



inspiring the journey for
independence together

Stress Management Policy

Reviewed 3 yearly

Non-Statutory

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1. Policy Statement

Rivermead Inclusive Trust is committed to promoting and protecting the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of all employees. The Trust recognises that excessive or prolonged work-related stress can have significant impacts on employee health, attendance, performance, relationships and organisational effectiveness.

The Trust aims to create a positive working environment where stress risks are identified early, assessed appropriately and managed effectively through preventative and supportive approaches.

This policy establishes the Trust's arrangements for managing work-related stress in accordance with:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Equality Act 2010
- HSE Management Standards for Work-Related Stress
- Department for Education (DfE) Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) risk management guidance and associated risk management principles.

The policy applies to all employees, agency workers, volunteers and contractors working within Rivermead Inclusive Trust.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Prevent work-related stress wherever reasonably practicable.
 - Promote positive mental health and wellbeing.
 - Identify organisational and individual stress risks.
 - Ensure consistent arrangements across all Trust schools and services.
 - Provide clear roles and responsibilities.
 - Establish support mechanisms for employees experiencing stress.
 - Ensure compliance with statutory health and safety duties.
- 

3. Definition of Stress

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as:

"The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them."

Stress is not an illness but prolonged exposure to stress may contribute to physical and mental health conditions including anxiety, depression, fatigue, sleep disturbance, cardiovascular problems and musculoskeletal conditions.

4. The Trust's Approach

Rivermead Inclusive Trust adopts a proactive and preventative approach to wellbeing.

The Trust promotes wellbeing through:

- The **Trust Thirty Wellbeing Charter**.
- A dedicated staff wellbeing area on the Trust website.
- Regular wellbeing newsletters highlighting support, events and practical resources.
- Regular **Friday Thought** communications providing practical wellbeing strategies, information and support resources.
- Designated wellbeing days.
- Staff wellbeing training and twilight sessions.
- Access to external support services.
- Access to GP services and appointments through a work based scheme.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Leads operating across all schools.
- Access to counselling services.
- Access to mental health first aiders within schools and across the Trust.

These arrangements form part of the Trust's wider Health and Safety Management System.

5. HSE Management Standards Framework

The Trust uses the HSE Management Standards to identify and assess organisational stress risks.

5.1 Demands

The Trust will seek to manage:

- Workload expectations.
 - Working hours.
 - Staffing capacity.
 - Pupil complexity.
- 

- Emotional demands.
- Environmental conditions.
- Administrative burdens.

Controls include:

- Workload reviews.
- Curriculum and assessment efficiencies.
- Protected planning and leadership time.
- Staff consultation.
- Reasonable adjustments where required.
- Appraisal systems with a focus on workload management and wellbeing.

5.2 Control

The Trust will:

- Encourage employee autonomy where appropriate.
- Involve staff in decision making.
- Enable flexible approaches where operationally possible.
- Encourage professional judgement.

5.3 Support

The Trust will provide:

- Line management support.
- Peer support.
- Wellbeing resources.
- Occupational Health referrals.
- Employee Assistance Programme support.
- Wellness Action Planning.

5.4 Relationships

The Trust will:

- Promote positive professional relationships.
- Maintain clear expectations for conduct.
- Address workplace conflict promptly.
- Investigate inappropriate behaviour appropriately.

Relevant procedures include:

- Harassment and Bullying Policy.
- Grievance Procedure.
- Staff Code of Conduct.

5.5 Role



The Trust will ensure employees:

- Understand their responsibilities.
- Receive clear job descriptions.
- Understand reporting structures.
- Receive appropriate induction and supervision.

5.6 Change

The Trust will:

- Communicate organisational changes clearly.
- Consult staff appropriately.
- Assess wellbeing implications of significant changes.
- Provide support throughout periods of transition.

6. Trust-Wide Stress Risk Assessment Framework

The Trust operates a structured organisational stress risk assessment framework aligned to the HSE Management Standards.

