



**Regionally Focused – Globally Engaged**

# **Stress at Work Policy and Procedure**

**March 2021**

## History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1.1	Spelling error changed	Debbie Kerr	March 2015
1.2	No changes	Debbie Kerr	March 2017
1.3	Minor changes – review timescales and wording in section 7.8	Debbie Kerr	March 2021

## Stress at Work Policy

### 1. Introduction

Borders College recognises that as an employer it has a legal, economic and ethical responsibility with regard to the management of health and safety in the workplace under section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. This extends as much to the management of stress as to any other health and safety issue.

The College aims to create an environment where, if workplace stress does occur, it can be dealt with openly and fairly. The College will take all reasonably practicable steps as an employer to manage stress but individuals should also recognise their own responsibilities in this regard.

### 2. Scope

Stress is an inherent part of everyday life. Most daily pressures experienced can be positive, challenging and motivating. However, when these pressures start to accumulate an imbalance can develop between the demands present in our lives and the resources available to cope with these demands. If the resulting stress is excessive and continues for some time this can potentially lead to ill health.

This policy is applicable to all staff in this situation.

### 3. Key Principles

The College acknowledges that stress in the workplace can be caused by any combination of a number of quite diverse factors such as:

- The workplace environment: location, noise, ergonomics, extremes of temperature, space
- Relationships with others at work; actual or perceived discrimination, bullying and harassment
- Communications: perceived lack of information
- Organisational changes: restructuring, resources, job security
- Working arrangements: contract of employment, working hours, understanding of role

It should also be noted that domestic factors may add to the stress levels of employees and the College may offer increased support at such times.

### **4. Responsibilities**

- 4.1 The SMT is responsible for overseeing compliance with the principles of this policy.
- 4.2 The Head of HR and the Health and Safety Manager are responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- 4.3 Line Managers are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and supporting staff suffering from stress.

### **5. Related Documents**

- 5.1 Staff Handbook
- 5.2 Stress at Work Procedure

### **6. Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years or more regularly if required.

### 7. Procedure

The Health and Safety Executive estimates that millions of working days are lost each year through stress, depression, anxiety or some other work-related stress disorder. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) estimates that 100 million days are lost each year due to mental health absence. The cost of workplace stress to UK industry is reckoned to be £3.7 billion per year.

Effective management of stress can reduce absence, lessen the risk of mistakes, wrong decisions and accidents, improve quality and performance and improve workplace relations.

7.1 The College will fulfil its commitment by promoting a working environment where stress is not seen as a sign of weakness or incompetence. This should help ensure that where there are members of staff who feel they are suffering from the negative effects of stress, then they can raise the issue in confidence and the necessary support mechanisms can be put in place.

The College will manage this process by implementing and regularly reviewing stress risk assessments in line with HSE Management Standards and Guidance.

7.2 In the event of a staff member recognising the negative effects of stress in themselves or others, then he/she should make this known to one of the following persons who may be able to offer some practical support. These include:

- Senior Manager
- Health and Safety Manager
- HR Staff
- Occupational Health Services

Any of the above staff will treat an approach in complete confidence. Stress counselling sessions will be available to any members of staff suffering from stress together with paid time off to attend.

For those members of staff who do not wish to draw attention to their need for counselling, the opportunity exists for them to make their own arrangements directly with occupational health and attend a counselling session out with their normal working hours. The contact telephone number of Occupational Health is available in the Staff Handbook and on the College intranet.

7.3 Staff will be supplied with; information, coping mechanisms and health promotion activities through training events and internal advertising.

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- 7.4 Training will be made available to staff on how to recognise and deal with symptoms of negative stress in themselves and others.
- 7.5 The College will undertake to monitor the following as a means of identifying and monitoring stress:
- Levels of sickness absence
  - Staff turnover
  - Accident statistics
  - Statistics for self-referral to occupational health for stress (anonymous)
  - The number of disputes, grievances or complaints
  - Noticeable reduction in performance levels
- 7.6 Objective assessments will be made on any work conditions that are likely to cause stress. In addition, the College will take account of any individual's perceptions of stress by responding to a request for a subjective assessment. Both objective and subjective assessments will be carried out by the Health and Safety Manager and Line Manager where appropriate.
- 7.7 The Wellbeing Group will also seek opportunities to promote activities that support health, engagement and enhance the employment experience.
- 7.8 Borders College will continue to work towards maintaining the Gold Healthy Working Lives Award and holds the Mentally Healthy Workplace Award.

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