

# Stress Policy

*We will provide this policy on request at no cost, in large print, in Braille, on tape or in another non written format.*

# STRESS POLICY

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cube Housing Association is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees and recognises that workplace stress is a health and safety issue. It acknowledges the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors that may be detrimental to the health of staff.

This Policy will apply to both staff and Board members. Managers are responsible for its implementation and Cube will ensure that the necessary training and resources are provided for this.

## 2. POLICY STATEMENT

Through the Stress Policy and the Health & Wellbeing Policy, Cube is committed to providing a supportive working environment that maintains and promotes the health and well being of all staff and Management Board members. This includes the organisational environment through effective and sensitive management, enabling staff to cope successfully with the demands and pressures of work and Management Board members to successfully cope with the governance demands placed on them in their capacity as a Board member. This Stress Policy also aims to provide support for staff and Board members whose health and well-being are affected by stress.

## 3. DEFINITION OF STRESS

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demands 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. It should be noted that if stress is excessive and goes on for some time, it can lead to mental and/or physical ill health.

Pressures can also arise from an individual’s personal life as well as from work. People vary in their capacity and ability to cope with different types of pressure. A moderate amount of pressure may motivate people, just as a lack of pressure or stimulation can be just as stressful for some people as too much pressure can be for others.

Some individuals will recognise that their health is affected and will seek help; others will not recognise or acknowledge that they are stressed, although it may be apparent to their manager and work colleagues as stress.

## 4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Cube recognises that it has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that its working environment for all staff and Board members is healthy and safe. It also recognises that its duty of care extends to mental health, as well as physical health at work. This Act requires employers to take measures to control that risk.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess risks to health and safety, including assessing the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities and implement avoidance and control measures. This responsibility includes proactively identifying risk factors then implementing measures to minimise risk and prevent harm to employees.

Both the Act and Regulations require staff to tell their employer of any imminent risk to their health.

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) have issued Management Standards for Work Related Stress which provide guidance and support to employers on preventative measures and how to conduct stress risk assessments.

Whilst these Standards do not place an additional legal responsibility on employers, they will be used as evidence against employers who ignore their responsibilities in managing stress under the Health at Safety at Work Act 1974 should any enforcement action arise. Cube will commit to working within these Standards for managing stress.

## 5. POLICY AIMS

- To identify all workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control risks from stress. These risk assessments will be reviewed annually.
- To consult with trade union safety representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress.
- To provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices and manage stress through effective and sensitive management.
- To provide confidential counselling for staff and Board members affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.
- To liaise with Cube's occupational health adviser to provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement actions and recommendations to reduce work related stress.
- To increase awareness of stress and methods to combat it through regular training events and information awareness raising campaigns
- To develop working practices that will reduce the factors which may lead to stress in the workplace
- To develop procedures to manage problems that do occur and to support individuals who are stressed
- To monitor procedures and outcomes, and to assess the effectiveness of the policy

## 6. SOURCES OF STRESS

Stress may arise from various sources, e.g. in the workplace or away from work. Whilst Cube has no control over the latter, it is committed to identifying the sources of stress in the workplace and trying to eliminate them. Workplace stress may arise from the following:

- poor physical conditions: noise, poor ventilation, lighting or equipment
- job design: under use of skills/de-skilling, conflicting demands and inconsistent management, unclear setting of objectives, setting of unrealistic timescales.
- work relationships: bullying or other harassment, poor management communication
- work organisation and conditions: job insecurity / threat of redundancy, excessive workload, lack of participation in decision-making, rigid hierarchy, lack of transparency in procedures, lack of support, reluctance to take / not taking holidays, sick leave etc.

The above sources are some examples and are not exhaustive.

## 7. SIGNS OF STRESS

The effects of stress may be physical, psychological, behavioural or a combination. Many effects are a short-term response to pressure, which disappear once the source of pressure has been removed. If pressure continues, it can result in the individual experiencing anxiety, anger and frustration, irritability, intolerance and over-indulgence in alcohol or tobacco.

Physically, stress may manifest itself by sleep disturbance, resulting in tiredness, tenseness, nausea and dizziness, headaches, weight loss / gain and, in extreme circumstances, by chest pains, raised blood pressure and heart disease. Mentally, it may show itself by indecision, lack of concentration, memory loss, lack of judgement, loss of motivation and impairment of perception.