The framework identifies and monitors risks including:

Stress Risk Area	Examples
Demands	Excessive workload, staffing shortages, competing priorities
Control	Limited influence over work methods or priorities
Support	Insufficient management support or resources
Relationships	Workplace conflict, difficult interactions
Role	Unclear expectations or conflicting responsibilities
Change	Organisational restructuring, policy changes, academy projects

Sources of evidence include:

- Staff surveys.
- Wellbeing surveys.
- Absence data.
- Occupational Health reports.
- Exit interviews.
- Staff consultation forums.
- Trade union feedback.
- Incident reports.
- Employee Assistance Programme trend data.

Findings are reviewed regularly at school and Trust level.

7. Site-Specific Stress Risk Assessments

Each school and service area must consider local circumstances and complete stress risk assessments where risks are identified.

Potential site-specific risks may include:

- High levels of pupil need.
- Behaviour management demands.
- Safeguarding workload.
- Leadership vacancies.
- Recruitment difficulties.
- Curriculum change programmes.
- Building projects.
- Inspection activity.
- Budget pressures.
- Extended travel requirements.

Headteachers and managers are responsible for ensuring local risks are assessed and managed.

8. Individual Stress Risk Assessments

Where concerns arise relating to an individual employee's wellbeing, an Individual Stress Risk Assessment will be completed.

Triggers may include:

- Stress-related absence.
- Signs of declining wellbeing.
- Occupational Health recommendations.
- Employee self-referral.
- Management concerns.
- Significant workplace changes.

The assessment will:

- Follow HSE Management Standards.
 - Identify workplace stressors.
 - Agree control measures.
 - Establish review dates.
 - Record support arrangements.
- 

Assessments will be undertaken sensitively and confidentially.

9. Wellness Action Plans

Employees may complete a Wellness Action Plan with their manager.

Plans may identify:

- Workplace triggers.
- Early warning signs.
- Helpful adjustments.
- Preferred support approaches.
- Emergency contacts.
- Return-to-work arrangements where appropriate.

Wellness Action Plans complement but do not replace risk assessments.

10. Support Available to Employees

Rivermead Inclusive Trust provides a range of support mechanisms.

Internal Support

- Line manager support.
- Headteacher support.
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Leads.
- HR support.
- Trust leadership support.
- Peer support networks.
- Wellbeing champions.

External Support

- Employee Assistance Programme (Care First / Optima).
- Occupational Health referrals via approved providers (including Spire where appropriate).
- GP services.
- NHS Talking Therapies.
- Specialist mental health services.

Absence Support

Where employees are absent due to stress, anxiety or mental health concerns:



- Weekly wellbeing contact will normally be maintained.
- Supportive welfare discussions will take place.
- Occupational Health referrals will be considered.
- Individual return-to-work plans will be developed where appropriate.

11. Mental Health and Wellbeing Leads

Each school has an identified Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead.

Responsibilities include:

- Promoting wellbeing initiatives.
- Supporting awareness campaigns.
- Sharing resources.
- Coordinating local activities.
- Signposting support.

Wellbeing Leads meet monthly as a Trust network and are supported by Trust leadership.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

Trust Board

The Trust Board will:

- Ensure appropriate governance oversight.
- Monitor staff wellbeing trends.
- Receive assurance regarding stress management arrangements.
- Ensure resources are available.

Chief Executive Officer and Executive Leaders

Will:

- Promote a positive wellbeing culture.
- Oversee Trust-wide implementation.
- Review organisational stress risks.
- Ensure compliance with this policy.

Headteachers / Heads of School

Will:



- Implement this policy locally.
- Complete and review stress risk assessments.
- Monitor staff wellbeing indicators.
- Support managers appropriately.

Line Managers

Will:

- Identify early signs of stress.
- Hold supportive wellbeing conversations.
- Complete individual stress risk assessments where necessary.
- Monitor agreed actions.
- Seek advice where appropriate.

Employees

Employees are expected to:

- Take reasonable care of their own wellbeing.
- Raise concerns promptly.
- Participate in wellbeing discussions.
- Engage with agreed support arrangements.

