

Stress and Mental Wellbeing at Work Policy

Introduction

This policy sets out how Avondale Construction Limited (**the Company, we, us or our**) approaches supporting the mental wellbeing of all staff and managing work-related stress to create a healthy and productive workplace.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all employees, officers, consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency workers, volunteers and interns.

Who is responsible for this policy?

All managers must:

- ensure their team members understand and follow this policy
- address concerns fairly and consistently
- consult senior management when unsure how to apply this policy.

All staff must comply with this policy and raise any concerns they may have.

Non-compliance

If you are an employee, worker or agency worker, you should raise any concerns about potential breaches of this policy with your manager. Other staff should speak to their contact in the Company. We may act under our disciplinary procedure if you are an employee and you fail to comply with this policy. In the case of workers, agency workers and contractors, if you breach this policy we may terminate your engagement.

Questions about this policy

Contact your manager if you have questions about this policy or how it applies to you.

1. About this policy

- 1.1 We are committed to protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of our staff. We recognise the importance of identifying and tackling the causes of work-related stress. We also recognise that personal stress, while unrelated to the workplace, can adversely affect the wellbeing of staff at work.
- 1.2 The purpose of this policy is to set out the measures we have in place to support the mental wellbeing of all our staff.
- 1.3 Any information you provide to us about your health will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. We recognise that such data is sensitive and will handle it in a confidential manner.

2. Legal obligations

- 2.1 We have a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that your health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised.
- 2.2 This policy takes account of our obligations under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Employment Rights Act 1996, Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Working Time Regulations 1998 and Equality Act 2010.

3. Understanding stress and mental health

- 3.1 Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or demands placed on them. Stress is not an illness but, sustained over a period, it can lead to mental and/or physical illness.
- 3.2 Mental health is a term to describe our emotional, psychological and social wellbeing; it affects how we think, feel and act and how we cope with the normal pressures of everyday life. Positive mental health is rarely an absolute state since factors inside and outside work affect mental health, meaning that we move on a spectrum that ranges from being in good to poor mental health.
- 3.3 There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. Certain levels of pressure are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enable individuals to meet their full potential and provide a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure becomes excessive it produces stress and undermines mental health.

- 3.4 Pressures outside the workplace, whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown or financial worries, can result in stress and poor mental health. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.
- 3.5 We recognise that individuals react to similar situations in different ways and that what triggers stress and poor mental health varies from person to person.

4. Our approach to mental wellbeing in the workplace

4.1 We will:

- (a) Promote a culture of open communication by providing both formal and informal channels through which staff can raise concerns.
- (b) Take account of stress and mental wellbeing when planning and allocating workloads. We will provide opportunities to discuss these through our appraisal and/or one-to-one supervision processes.
- (c) Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking and monitor holidays to ensure that staff are using their entitlement.
- (d) Ensure risk assessments include or specifically address work-related stress.
- (e) Facilitate requests for flexible working where reasonably practicable in accordance with our Flexible Working Policy.
- (f) Ensure that in any workplace reorganisation our change management processes are designed to minimise uncertainty and stress.
- (g) Implement policies and procedures to address factors that can cause or worsen stress so that we can provide a workplace free from harassment, bullying and victimisation and address inappropriate behaviour through disciplinary action.
- (h) Provide training to help all staff understand and recognise the causes of work-related stress and mental ill health, the impact of stress from factors in everyday life and the steps they can take to protect and enhance their own mental wellbeing and that of their colleagues.
- (i) Provide support services such as an employee assistance programme for staff affected by or absent by reason of stress.

5. Supporting the implementation of this policy

- 5.1 All staff - all staff should ensure that they are familiar with this policy and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. Staff should plan and organise their work to meet personal and organisational objectives and co-operate with support, advice and guidance that may be offered by managers. Anyone who experiences or is aware of a situation that may result in work-related stress or undermine mental wellbeing at work should speak to a manager.
- 5.2 Managers - all managers have a responsibility to recognise potential issues of work-related stress or mental ill health in the staff they manage. They will be given training to support them in this and should seek advice from the HR Department if they have concerns. All managers should provide support to staff by working with HR Department and through making appropriate referrals to the company approved Occupational Health provider.

