stress in particular the degree and speed of current educational change.

Causes of Non-Work Related Stress

Causes of non-work related stress may include:

- Bereavement

- Relationship breakdown
- Problems relating to children/parents
- Illness in the family
- Financial problems
- Personal issues such as gender, sexuality
- Experience of chronic illness
- Addiction
- Abuse
- Violence
- House move.

Causes of Work-Related Stress

Causes of work-related stress may include:

School Culture

e.g. management style, poor communication leadership, organisational change, poor relations with co-workers, lack of participation in decision making

The Environmental Factors

e.g. noise, lighting, ergonomic design

Factors intrinsic to the Job

e.g. long hours, high workload, dealing with challenging behaviours, confrontational situations

Employee Development

e.g. unsupportive feedback on performance, training needs, job security, lack of promotion - under/over promotion

The Effects of Stress

The effects of stress can be short-lived provided timely and appropriate action is taken. Early recognition of the signs of stress is beneficial to the employee and the school.

Effects on the Individual

Work-related stress is not an illness but if it is prolonged or particularly intense, it can lead to increased problems with ill health e.g. heart disease, anxiety, depression, high blood pressure etc. It can also lead to other behaviours that are not helpful to health such as weight loss/gain, drinking too much caffeine, alcohol and smoking.

Effects on the School

Stress has implications for a school and reducing stress is cost-effective. For example stress can cause:

An increase in sickness absence, which leads to increased workloads for others

- Reduced staff performance
- Reduced staff morale
- Increased staff turnover
- Increased parental complaints
- Possible expensive litigation.

The Signs of Stress

Early recognition of the signs of stress is beneficial to the employee and the school. It is important to recognise that people demonstrate some of the symptoms of stress at various times in their life. This does not necessarily mean they are suffering from stress. The levels of stress that an individual feels will correspond to the symptoms they experience.

Physical Signs →	Nausea
	Headaches
	Fatigue
	Shoulders, neck, back pain
	Cramps
	Chest pain
	Palpitations
	Weight loss/gain
Behavioural Signs →	Smoking
	Alcohol - increased drinking
	Nail biting
	Changes to eating habits
	Erratic mood changes
Emotional Signs →	Intolerance and irritability
	Withdrawal of social contact
	Low self-esteem

	Guilt
	Panic
	Worrying inappropriately
Work Related Signs →	Reduction in productivity
	Increase in error rates
	Indecisive/ poor decision making
	Deterioration in planning/control of work
	Tension/conflict between colleagues
	Increase in disciplinary issues
	Loss of motivation/commitment
	Working longer hours with little achievement
	Erratic/poor timekeeping
	Increased absence
	Evading deadlines
	Lack of concentration

Identifying Work-Place Stress

There are a number of ways of identifying workplace stress:

Sickness Absence Analysis

An analysis of sickness absence can identify stress. Consideration may be given to:

- individual problems - where there may be increased rates of either short-term or long-term absences, or possible stress related diagnosis
- whether there may be group problems - where there are numbers of employees with increased sickness absence rates or with possible stress related diagnosis
- by looking at medical certificates for stress as a specific reason for absence.

Personal Accident Report Forms

If an employee feels that they have an illness or condition caused by their work it should be reported on the Personal Accident Form and investigated by the head teacher. For copies of the form please contact the School Office.

<u>Performance Management / Supervision Process</u>

The supervision / performance management process provides an opportunity for discussing and identifying if an employee has a problem. It is important for the Headteacher to listen to the employee and encourage them to discuss their feelings. Many teachers and employees are reluctant to admit to feeling stressed at work as they may perceive it as a sign of weakness or feel it goes against the management culture.

<u>Informal Monitoring</u>

The basis of this approach is that the Headteacher knows the members of the team, their individual skills, moods, personalities and how they respond to pressures and demands. They should then be aware of any difficulties and try and provide support and assistance.

<u>Exit Interviews</u>

Exit interviews occur when employees leave a job and can be a useful way of gaining insight and understanding into how employees view their job and the school.

<u>Stress Audit</u>

Headteachers may wish to carry out an individual stress assessment. It is important that these are carried out on a confidential basis and that staff are aware of what the information will be used for. While these may give a good indication of stress levels they can be time consuming in carrying them out and analysing the results.

Addressing and reducing work-place stress

The Governing Body and Headteacher are responsible for the health and safety of the employees in the school. When identifying the hazards employees face consideration should be given to the causes of stress, making reductions as far as possible and taking appropriate action to monitor.

<u>The School's approach</u>

The school's approach to stress should be supportive. If the cause of stress is not work related the employee should be supported via existing mechanisms such as their GP. Where an employee has been absent from work for a long period measures such as a phased return or a temporary reduction in hours or a temporary reduction in responsibility could be considered to aid in the return to school.

