

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Personnel and Management Services Committee - 12 March 2001

REPORT ON: (A) Policy on Stress in the Workplace
(B) Policy on Alcohol and Drugs

REPORT BY: Director of Personnel and Management Services

REPORT NO: 86-2001

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To propose policies on Stress in the Workplace and Alcohol and Drugs, with a view to them being approved as official policies of the Council.

2 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- 2.1 agrees to adopt as official Council policy the proposed policies on Stress in the Workplace and Alcohol and Drugs (attached as Appendices 1 and 2) and remits the Director of Personnel and Management Services to introduce and implement these.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Providing support and assistance to employees under the proposed policies may involve time off work, counselling, medical and other specialist agency reports. However, some or all of these costs are already routinely incurred by departments of the Council and, whilst the proposed policies will be more structured and consistent in their approach, it is not anticipated that any significant additional costs will result from their introduction.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Adoption of the proposed policies will support key local Agenda 21 themes by promoting the efficient use of human resources and emphasising the prevention of illness, as well as caring for those who experience illness.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The provisions of the proposed policies will apply equally to all employees.

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Dundee City Council is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of employees by introducing and implementing appropriate policies to identify and address problems and circumstances which may have a detrimental effect on them. The Dundee City Council Plan 1999/2002 confirms the Council’s commitment to promoting a healthy culture within the organisation. There is also a declared intention to implement the Healthy Dundee Strategy which, amongst other things, aims to give people information and support in leading a healthy lifestyle.
- 6.2 Alcohol and/or drug misuse have long been recognised as problems which can result in damage to individuals health and difficulties in their employment situation.
- 6.3 More recently, the problems of stress have also been well reported and there is an onus on employers to assess the risks of stress arising from work activities and to take all reasonable and practicable steps to minimise them.
- 6.4 Irrespective of whether personal and/or employment problems result from alcohol, drugs, stress or any combinations of these, it is good practice for an employer to be alert to the possibilities and to have measures in place to deal with these and support employees appropriately.
- 6.5 The proposed policies provide a framework for tackling the potential problems of stress and drugs and alcohol in a reasonable and consistent manner.
- 6.6 The Director of Personnel and Management Services has already arranged for the services provided by the Council’s Medical Advisers to be supplemented by the services of an Occupational Health Specialist. It is also intended to provide awareness and risk assessment training for Managers and Supervisors and to monitor the operation of the policies and amend them, if necessary.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Support Services, Director of Finance and all other Chief Officers have been consulted on the proposed policies. The trade unions have also been consulted and a number of suggestions made by them have been incorporated.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.

9 SIGNATURE

J.C. Petrie
 Director of Personnel and Management Services

Date

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**POLICY ON STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE****INTRODUCTION**

The pressures and challenges faced in life and at work help to provide focus and motivation and lead to a sense of achievement and job satisfaction when tasks or goals are accomplished. A certain level of pressure is a positive force in providing people with the impetus to get on with the business of living and working.

However, people react differently to pressure and each person has a different tolerance level. Too much pressure over a prolonged period can lead to a stress reaction. Stress is negative and harmful. It reduces an individual's ability to function normally and is detrimental to their self esteem and well being. The Health and Safety Executive's guidance booklet, "Stress at Work, a Guide for Employers", defines stress as:-

"the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them. It arises when they worry that they can't cope."

POLICY STATEMENT

Dundee City Council is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of its employees by introducing and promoting policies to encourage healthier lifestyles. The Council accepts the need to identify symptoms of stress early and to respond constructively. All reasonably practicable steps will be taken to ensure that employees' health is not placed at risk through excessive pressures in the workplace. The Council also recognises that external pressures in an employee's personal life, such as debt or personal relationships, can produce stress, which may impinge upon the employment situation.

AIMS OF THE POLICY

- To provide information and education on stress awareness and promote employee health and welfare.
- To promote a supportive working environment and culture for all employees.
- To foster self awareness and the attitude that stress symptoms can affect anyone and are not indications of weakness to be concealed.
- To encourage early recognition and attention to employees who may be experiencing stress.
- To take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure that employees' health, mental or physical, is not adversely affected through stress resulting from work.
- To provide support and practical assistance for employees identified as having stress symptoms.
- To establish and maintain health and safety systems which assess the risks of stress and ensure that they are managed effectively, as far as reasonably practicable in accordance with Health and Safety legislation.
- To provide fair and consistent procedures for dealing with employees whose conduct, attendance and/or performance are adversely affected by stress.

