

Excellence in HRM Awards - *Best Management practice in tackling workplace stress*

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From the Trust perspective we look at three main areas:

- How work is organised
- How people are dealt with
- What demands are made on them

Fundamental Principle

The framework is based on the fundamental principle of mutuality where employees and the Trust as the employer take responsibility for stress

Alternative Methods

Through the risk assessment process identify the problem allowing individuals and line managers to look at alternative methods of working (including location) to counteract high levels of distress

The framework supports staff in a number of ways, again fostering best practice through professional and consistent management. The main benefits are...

Flexible Working

Allows for individuals to work part-time and be paid full wages for a period at the discretion of the line manager (maximum six weeks) Framework also allows for a phased return to work.

Special Leave

Allows individuals in exceptional circumstances to have up to 4 weeks full paid 'special leave' (agreed by HR and the line manager)

The Framework

- Conceived to support the 'whole person' - Deals with individuals
- Unique in the NHS
- Supported by the Trust Board and JNCC
- Designed by HR in Partnership with Staff Side
- Based on research from Employees
- Utilises the most up to date HSE/CBI Guidance and Research
- Aimed at Supporting Staff at Work through whatever circumstances they may be experiencing
- The Framework also supports and dovetails with the Personal Responsibility Framework
- Creating a Culture of Mutuality in the Trust

Objectives

- To help better support staff at work through the Framework and Workshop
- To understand the role of the manager in supporting staff utilising the management standards
- To highlight the Trusts support mechanisms - spiritual/pastoral, counselling and staff support service including First Contact Supporters
- To provide the Tools necessary to effectively support staff and manage stress in the workplace through access to training and HSE Management Standards
- To understand and simplify the Risk Assessment approach to the aforementioned
- To become an NHS employer of choice

Benefits

- No grievances about support offered to staff
- Gives consistency to all staff and managers across the Trust
- Positively supports cultural change
- Is reducing sickness absence and associated costs
- Workshops are a 'fun' and engaging experience
- 100% of individuals who have been through the framework would have taken sick leave if no provision existed
- Primary Intervention - aimed at dealing with stressors by providing individuals with more control over their work

In reality..

'In January 2004, my sister died very suddenly and unexpectedly. This flexibility and support enabled me to attend work during this very difficult time, which I personally felt I needed to do to put some structure and focus back into my life. In all honesty, without these adjustments to my role and working pattern I do not believe I would have been able to cope with coming to work for a while, both emotionally and physically.'

Anon

'Not being from a clinical background, when one of my staff became 'distressed' at work I found that the Supporting Staff Framework enabled me to identify the signs and through utilising the risk assessment process from the HSE Management Standards, I was able to tangibly and consistently look at the causes and find workable solutions for both parties. Even though the 'distress' was not solely caused by work, we were able to help the individual.'

Anon

'I benefited greatly from the Framework and support of the team last year when my husband died. I was off work for two weeks initially, and was visited at home by my manager and colleagues. I made the decision to come back to work after the two weeks, but my colleagues took over the work that was likely to create the most pressure. I was also allowed to leave at any time, which I did not need to do, and to phone in if I couldn't face coming into work - which I did on two occasions. I have also been able to continue to work from home on one day a week, which has helped considerably with my childcare arrangements, which were in chaos.'

Anon