

# The Church of St. Patrick Drumbeg

## Stress at Work Policy

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### 1. **PURPOSE**

The Church of St. Patrick is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its employees. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

Being under pressure often improves performance and can be a good thing. However, when demands and pressures become excessive this may lead to stress which can have an adverse impact on both working and personal lives and can affect anyone at any level in the business.

This policy is not contractual, but indicates the way in which the Church of St. Patrick plans to deal with the issues of stress at work.

We aim to provide a working environment where stress is not seen as a sign of weakness or incompetence, and where employees who believe they are suffering from the negative effects of stress feel able to approach their manager in confidence, in order that the necessary support mechanisms can be put in place. In addition, we aim to assist those who may be suffering from workplace or personal stress by offering confidential support.

Therefore, this policy seeks to clarify our responsibilities in relation to stress management, raise awareness of the issue and how it can be recognised and outline what support is available.

### 2. **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all employees including apprentices and those on fixed-term contracts.

### **3. DEFINITION OF STRESS**

#### **3.1 The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as:**

*"the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed on them. It arises when they worry that they cannot cope."*

In other words, stress occurs when the pressures on a person exceed their ability to deal with them.

#### **3.2 Stress can be caused by a variety of reasons including:**

- Heavy (or light) targets and workloads.
- Insufficient resources.
- Ineffective equipment or tools
- Long working hours
- Rapid change and uncertainty
- Harassment or bullying in the workplace
- Boredom
- Ill-health
- Personal, financial or legal problems.

**3.3** Symptoms might include frequent short-term absences, reduced efficiency or minor ailments (such as headaches/migraines, reduced appetite, tiredness, sleepless nights, anxiety attacks, irritability, increased smoking or drinking) to more serious issues such as heart disease, raised blood pressure, ulcers, excessive drinking and depression.

**3.4** It is important to bear in mind that stress may come under the definition of "disability". If, in individual circumstances, a medical report confirms this to be the case, as with other disabilities, we will take steps to make any reasonable adjustments which may be recommended.

### **4. EMPLOYERS RESPONSIBILITIES**

**4.1** Legislation requires that the Employer takes reasonable steps to look after our employees' mental health and welfare. This means that we need to ensure that they do not have excessive demands placed on them by their jobs. As stress may also be caused by bullying, harassment and violence, we aim to provide a working environment that is, as far as is reasonably practicable, free from these influences. However, we are entitled to assume that all employees can cope with the normal day-to-day pressures of their job: if this is not the case, they have a duty to inform us.

#### **4.2 In applying this policy we recognise our responsibilities by:**

- Placing a high importance on the health, safety and welfare of all employees in the conduct of our business.
- Accepting the legal and moral obligation to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace.
- Providing a commitment to support employees who require help for stress-related problems.

- Providing information to employees about the harmful effects of stress to promote preventative action
- Requiring our managers to be ambassadors of this policy and ensuring they set an example themselves in sensible working practices and consider how to get the best out of their teams without affecting their health.

## **5. PROCEDURE**

- a.** Any employee who believes they are suffering from the negative effects of stress, rather than worrying about it, are encouraged firstly to speak to their Line Manager.
- b.** If the employee does not feel able to talk to their Line Manager then they should speak with the Health and Safety Committee.
- c.** If necessary, the Church of St. Patrick will carry out a stress risk assessment. This will include a review of the employee's actual duties against those described in their job description.
- d.** Alternatively during any performance reviews analysis will be undertaken to ensure that employees are competent to fulfil their roles. Appropriate action will be taken to remedy any gaps in their knowledge, skills or experience which may lead to stress, and to ensure they feel confident to undertake their roles to the best of their ability.
- e.** The risk assessment will identify pressures at work that could cause high and long-lasting levels of stress, identifying who could be affected by these pressures and taking appropriate steps to deal with them, such as lessening workload or transferring to other duties where appropriate. The results of the risk assessment will be communicated to those involved.
- f.** The possibility of changing working conditions or making changes to reduce stress on the employee will be discussed, whilst recognising the needs of the employee, their work colleagues and the business.
- g.** All employees should support their colleagues if they believe they are experiencing work-related stress, and should encourage them to talk to someone about it.
- h.** In all cases, if the Church of St. Patrick is aware that an employee is suffering from stress, it will take such steps as are appropriate, firstly to try to manage the situation. This may include reviewing workloads, providing assistance, training or improved equipment, or transferring to other duties, on a temporary or permanent basis, as appropriate.
- i.** The Church of St. Patrick may request the employee to sign a consent form to enable them to write to their GP for a professional medical report.
- j.** The Church of St. Patrick will put in place an occupational provider to provide counselling where appropriate.
- k.** Employees are encouraged to make the Church of St. Patrick aware of any serious problems that are non-work related that can also impact on their attendance and work performance. This can then be taken into account when assessing performance.

- l.** Managers should assess the workload and responsibilities of those returning to work after experiencing work-related stress to help or prevent injury to health.
- m.** Employees taking medication to control their condition are required to inform the Church of St. Patrick so that these details can be kept on file and made available to any medical or first aiders that may be involved in a medical emergency or accident.
- n.** Only as a final stage, and where no alternative action is appropriate, the Church of St. Patrick may consider terminating employment on the grounds of ill health after going through a full investigation process.

**6. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS**

- We also have the following related policies and documents: Health and Safety Policy, Loan Workers Policy and Drugs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse Policy which are kept in the [Rectors Office](#) and the employee may review these with their manager upon request.

The above list is not exhaustive and other held Policies may be applicable.

**7.0. WHERE TO FIND FURTHER INFORMATION**

If you require further information on this policy or the interpretation or operation of this policy, please speak with your [Line Manager](#) in the first instance.

**8.0. Implementation, Monitoring and Review of this Policy**

This policy will take effect from **13<sup>th</sup> June 2017**.

The [Rector and Health and Safety Officer](#) has overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, which will be reviewed on a regular basis following its implementation (**at least annually**) and additionally whenever there are relevant changes in legislation or to our working practices.

Employees will be consulted about any proposed changes, and adequate notice given of these.

Any queries or comments about this policy should be addressed to The [Rector or Health and Safety Officer](#).

**POLICY REVIEW DATES**

<b>9<sup>th</sup> February 2018</b>			