They need to:

- (a) Promote a culture of open communication.
 - (b) Effectively plan and provide feedback on performance.
 - (c) Ensure that staff receive necessary training, where available.
 - (d) Monitor workloads and reallocate work where necessary.
 - (e) Ensure that staff understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and others, and act on behaviour that falls below those standards.
- 5.3 Help and information can also be obtained from company **EAP Lighthouse Charity** www.lighthousecharity.org the mental health charity, www.mind.org.uk or the Samaritans, www.samaritans.org.
- 5.4 If any member of staff is considered by their manager or colleagues to be at serious risk of self-harm, or of harming others, action must be taken straight away. The matter should be referred to their manager who will seek medical advice if that is reasonably practicable. Every effort will be made to contact any person nominated by the member of staff as an emergency contact. Where necessary the emergency services will be called. The wellbeing of the member of staff and those around them will always be our first concern.

6. Addressing work-related stress

- 6.1 If you believe you are suffering from work-related stress you should discuss this with your manager in the first instance. If you feel unable to do so you should contact the HR Department. You should also access the support services referred to in paragraph 3.
- 6.2 Once an issue affecting your health comes to the attention of your manager, supervisor or the HR Department, we will discuss with you what steps can be taken to address that issue. Those steps may include any of the following:
 - (a) A review of your current job role, responsibilities, workload and working hours. Adjustments may be agreed to these, on a temporary basis and subject to further review, where appropriate.
 - (b) Where it appears that stress has been caused by bullying or harassment, investigation under our Disciplinary and/or Grievance Procedures.
 - (c) Referral for medical advice, treatment and/or a medical report to be provided by the HR department, medical advisers or any specialist or GP who has been treating you.
 - (d) If you are on sickness absence, discussion of an appropriate return to work programme then our Sickness Absence Policy may be applied.

7. Absence due to stress or mental ill health

- 7.1 If you are absent due to work-related stress or mental ill health, you should follow the sickness absence reporting procedure contained in your contract and our Sickness Absence Policy.
- 7.2 In cases of prolonged or repeated absence it may be necessary to apply the procedure set out in our Sickness Absence Policy and Capability Procedure.

8. Confidentiality

- 8.1 Information about stress, mental health and mental wellbeing is highly sensitive. Every member of staff is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality that is required when dealing with information about stress or mental health whether they are supporting a colleague or because they are otherwise involved in the operation of a workplace policy or procedure.
- 8.2 Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action.
- 1.2 However, there are occasions when information about stress or mental wellbeing needs to be shared with third parties. For example:
 - (a) Where steps need to be taken to address work-related stress such as reallocating work within a team.
 - (b) Where medical advice is required on how to support a member of staff, address issues raised by work-related stress or address issues raised by mental ill health.
 - (c) Where allegations of harassment, bullying or other misconduct require a disciplinary investigation or proceedings to take place.
 - (d) Where a member of staff presents an immediate danger to themselves or others.

In these circumstances, wherever possible, matters will be discussed with the member of staff concerned before any action is taken.

9. Protection for those reporting stress or assisting with an investigation

- 9.1 Staff who report that they are suffering from work-related stress or mental ill health, who support a colleague in making such a report or who participate in any investigation connected with this policy in good faith will be protected from any form of intimidation or victimisation.
- 9.2 If you feel you have been subjected to any such intimidation or victimisation, you should seek support from your manager. You may also raise a complaint in accordance with our Grievance Procedure. If you are a worker, agency worker or contractor we encourage you to submit a formal written complaint.
- 9.3 If, after investigation, you are found to have provided false information in bad faith, you will be subject to action under our disciplinary procedure. In the case of workers, agency workers and contractors this may result in the termination of your engagement.