IDENTIFICATION OF STRESS

It is important to identify stress as early as possible. Some possible signs which may, but do not necessarily, indicate the existence of stress are:-

- Increasing sickness absence particularly if frequent and short term;
- Becoming accident prone;
- Deteriorating work performance such as reductions in output and/or quality, wastage of materials and poor decision making;
- Poor relationships at work with managers, colleagues and clients;
- Worsening attitude/behaviour with loss of motivation, co-operation and commitment, erratic time-keeping, breaches of discipline, increased intake of alcohol/drugs and suspected hangovers;
- Physical symptoms, such as headaches, stomach upsets and other ailments;
- Mental effects may include nervousness, inability to concentrate and anxiety;
- Frequently working long hours without being asked and/or not taking annual leave may indicate that an employee is under pressure and not coping.

MANAGING PRESSURE

Management

Managers can help to reduce or control some of the pressures on employees by good management practice and regard for employees' welfare. They should:-

- Assess the risks of stress in each job/activity and take all reasonable steps to deal with these by putting in place safe systems of working.
- Ensure that employees are trained and competent in their jobs and know what is expected of them.
- Allocate workloads and targets that are reasonable and achievable.
- Provide supervision and support within an appropriate working environment and organisational structure.
- Be aware of stress symptoms and if an employee appears to be affected, offer appropriate advice and assistance.

Employees

Individuals can reduce or control pressures on themselves in their lives and at work. They can also take steps to increase their ability to cope with pressure. They should:-

- Where possible, organise and prioritise work, allowing sufficient time for each task.
- Give managers early warning of any work problems arising and seek help if it is needed;
- Maintain good health by sensible eating, exercise, getting sufficient sleep, reducing smoking and drinking, maintaining leisure/recreation activities;
- Seek help/advice in the event of persistent stress symptoms.

MAIN PROVISIONS FOR DEALING WITH STRESS SYMPTOMS

The policy applies to all Dundee City Council employees. Its main provisions are:-

Advice and Assistance Arrangements

- The Department of Personnel and Management Services' Personnel Officers, will provide advice, assistance and support to individual employees and managers in interpreting and applying the Council's Policy on the Avoidance of Stress in the Workplace.
- Where required, a Personnel Officer will arrange appropriate counselling or medical advice.
- In each case, a Personnel Officer will act as the main contact, co-ordinate all developments and make any other arrangements necessary.

Employees seeking help

An employee who feels under excessive pressure and suspects that they are experiencing stress symptoms and wishes to seek help or advice, has a number of options:-

- Access help privately through their own General Practitioner and/or directly to appropriate specialist counselling such as Citizens Advice, debt/money advice projects, Samaritans, etc.
- Request a private and confidential meeting with a Personnel Officer who can arrange counselling/medical advice, with the involvement of departmental management, as appropriate.
- An employee may choose to seek the support of their manager, who will arrange a meeting with a Personnel Officer.
- An employee may also seek advice or guidance from their Trade Union.

Management Initiated Action

A manager or supervisor, who believes that an employee is experiencing stress, should discuss the matter with the employee and arrange for him/her to contact or meet and obtain advice from a Personnel Officer. There are a number of ways that this can arise:-

- As a result of the manager/supervisor's personal knowledge of individual employees and observation of their general behaviour and demeanour.
- Arising from investigations into unsatisfactory conduct, performance or attendance.
- During the course of formal disciplinary/performance or absence management hearings.

Protections

- The confidentiality of any records of employees' stress conditions will be strictly preserved and any breach of confidence will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
- Employees will be granted paid time off or leave, where appropriate, for approved counselling or treatment.
- Where appropriate, advice will be sought from the Council's Medical Adviser and the employee's own general practitioner.
- It may be necessary, after assessment, to consider a temporary or permanent redefinition of the duties and responsibilities of an employee or to arrange alternative work, where this is available.

- Where a stress problem emerges as a possible factor during the course of formal disciplinary, performance or absence management hearings, the hearing may be adjourned, where appropriate, pending further investigation/assessment. When these investigations are completed, the adjourned hearing will be reconvened and the original complaint(s) against the employee dealt with, taking due account of all relevant evidence, including any on the extent to which stress may have played a part and the individual's willingness to address the issues.
- Where employees with stress conditions are being dealt with under the Council's approved procedures on Discipline and Sub Standard Work Performance or Sickness Absence Management, all rights conferred by these procedures will be maintained, including that of accompaniment by a colleague or trade union representative.

The above protections, where applicable, are subject to the following conditions:-

- The employee co-operates with counselling and/or medical advice.
- An employee who refuses to accept counselling and/or medical advice will be subject to ongoing consideration of any conduct, performance or attendance issues. This could lead to the possibility of re-deployment to a more suitable post, ill-health early retirement or termination.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Executive and Chief Officers of the Council are responsible for the effective operation of the policy across the Council as a whole and within the various departments respectively. The Director of Personnel and Management Services will provide advice and assistance to managers and monitor and review the policy, as necessary.

Managers are responsible for assessing risks, putting in place safe systems of work and looking after the welfare of employees.

