

## Sandwell Mind policy on workplace stress

Stress is a response to the perceived pressures or demands that are being placed upon an individual. It is important to recognise that moderate levels of stress can actually make us more alert and better able to respond to challenging situations effectively, but also that excessive or prolonged exposure to stress can lead to physical and mental ill health. Sandwell Mind is therefore committed to taking all reasonable steps to ensure that employees operate in a healthy working environment, and that workplace stress is minimised as far as possible.

The organisation is committed to working towards best practice in the six management standards for stress as identified by the HSE: this means looking at the demands placed on employees, the amount of control employees have over the way they do their work, the quality of support that is offered to employees, the quality of workplace relationships, the role employees have within the organisation, and the management of organisational change.

There are numerous ways in which stress can manifest itself: reduced concentration and attention span, low energy levels, diminished enthusiasm, poor decision making, shifting of responsibilities onto others, avoidance of potentially challenging situations, reduced self esteem, disrupted sleep, altered behaviour patterns, and so on.

Sandwell Mind is committed to maintaining the following organisational structures in order to reduce the potential for work related stress becoming problematic to individual employees:

- Clear line management structures and lines of accountability
- Clear job descriptions outlining individual roles and responsibilities
- Regular formal supervision giving staff the opportunity to discuss working practices, training needs and personal issues with their line manager
- The promotion of an open culture of peer support
- An induction and foundation training programme for new staff, covering the basic areas of skills and knowledge that are required to successfully undertake their role
- Further training for all staff covering core skills/knowledge in greater detail
- Written policies and systems for whistle-blowing, grievances, dealing with harassment and bullying, and a written staff code of conduct
- Counselling is available to all employees free of charge if required
- A Stress Risk Assessment form completed at least annually for all employees

For further information on signs of stress, and suggestions for managing stress, staff are referred to 'The Mind Guide to Managing Stress' and to the relevant HSE guidance, copies of which are available at Head Office.