## 8. RESPONSIBILITIES

To help combat stress and achieve a well managed work environment; there will be preventative measure in place at all levels:

### i) Individual Level

- All staff and Board members will be made aware of the Stress Policy
- A culture of consultation, participation and open communication will be promoted
- Effective systems will be in place for staff and Board members, dealing with eg interpersonal conflict, bullying, racial and sexual harassment, through appropriate steps given in the Grievance & Dignity at Work Policy and Procedures for staff, and the Governance Code of Conduct for Board Members
- A comprehensive Health and Safety Policy and Manual will be in place
- If affected by stress, staff and Board members will be encouraged to attend stress awareness/stress management courses and/or attend confidential counselling through our partner agency, Employee Counselling Service, so they are better able to handle the pressures they may encounter.
- Staff and Board members will be reminded that they have a duty, whilst at work, to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and therefore have a responsibility to make management aware of the pressures they are encountering at work
- Staff will be encouraged to address potential work problems at an early stage by reporting pressures they are encountering by
  - i) asking for support from their Senior Manager or through the HR Team
  - ii) discussing their concerns with their Health and Safety representative
  - iii) by asking for Employee Counselling Service support, either as a workplace referral, organised through the HR Team, or direct by calling 0141 332 9833.
- Board members will be encouraged to address potential governance problems at an early stage by reporting pressures they are encountering to the Chairperson or to the Chief Executive or a suitable depute
- Staff and Board members will also be encouraged to address personal/non-work issues through any of these sources

### ii) Management Level

- Develop and implement recommendations of risk assessments within their jurisdiction
- Provide continuing support to individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to Occupational Health or Employee Counselling Service where appropriate.
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and/or procedural changes
- Ensure staff and Board members are fully trained to carry out their duties
- Encourage staff and Board members to contribute ideas and have some influence over decision-making, especially regarding their own work and provide good management support, appropriate training and development opportunities
- Monitor workloads and working hours to ensure that staff and Board members are not overloaded
- For staff who have been off with a stress related illness, review their workload, / working pattern and consider a phased return to normal working in liaison with

the HR team and occupational health. Planned support from the manager should be timetabled in until the staff member indicates their willingness for this to be withdrawn or alternative support or actions are identified.

- Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement
- Attend training as required in good management practice and health & safety
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to staff or Board member who is experiencing stress outside work, e.g. bereavement, separation etc
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress in own team and in conjunction with other senior managers and the Health & Safety Group

### iii) Human Resources

- Provide guidance to managers and the Management Board on the Stress Policy
- Help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness & absence statistics
- Advise managers and individuals on training requirements
- Provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to Occupational Health or Employee Counselling Service where appropriate.
- Support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their managers on a planned return to work.
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress, in conjunction with managers and the Health & Safety Group

## 9. MONITORING STRESS LEVELS

Stress complaints will be taken seriously, investigated and resolved. This may include reviewing the staff member's workload, identifying key support and training, or considering other employment options on a temporary or permanent basis if stress levels cannot be reduced. Key supporting policies to assist with the management of stress are the Attendance & Absence Management Policy; Grievance & Disciplinary Policy; Health & Wellbeing Policy; Cube Conditions of Service and Health and Safety Manual.

In addition to these policies, Cube will carry out a work-related stress risk assessment to the HSE Management Standards as outlined in Section 4 of this Policy. All staff and Board members will be invited to take part in the risk assessment and will have a responsibility to ensure preventative measures to control risks are adhered to. The significant findings of these risk assessments will be written down. These preventative measures will be evaluated for effectiveness on an annual basis.

## 10. PROCEDURES

The procedures for implementing this policy will be developed in consultation with the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) and will be included as an appendix in the Staff Handbook, which new employees will receive as part of their induction programme.

## 11. POLICY REVIEW

The Association's Management Board will review the Stress Policy every 3 years but reserves the right to make any additions or alterations considered necessary in the intervening period as a result of changes in legislation or best practice. The Procedures will be reviewed by management and the JCC on an annual basis to ensure their effectiveness.