If the source of stress is work related the Headteacher should undertake a risk assessment / risk reduction approach to the problem (this is a delegated responsibility from the Local Authority). All reasonable, practical steps should be taken to ensure the health and safety of employees.

Evaluation should be undertaken annually to ensure that the responses that have been made are working and being observed. All staff have a responsibility to look after their own health and safety and ensure that they raise concerns at an early stage.

Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is the process of identifying areas of work / work organisation that are likely to result in ill health (stress) and to attach an assessment of the likelihood and severity of that risk. Once the risk assessment has identified likely sources of stress, suitable measures should be developed and put in place to minimise the likelihood of 'ill health'. For example in cases where staff take excessive amounts of work home and / or work longer hours, the school should ensure that a system is in place to monitor and address workloads. Also, where staff have to deal with high levels of challenging behaviour the school should provide training and strategies for them to use.

The Headteacher's Responsibility

Headteachers have an important part to play as they are best placed to observe stress developing. They should ensure that they are aware of employee workloads and of employees' concerns both generally and specifically as they relate to work. This responsibility will apply to all appropriate line managers throughout the structure of the school.

A check-list for Headteachers in preventing and dealing with work related stress is shown in Appendix 2 – Headteachers' Checklist.

Developing a supportive culture

Means of reducing stress is intrinsic to good management and it is important for the Headteacher to show that stress is an issue that the school takes seriously and to be understanding to staff who admit that they are under too much pressure.

Staff can often feel isolated and unable to share their problems with others. Creating a supportive culture and an open door policy can help eliminate feelings of having to cope alone and reduce stress.

The Headteacher should:

- Ensure they are accessible to staff to discuss problems
- Raise awareness of stress and demonstrate that it is not an indication of weakness
- Help new staff by having a good induction programme
- Encourage staff to talk about feelings of stress
- Encourage supportive behaviour in other team members
- Develop a team spirit to reduce feelings of isolation
- Provide support to staff returning to work after long term absence e.g. phased return, shorter hours
- Provide training on stress - on an individual or group basis.
- Provide training on time management, management skills, assertiveness etc.

Management Style and Organisation

How a school is managed can contribute to workplace stress. Headteachers should consider:

- Ensuring effective communication takes place involving all staff

- Fostering co-operation not competition - encouraging teamwork and participation
- Setting clear aims and having clear policies
- Ensuring sufficient and appropriate training
- Giving constructive feedback on performance
- Having effective mechanisms for identifying problems such as sickness absence and work performance at an early stage
- Helping staff recognise their own limitations and skills
- Regularly reviewing workloads and allocate work accordingly.

Other Considerations

Headteachers can also look at:

Factors in reducing work stress

Management
e.g. effective, open management, good communication, employee involvement especially in periods of change, valuing staff

School Issues
e.g. ensure training for dealing with challenging behaviour, provide support & use school procedures for cases of verbal/physical abuse, harassment and bullying.

Job Design
e.g. well defined tasks and responsibilities, address work load issues inc working time, sufficient training, utilisation of skills etc.

Employee Development
e.g. ensure clear objectives and understanding of responsibilities, ensure training needs are met and reviewed regularly, provide appropriate support etc.

A number of good practice suggestions for consideration when looking at strategies are shown in Appendix 3 – Good Practice Suggestions for Headteachers.

General Support

Careline	Telephone counselling service for the general public: 020 85141177
Carers Line	Help and advice line: 0808 8087777
Cruse Bereavement Service	Helpline for bereaved people and those caring for bereaved people: 0870 1671677
Drinkline	Advice, information and support to anyone concerned with their own or someone

	else's drinking: 0800 9178282
Gam Care	Confidential counselling, advice and information for those with a gambling dependency: 0845 560001333
National Debtline	Help for anyone with debt/money issues: 0808 8084000
National Drugs Helpline	24 hour helpline for drug/solvent users, their families, carers and friends: 0800 776600
NHS Direct	24 hour confidential helpline for health concerns: 0845 46 47
Parentline	Helpline for support and information to those in a parenting role: 0808 8002222
Refuge	24 hour helpline for those suffering from domestic violence: 0870 5995443
The Samaritans	24 hour helpline for emotional support: 0845 7909090
Victim Support Line	Helpline for emotional support and advice for those affected by crime: 0845 3030900.

APPENDIX 1
Employees Guide to Managing Stress

1. WHAT IS STRESS?

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as

"the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands placed upon them".

Stress is part of everyday life and an individual's stress level can vary depending on their tolerance and threshold. However, there is an important distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge (which can be stimulating and motivating) and stress, which is the reaction to the demands that a person feels when they cannot cope at a given time.