13. Monitoring Arrangements

Stress and wellbeing indicators will be monitored through:

- Organisational stress risk assessments.
- Staff surveys.
- Sickness absence monitoring.
- Occupational Health trends.
- Staff turnover data.
- Exit interview themes.
- Grievances and workplace concerns.
- Wellbeing Lead reports.

The Trust Health and Safety Committee and senior leadership teams will regularly review information to identify emerging risks and required actions.

14. Training

The Trust will provide appropriate training including:



- Stress awareness.
 - Mental health awareness.
 - Wellbeing leadership.
 - Managing absence.
 - HSE Management Standards risk assessment training.
 - Supportive conversations and early intervention.
-

15. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner where:

- Legislation changes.
 - HSE guidance changes.
 - DfE guidance changes.
 - Significant organisational change occurs.
 - Monitoring indicates amendments are required.
-

Appendices

Appendix A: Individual Stress Risk Assessment Template (HSE aligned)

Appendix B: Organisational Stress Risk Assessment Template

Appendix C: Wellness Action Plan Template

Appendix D: Wellbeing Support Directory

Appendix E: Stress Management Flowchart for Managers



Appendix A

Individual Stress Risk Assessment Template

CONFIDENTIAL

Employee Name
Job Role
School/Department
Manager Completing Assessment
Date of Assessment
Review Date

Reason for Assessment

- ☐ Stress-related absence
- ☐ Employee request
- ☐ Occupational Health recommendation
- ☐ Wellbeing concern identified
- ☐ Return to work
- ☐ Organisational change
- ☐ Other

Details:



Assessment Against HSE Management Standards

1. Demands

Consider:

- Workload
- Deadlines
- Emotional demands
- Work environment
- Working hours

Current Concerns:

Required Actions:

2. Control

Consider:

- Level of autonomy
- Ability to prioritise work
- Flexibility in working arrangements

Current Concerns:

Required Actions:

3. Support

Consider:

- Manager support
- Peer support
- Resources
- Training needs



Current Concerns:

Required Actions:

4. Relationships

Consider:

- Team dynamics
- Conflict
- Communication
- Unacceptable behaviour

Current Concerns:

Required Actions:

5. Role

Consider:

- Understanding of responsibilities
- Competing priorities
- Role clarity

Current Concerns:

Required Actions:

6. Change

Consider:

- Recent changes
- Future changes



- Communication arrangements

Current Concerns:

Required Actions:

Agreed Support Measures

- ☐ Wellness Action Plan
- ☐ Occupational Health Referral
- ☐ Workload Adjustment
- ☐ Temporary Duties Review
- ☐ Flexible Working Arrangement
- ☐ Additional Supervision
- ☐ Employee Assistance Programme
- ☐ Additional Training
- ☐ Other

Details:

Review Arrangements

Action	Responsible Person	Timescale

Manager Signature: _____

Employee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B

Organisational Stress Risk Assessment Template

School/Service

Date of Assessment

Assessment Team

HSE Standard	Potential Risk	Current Controls	Risk Rating R/A/G	Additional Actions	Lead	Review Date
Demands	Excessive workload	Workload reviews				
Demands	Staff shortages	Recruitment planning				
Control	Limited employee influence	Consultation forums				
Support	Inadequate manager support	Supervision arrangements				
Relationships	Workplace conflict	Behaviour policies				
Role	Unclear responsibilities	Job descriptions				
Change	Organisational change	Communication plan				

Evidence Reviewed

- ☐ Staff Survey
- ☐ Wellbeing Survey
- ☐ Absence Data
- ☐ Turnover Data

- ☐ Exit Interviews
- ☐ Occupational Health Trends
- ☐ Trade Union Feedback
- ☐ Staff Forums
- ☐ Incident Reports
- ☐ EAP Usage Data

Key Strengths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Key Risks

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Priority Actions

Action	Lead	Deadline

Appendix C

Wellness Action Plan (WAP)

Employee-led wellbeing discussion document

Employee Name	
Role	
School	
Date	

What helps me stay mentally healthy at work?