**CUBE HOUSING ASSOCIATION OPERATIONAL RISK ASSESSMENT**

**STRESS POLICY  
REVIEW DATE: JANUARY 2010**

<u>Risk Category</u>	<i>Hazards</i>	<i>Risks</i>	<i>Likely frequency</i>	<i>Severity</i>	<i>Control Action</i>	<i>Tick if in place</i>	<i>Action on risk occurring</i>
<b>Professional</b>	<i>Increased levels of absence of staff or Board through workplace stress</i>	<i>Delivery of service compromised Decision-making affected</i>	<i>L</i>  <i>L</i>	<i>M</i>  <i>M</i>	<i>All Health &amp; Safety (H &amp; S) and HR Policies  Induction procedures  Occupational Health and ECS support</i>	<i>✓</i>  <i>✓</i>  <i>✓</i>	<i>Review support mechanisms</i>
<b>Financial</b>	<i>Increased costs if any claims for breach of H &amp; S legislation or costs for covering absences</i>	<i>Litigation Damage to reputation Budget overspend</i>	<i>L</i>  <i>L</i>  <i>L</i>	<i>M</i>  <i>M</i>  <i>H</i>	<i>All H &amp; S policies &amp; procedures  Budget includes provisions for sickness  Liability Insurance</i>	<i>✓</i>  <i>✓</i>  <i>✓</i>	<i>Revise policies &amp; procedures  Review support mechanisms</i>
<b>Legal</b>	<i>Breach of H &amp; S legislation</i>	<i>Costs of any action Reputation to Cube</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>Liability Insurance  Advice from EVH, solicitors, ACAS  Good practice procedures</i>	<i>✓</i>  <i>✓</i>  <i>✓</i>	<i>Take legal advice  Report to Committee</i>
<b>Technological</b>	<i>Security of sensitive personal information held on network.</i>	<i>Breach of security</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Regular review of security of network / Firewall / HR software</i>	<i>✓</i>	<i>Review procedures</i>

Risk Assessment completed by: Maureen Gimby, HR & Training Manager

Date: 14 January 2010

### Draft Equality Impact Assessment Form

<b>Policy/Procedure/ Strategy - being assessed:</b>	Stress Policy	
Department:	HR & Executive Team	
Person (s) Responsible for assessment:	Maureen Gimby	
Date of assessment:	14 January 2010	
Is this a new or existing policy?	Revision of existing policy	
1. Briefly describe the function being assessed	The framework and responsibilities for managing the risk of potential workplace stress for staff and Board members	
2. Who are the main stakeholders in relation to the function?	Internal: Staff and Board Members  External: Occupational Health Adviser	
3. Who has been consulted as part of this EIA? What types of consultation have been carried out?	Internally: Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) followed by policy review by Audit & General Purposes Committee and then Management Board, made up of tenants and specialists. Senior Managers and Health & Safety Group to be consulted on how to implement the HSE Management Standards for Work Related Stress  Externally: Occupational Health Adviser	
4. Could the function have a differential impact on <b>racial groups</b> ? Please tick	Yes✓	No
What evidence exists to support your analysis?	The policy sets out a commitment to equality of service to staff and Board members as does Cube's Equal Opportunities policy. However, failure to implement good management of the mental health of our workforce or monitor its delivery could have an impact on racial, minority or other vulnerable groups.	
5. Could the function have a differential impact due to <b>gender</b> ? Please tick	Yes✓	No
What evidence exists to support your analysis?	As above	
6. Could the function have a differential impact on <b>disabled people</b> ? Please tick	Yes✓	No
What evidence exists to support your analysis?	As above	
7. Could the function have a differential impact due to <b>age</b> ? Please tick	Yes✓	No

What evidence exists to support your analysis?	As above	
8. Could the function have a differential impact due to <b>sexuality</b> ? Please tick	Yes ✓	No
What evidence exists to support your analysis?	As above	
9. Could the function have a differential impact due to <b>religion or belief</b> ? Please tick	Yes ✓	No
What evidence exists to support your analysis?	As above	

If the answer is NO to all questions 4-9 and no differential treatment has been found, then there is no requirement for a full Equality Impact Assessment. Please go back regularly and review the cycle.

If the answer is YES to any of the questions 4-9 please continue to question 10

10. In what areas could the differential impact identified in 4-9 be considered to be an adverse impact in this function? (Please tick if yes)	Race ✓	Gender ✓	Disability ✓	Age ✓	Sexuality ✓	Religion /belief ✓
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11. What solutions will be introduced to overcome these adverse impacts?	<p>Training will be provided to all staff, management and Board members on stress and mental health. Feedback from staff and Board members will be collected on a regular basis and will be obtained from a variety of sources including survey information.</p> <p>Policies and procedures impacting on health and wellbeing will be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure compliance with current legislation and best practice is maintained.</p> <p>Complaints of workplace stress or mental ill health will be monitored and acted upon. A report on the nature of complaints made and action taken will be provided to the A &amp; GP committee, in confidence, when it meets.</p> <p>All policies/strategies will have an equalities impact assessment carried out at review to ensure the highest standards of health and safety for managing workplace stress are offered to all staff and Board members.</p>
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12. In what areas could the differential impact identified in 4-9 be considered to be a <b>positive</b> impact in this function? (please tick if yes)	Race	Gender	Disability	Age	Sexuality	Religion/belief
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13. What strategies will be introduced to safeguard and spread these positive impacts?
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14. Which Action Plans / Policies have these solutions/strategies been transferred into?	Stress Policy Health & Wellbeing Policy Equal Opportunities Policy Attendance & Absence Management Policy

**Signed off by Manager:**

**Date: 14 January 2010**

**Date to be reviewed: January 2013**