2. THE DUTIES OF YOUR EMPLOYER

The Local Authority and your Governing Body has a duty to ensure that the health of employees is not harmed by work related stress. In particular they must:

- Assess the risk to your health from work related stress
- Put in place measures to eliminate, or where that is not possible, to reduce that risk
- Consult you, either directly or through your trade union about workplace and organisational changes that are likely to significantly affect your health and safety.

Your Governing Body's commitment to addressing stress is confirmed in the school's Stress Policy.

3. YOUR ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES

You and your colleagues may suffer at sometime in your working life from stress at work. It is important that you are able to recognise factors in the workplace which may cause stress. It is also helpful if you recognise the signs and symptoms of stress in yourselves or others in order to take positive action.

Legally you have a duty under Section 7 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Regulation 14 of the Management if Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to take reasonable care of your own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by your acts or omission whilst at work.

4. THE EFFECTS OF STRESS

Different people perceive different events as stressful. Therefore stress may be experienced as a result of exposure to a wide range of work demands and this therefore may contribute to an equally wide range of health issues.
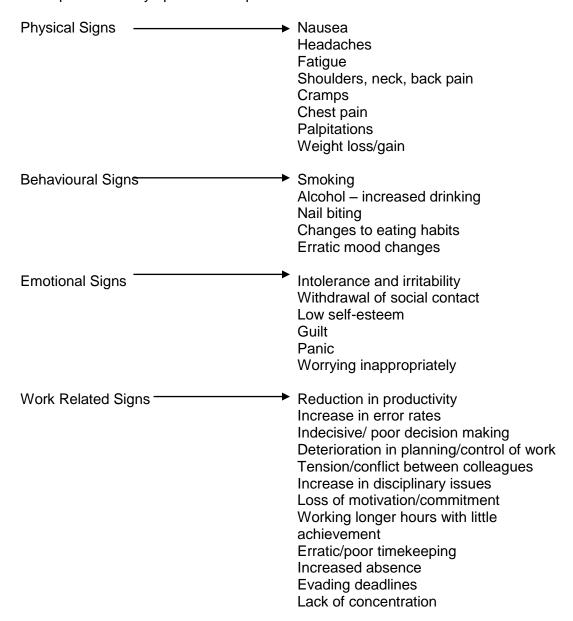
We respond to short-term stress in a number of ways. These responses allow the body to get rid of built up energies on a regular basis and the let the body recover

and return to normal. These responses include the heart beating faster, tense muscles, extra cholesterol and sugar in the blood and slower immune and digestive responses.

Prolonged stress, or if it is particularly intense can lead to increased problems with ill health e.g. heart disease, anxiety, depression, high blood pressure etc. It can also lead to other behaviours that are not helpful to health such as weight loss/gain, drinking too much caffeine or alcohol and smoking.

5.   THE SIGNS OF STRESS

Early recognition of the signs of stress is beneficial to all. It is important to recognise that we demonstrate some of the symptoms of stress at various times in their life. This does not necessarily mean we are suffering from stress. The levels of stress we feel will correspond to the symptoms we experience.

Physical Signs ⟶ Nausea
Headaches
Fatigue
Shoulders, neck, back pain
Cramps
Chest pain
Palpitations
Weight loss/gain

Behavioural Signs ⟶ Smoking
Alcohol – increased drinking
Nail biting
Changes to eating habits
Erratic mood changes

Emotional Signs ⟶ Intolerance and irritability
Withdrawal of social contact
Low self-esteem
Guilt
Panic
Worrying inappropriately

Work Related Signs ⟶ Reduction in productivity
Increase in error rates
Indecisive/ poor decision making
Deterioration in planning/control of work
Tension/conflict between colleagues
Increase in disciplinary issues
Loss of motivation/commitment
Working longer hours with little achievement
Erratic/poor timekeeping
Increased absence
Evading deadlines
Lack of concentration

Generally the best way to identify your own or a colleague's stress is to be aware of normal performance levels, general demeanour and behaviour at work. Where there

are changes in any of these behaviour patterns it could be the effects of stress. These signs are often picked up by other people before we acknowledges them ourselves.

6.   WHAT DO I DO IF I FEEL STRESSED

There are support mechanisms and procedures in school to help you resolve workplace stress:

6.1   Communication

If you feel that there are aspects of your work which are causing you to feel excessively stressed you should discuss them with your headteacher who will try and help you resolve the situation.

They may also ask you if you have any problems related to stress, either as part of performance management/management supervision sessions or absence control procedures.

If your problems are related to home or are of a personal nature you may also wish to discuss them with your headteacher. They may be able to assist with emotional support or practical help such as compassionate leave.