Employees are responsible for their own conduct and lifestyles and should seek or accept help, where necessary. If a fellow employee is known to be experiencing stress symptoms, support and understanding should be offered, where appropriate.

EDUCATION

Dundee City Council will support the effective implementation of the policy by providing managers and employees with appropriate information, professional back-up and training.

- To assist in early recognition and response to possible signs of stress.
- To encourage a general awareness of the nature of stress and its symptoms as they affect employees in the workplace.
- To develop a positive and constructive approach to dealing with the problems of stress and its symptoms.
- To promote the benefits of a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

MONITORING/REVIEW

The policy will be monitored on an on-going basis with the services, training and referral procedures continually assessed and reviewed, as necessary.

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL**POLICY ON ALCOHOL & DRUGS****INTRODUCTION**

Many people enjoy drinking alcohol in appropriate circumstances. Nevertheless, an immediate effect of alcohol intake is to impair an individual's judgement and ability to perform tasks safely. Excessive use over a period can result in dependency and have a detrimental effect on health, family and work.

Drugs are also in common use both properly and improperly. They have all the negative potential of alcohol, and are readily available from a variety of legal and illegal sources. Prescription drugs, solvents and other substances, if misused, can be as harmful as illegal drugs, although the latter have the added complication of involving criminal acts.

POLICY STATEMENT

Dundee City Council recognises that alcohol and drug misuse (which is taken to include the improper use of solvents and other substances) are increasing problems both within the community and the workplace. Drugs and alcohol can continue to impair performance long after consumption and where these encroach upon the workplace, undermine an individual's health and wellbeing and compromise the safety of other employees and members of the public, the Council will take appropriate action.

Dundee City Council is committed to improving the health and welfare of its employees by introducing and promoting policies to encourage healthier lifestyles. The Council accepts the need to identify alcohol and drugs problems early and to respond constructively.

This policy provides a framework for dealing positively with employees whose use of alcohol or drugs has a detrimental effect on their health, safety, conduct, attendance, performance or social functioning at work.

AIMS OF THE POLICY

- To provide information and education to promote employee health and welfare.
- To encourage early recognition and intervention in alcohol/drug problems in the workplace.
- To provide support and practical assistance for those with alcohol/drug problems.
- To ensure that alcohol/drug use or misuse does not compromise the safe, efficient and productive operation of the organisation.
- To provide fair and consistent procedures for dealing with employees whose conduct, attendance and/or performance are adversely affected by alcohol/drugs.

IDENTIFICATION OF ALCOHOL/DRUG PROBLEMS

It is important to identify alcohol and drug problems as early as possible. Some possible signs which may, **but do not necessarily**, indicate alcohol or drug misuse are:-

- frequent lateness and/or repeated brief periods of self-certified absence particularly related to weekends, holidays or after pay days.
- poor performance, impaired concentration and memory.
- frequent absences for gastro-enteritis, dyspepsia, nervous debility, etc.
- accidents either on or off the job.
- smelling of alcohol or appearing to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs during working hours.
- mood changes, irritability, lethargy.
- deterioration in relationships with fellow employees, borrowing money.
- hand tremors, slurred speech, facial flushing, poor personal hygiene.
- stress related problems.

MAIN PROVISIONS FOR DEALING WITH ALCOHOL AND DRUGS PROBLEMS IN THE WORKPLACE

The policy applies to all Dundee City Council employees. Its main provisions are:-

Advice and Assistance Arrangements

- The Department of Personnel and Management Services' Personnel Officers will provide advice, assistance and support to individual employees and managers in interpreting and applying the Council's Policy on Alcohol and Drug Use.
- Where required, a Personnel Officer will arrange referral to an appropriate counselling/treatment agency and/or medical adviser.
- In each case, a Personnel Officer will act as the main contact, co-ordinate all developments and make any other arrangements necessary.

Voluntary Referral

An employee who knows, or suspects, that they may have an alcohol/drugs problem and wishes to do something about it voluntarily, has a number of options:-

- Access help privately through their own General Practitioner and/or directly to a specialist agency such as The Tayside Council on Alcohol.
- Request a private and confidential meeting with a Personnel Officer who can arrange referrals, with the involvement of departmental management, as appropriate.

- If an employee is worried that their work may already have been affected by their alcohol/ drugs problem, they may choose to seek the support of their manager, who will arrange a meeting with a Personnel Officer. ***(NB It is also recognised that prescribed drugs or medications can have possible side effects which may affect behaviour and/or performance. In such cases, it is the employee's responsibility to advise their Manager, who may ask a Personnel Officer to seek guidance from the Council's Medical Adviser.)***
- An employee may also seek advice or guidance from their Trade Union.