What can cause me stress or affect my wellbeing?

Early signs that I may be struggling

- ☐ Reduced concentration
- ☐ Increased anxiety
- ☐ Withdrawal from colleagues
- ☐ Increased sickness absence
- ☐ Changes in mood
- ☐ Reduced confidence
- ☐ Other

Details:

What support works best for me?

Adjustments that may help

- ☐ Regular wellbeing check-ins
- ☐ Flexible working arrangement
- ☐ Temporary workload adjustment
- ☐ Additional supervision
- ☐ Additional training
- ☐ Working environment adjustment
- ☐ Other

Details:

Support Contacts

Contact	Details
Line Manager	
HR	
Mental Health & Wellbeing Lead	
Occupational Health	
Employee Assistance Programme	

Review Arrangements

Review Date:

Employee Signature:



Manager Signature:



Appendix D

Wellbeing Support Directory

Immediate Support

Line Manager

First point of contact for wellbeing concerns and workplace adjustments.

Headteacher / Senior Leader

Available where additional support or escalation is required.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead

Available for wellbeing advice, signposting and local initiatives.

Trust Support

HR Team

Support regarding:

- Wellbeing concerns
- Attendance management
- Occupational Health referrals
- Reasonable adjustments

Trust Leadership Team

Support with organisational wellbeing initiatives and culture.

Employee Assistance Programme (Care First / Optima)

Provides:

- 24/7 confidential helpline
 - Counselling support
 - Mental health resources
 - Legal and financial advice
- 

- Online wellbeing resources

Contact details should be inserted by each school.

Occupational Health

Referral available through management where:

- Stress-related absence occurs
- Workplace adjustments may assist
- Medical advice is required

Provider: Spire (or alternative approved provider)

NHS Support

- GP Services
 - NHS Talking Therapies
 - Urgent Mental Health Support Services
 - NHS 111
-

Emergency Support

If there is an immediate risk of harm:

- Contact Emergency Services (999)
 - Present to A&E
 - Contact local Crisis Team
-



Appendix E

Stress Management Procedure Flowchart for Managers

Stage 1: Identify

Manager identifies:

- Changes in behaviour
- Increased absence
- Declining wellbeing
- Employee raises concern

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Stage 2: Initial Wellbeing Conversation

Manager meets employee and discusses:

- Current concerns
- Workplace pressures
- Available support

↓

Stage 3: Assess

Is there evidence of work-related stress?

No

Continue monitoring and provide support.

Yes

Complete Individual Stress Risk Assessment.

↓

Stage 4: Agree Actions

Consider:



- Workload adjustments
- Additional support
- Wellness Action Plan
- Occupational Health referral
- Flexible arrangements

↓

Stage 5: Implement Support

Actions put into place.

Review dates agreed.

↓

Stage 6: Monitor

Manager undertakes regular wellbeing check-ins.

Progress reviewed.

↓

Stage 7: Escalate if Required

Where concerns remain:

- Further Occupational Health advice
- HR involvement
- Additional risk assessment
- Return-to-work planning

↓

Stage 8: Review and Close

Risk reduced.

Support arrangements embedded.

Assessment closed and retained confidentially.

Appendix F

Trust Stress Management Governance Framework

Level	Responsibility
Trust Board	Strategic oversight, assurance and challenge
CEO / Executive Team	Policy implementation and monitoring
Trust Health & Safety Committee	Review organisational stress risks
Headteachers	Local implementation and monitoring
Managers	Early intervention and individual support
Wellbeing Leads	Promotion of wellbeing initiatives
Employees	Raising concerns and engaging with support

Annual Assurance Measures

The Trust will annually review:

- Staff wellbeing survey outcomes
- Stress-related absence rates
- Occupational Health themes
- Staff retention data
- EAP usage trends (where provided)
- Organisational stress risk assessments
- School-level action plans