Your headteacher will treat all your conversations in strictest confidence.

6.2   Seeking Other Support

You may feel that talking to your Headteacher is difficult and in these circumstances you may wish to contact your trade union representative for support and advice. They have contacts with their own support systems, the Local Authority and other outside agencies who they can approach with you or on your behalf.

If you are a teacher you may wish to call the Teacher Support Line which provides free information, support and counselling 24 hours a day.

Support can also be gained from your GP, the Local Authority agencies who provide information and advice in respect of specific issues e.g. Relate.

6.3   Individual Strategies

On a personal level it is useful to be able to analyse and examine your reactions to stress and to be able to reduce the effects as much as possible. Your chosen methods of reducing stress are as individual as the causes of it.

There are many things which can help you improve the situation to gain short-term relief and provide strategies for dealing with on-going stress:

- Be assertive – stand up for yourself

- Develop good points both in yourself and others

- Be positive, see the positive side of yourself and others

- Relaxation – this opposes the stress response and helps the re-balancing process

- Physical activity – use up the energy created by the stress response, this helps restore balance and build fitness
- Sleeping well – adopt regular sleep patterns
- Avoid trying things which cause more side effects than the stress such as alcohol, smoking, caffeine, overeating, aggression
- Eat well – the basis for good health which helps you to handle the pressure of stress
- Friendships – give the opportunity to talk and share
- Emotional release – laughing, crying and talking helps release some of the tensions of stress rather than keeping them bottled up
- Appreciate the present rather than dwelling on the past.

APPENDIX 2
Headteachers' Check List

Headteachers may find the following checklist useful in **preventing the root causes** of work-related stress and as a basis for written records:-

Am I familiar with the content of the Stress Policy and the policies also referred to?	YES/NO
Am I complying with the policy?	YES/NO
Do I know where to get further assistance?	YES/NO
Do I need further training in any aspects mentioned in the policy?	YES/NO
Have I carried out a risk assessment for work-related stress in my area of responsibility?	YES/NO
Have I consulted with employees and TU safety representatives?	YES/NO
Have I carried out a risk assessment for other workplace/activity risks?	YES/NO
Do I regularly review my risk assessments?	YES/NO

Headteachers may find this checklist useful in **dealing with stress cases** and as a basis for written records:-

- Do I know anything about this employee's ability to cope that causes me concern?
- Have I noticed (or had reported to me) anything about this employee's behaviour that causes me to think they are not coping?
- Have I talked to the employee about their ability to cope?
- Am I being supportive to the employee?
- Have I taken into account the issues they have raised with me?
- Have I reviewed the work-related stress risk assessment in view of this case?
- Have I been able to prevent the risk of stress for this employee?
- Have I agreed with the employee what control measures I will put in place to assist them?
- Have I put the control measures in place and set up a system to review their effectiveness?
- Am I monitoring the employee and their ability to cope on a regular basis?
- Have I kept detailed notes of the above?
- Do I need further assistance from other sections e.g. Human Resources?

APPENDIX 3
Good Practice Suggestions For Headteachers

JOB CONTENT
- Ensure responsibilities and expectations are clear
- Provide a degree of challenge
- Enable people to contribute to decision affecting their jobs
- Ensure job descriptions provide a clear role
- Provide feedback on performance
- Provide a variety in pace and method of task completion

MANAGEMENT STYLE AND STRUCTURE
- Acknowledge and value people's contribution to the school
- Have clear, well-communicated goals and objectives
- Consistent approach to all employees
- Ensures a balance between responsibility and authority needed to carry out those responsibilities
- Poor performance is tackled at an early stage with support and appropriate training
- Regular contact with employees
- Clear reporting responsibilities are communicated and adhered to

TRAINING
- Provide opportunities for professional development
- Committed to training and develop staff
- Assess training and development needs regularly
- Feedback and monitor training and development opportunities / take-up
- Ensure all staff receive a full induction

MANAGING CHANGE
- Keep those affected by change informed

SUPPORT SYSTEMS
- Encourage staff to maintain a work-life balance
- Ensure staff take appropriate leave
- Ensure confidentiality of those seeking help
- Use existing procedures such as compassionate leave, urgent domestic leave as appropriate
- Respond promptly to complaints of bullying, harassment etc
- Grievance, complaints and disciplinary policies should be seen as fair
- Undertake frank exit interviews with staff leaving the job

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT
- Physical layout
- Work areas comply with good practice and Health and Safety guidelines
- Noise levels controlled

EQUIPMENT
- Suitable and sufficient equipment available
- Planned and regular maintenance of equipment
- Equipment places comply with established standards / good practice
- Information, instruction and training are given