Management Referral

A manager or supervisor, who believes that an employee has an alcohol/drugs problem, should discuss the matter with the employee and arrange for him/her to contact or meet and obtain advice from a Personnel Officer. There are a number of ways that this can arise:-

- As a result of the manager/supervisor's personal knowledge of individual employees and observation of their general behaviour and demeanour.
- Arising from investigations into unsatisfactory conduct, performance or attendance.
- During the course of formal disciplinary, performance or absence management hearings.

Protections

- The confidentiality of any records of employees' alcohol/drug problems will be strictly preserved and any breach of confidence will be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.
- The employee will be granted paid time off or leave, where appropriate, to undergo any course of treatment prescribed. Leave of absence for a residential course of treatment will be treated as Sick Leave in accordance with the Council's Sick Pay Scheme.
- It may be necessary to adjust the duties and responsibilities of an employee, or to arrange alternative work during a course of treatment. Following treatment, the employee will normally be able to return to or resume the original job. In cases where this is deemed unsuitable, or where expert advice considers that it would be inconsistent with the long term resolution of the employee's problem, a suitable alternative will be sought.
- Where an alcohol/drug problem emerges as a possible factor during the course of formal disciplinary, performance or absence management hearings, the hearing may be adjourned, where appropriate, pending further investigation/assessment. When these investigations are completed, the adjourned hearing will be reconvened and the original complaint(s) against the employee dealt with, taking due account of all relevant evidence, including any on the extent to which alcohol/drugs may have played a part and the individual's willingness to address the issues.
- Where an employee's unsatisfactory behaviour resulting from alcohol/drug problems is being dealt with under the Council's approved procedures on Discipline and Sub Standard Work Performance or Sickness Absence Management, all rights conferred by these procedures will be maintained, including that of accompaniment by a colleague or trade union representative.

The above protections, where applicable, are subject to the following conditions:-

- The employee attends the proposed counselling/treatment programme and agrees to attendance and counselling progress reports being sent from the agency to the Council.

- The employee co-operates with counselling/treatment.
- In the event of a relapse, or in the event of continuing/further misconduct, absence or performance difficulties during or following the period of referral, the circumstances of each case will be reviewed and appropriate formal action may follow.
- An employee who refuses to accept the offer of or fails to maintain referral conditions will immediately be subject to the Council's Disciplinary, Sub Standard Performance or Absence Management Procedures in respect of any outstanding or new offences.

REMOVAL FROM THE WORKPLACE/SUSPENSION

- In the interests of safety and efficiency, a manager or supervisor has the authority to send home any employee, who is considered to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, pending an investigatory interview at the start of the next working day.
- In such cases, employees should be strongly cautioned not to drive and, where necessary, arrangements should be made for them to be transported home or collected by a friend or relative.
- As a result of the investigatory interview held at the start of the next working day it may be considered appropriate to suspend the employee on full pay on safety grounds and/or pending further investigation.
- Suspension is a neutral action and implies no judgement or censure.

EXCLUSIONS

There are a few specific circumstances where operation of the Policy would be inappropriate. In these cases, employees whose standards of conduct, work performance or safety are unacceptable, will be subject to normal disciplinary proceedings.

- Refusal to recognise an alcohol/drugs problem and rejection of any counselling/treatment offered.
- One off indulgence in alcohol/drugs where there is no evidence to confirm that a dependency problem exists.
- Possession of illegal drugs or dealing in drugs within the workplace. Such offences are subject to possible summary dismissal and the Council would also take disciplinary action, where appropriate, in respect of offences outwith the workplace.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Executive and Chief Officers of the Council are responsible for the effective operation of the Policy across the Council as a whole and within the various departments respectively. The Director of Personnel and Management Services will provide advice and assistance to departments and monitor and review the Policy, as necessary.

The Health and Safety at Work Act stresses that it is the responsibility of all employees to take care to protect themselves and others affected by their actions. Every employee should assume responsibility for their own behaviour and seek or accept help, where necessary. If it becomes known that a fellow employee has an alcohol or drugs problem, it should not be condoned or ignored, but understanding should be demonstrated and, where appropriate, positive support and encouragement offered. Where the alcohol/drugs problems of a co worker or a contractor's employee have health and safety implications, the matter should be reported to management. In addition to protecting other employees, this will assist the individual to confront the problem and accept help.

EDUCATION

Dundee City Council will support the effective implementation of the Policy by providing managers and employees with appropriate information, professional backup and training.

- To assist in early recognition and response to possible signs of alcohol/drug problems.
- To encourage a general awareness of the nature of alcohol and drug misuse as they affect employees in the workplace.
- To develop a positive and constructive approach to handling alcohol/drug problems.
- To promote the benefits of a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

MONITORING/REVIEW

The Policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis with the services, training and referral procedures continually assessed and reviewed, as necessary.