



Stress Toolkit

Manage stress levels in your workplace, today.

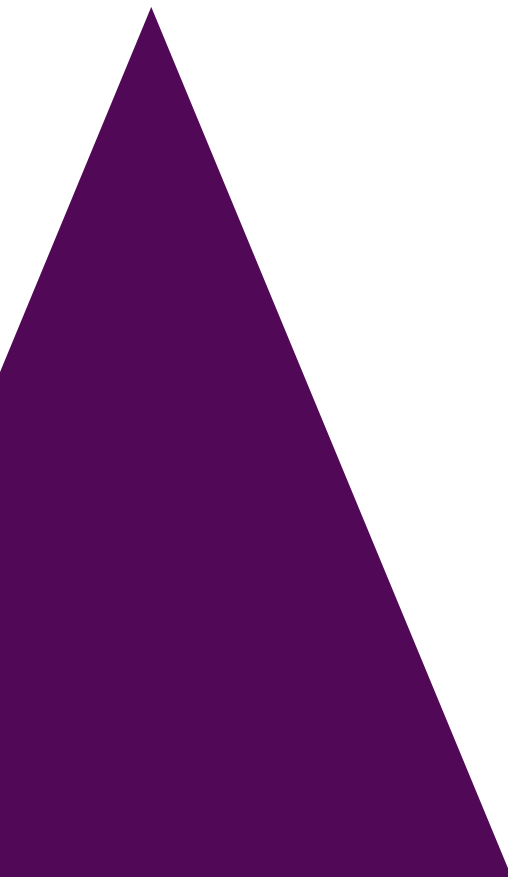
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Stress Toolkit

Some stress at work is unavoidable. But if it gets too much, it can have a massive impact on wellbeing, productivity, and can even lead to more serious mental health conditions.

Below are a few resources to help you manage and reduce stress in your workplace. Firstly, we provide guidance on how to conduct a stress risk assessment in your workplace. Next, we have a sample mental health policy—a document all workplaces should have. And finally, an infographic on how to spot signs of stress, and tackle current stress levels in your workplace.





Do I Have to Carry Out a Stress Risk Assessment?

The HSE states that over 11 million days are lost a year because of stress, with stress making up around 37% of all work-related ill-health cases.

Some of the main factors contributing to workload pressure include:

- Lack of managerial support
- Tight deadlines
- Too many responsibilities
- Role uncertainty
- Workplace violence

Almost all of the above factors of stress in the workplace can be identified, and consequently prevented, by carrying out a risk assessment.

Do we have to carry out a stress risk assessment?

Yes, employers are required to manage stress at work in the same way as other health & safety risks, and the first step is a risk assessment.

This will identify the nature and extent of the risk and employers are required to put in place preventative strategies to address those risks in a reasonable, practicable way. It could be that there is little or no risk of workplace stress, but you need to check regularly.

General indicators include: levels of sickness absence, patterns of absence, long-term absences, colleague relationships, and employee feedback.

What is the best way to carry out a risk assessment?

There is no single method of risk assessment. You may decide to issue employees, or representatives from each category of employee, with a questionnaire. The questions will relate to the individual's role, their workload, resources, and how their work is arranged in terms of targets and deadlines.

The questionnaire can also seek views on the working environment and facilities, relationships, support arrangements, and on the perception of the employer's general attitude to health & safety matters.

Another method is to set up a focus group to discuss these issues confidentially. As with all risk assessments, the significant findings need to be recorded (in writing if there are more than 5 employees) and monitored and reviewed as necessary. See more information on HSE's Stress site: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/>

Expert Support

If you need support with managing employee stress in the workplace, or any other H&S issue, contact an expert on **0800 015 4937**.



Sample Mental Health Policy

It is the policy of [name of organisation] to provide initial and ongoing support and help for employees who are/may be suffering with mental health problems.

For the purposes of this policy, a mental health problem refers to mental health conditions that have been diagnosed by a medical professional and classified as a disability, such as depression or PTSD.

The purpose of this policy is to assist with creating an open and honest workplace where line managers and employees can discuss mental health problems, and to ensure the necessary support is known and offered to employees when needed.

Legal obligations

The company understands the protection employees with a disability have against discrimination under the Equality Act 2010, including the obligation for employers to introduce reasonable adjustments for disabled employees.

Recruitment

Unless it is related to the specific requirements of the job, the company will not ask applicants at any stage of the recruitment process for information regarding any previous health issues, in order to ensure potential employees are not discriminated against because of their mental health history.

Indicators

In many cases, obvious indications that an employee is suffering from a mental health problem may not be present, however, early signs can include behavioural, mood or temperament changes.

Line manager responsibilities

Wherever a manager perceives mental health to be a potential problem for a member of staff — commonly during or as a follow-up to a period of sickness — that manager should talk to the member of staff to discuss what additional support can be offered.

Employee responsibilities

The employee may be aware of additional support that could assist them in their role. The company actively encourages employees to be open and honest about their mental health and to inform their line manager of any issues at an early opportunity to allow these to be addressed.

Action planning

Where a line manager identifies a mental health issue, they should work alongside the employee to create a personal wellness action plan that provides for proactive management of their mental health. Amongst other things, a wellness action plan should cover actions and measures that can support the employee's mental health.

Making workplace adjustments

The company is legally obliged to make reasonable adjustments to an employee's role or workplace if they have a disability that places them at a disadvantage when performing their role. Examples of adjustments for mental health include adjusting hours of work or reallocating duties.

Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Managing absence and return to work

Where the employee is absent by reason of their mental health concerns, their line manager will communicate with the employee on a regular basis during their absence. The Company's sickness absence policy will apply to the employee's absence as normal, subject to any reasonable adjustments in place for the employee.

Upon the employee's return from absence, a return to work plan will be discussed and agreed between the line manager and the employee to ensure necessary steps can be taken to support the employee to remain in work.

Confidentiality

Information concerning an employee's mental health is classed as a special category of personal data. This information will only be disclosed to others in line with the company's policies on data protection.

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TOP TIPS:

TACKLING STRESS IN

THE WORKPLACE

Signs to watch out for:



Personality changes



Poor work performance



Increased sickness absence



Short-temper



Becoming withdrawn

Employees should be encouraged to approach their managers if they feel something is affecting their ability to do their job well.

How to tackle this:

01 Speak to the employee

Tell them that you've noticed they've been acting differently and discuss why this could be.

02 Change their working conditions

Could alterations be made to their working day? Maybe they could work flexible working hours or work could be reorganised to take the pressure off them.

03 Refer them to an EAP

If your company makes use of an Employee Assistance Programme, inform the employee that they can speak to the EAP to gain further support.

04 Consider if an occupational health report or medical advice is necessary

This can make recommendations which can further help the employee at work.

05 Regularly review the situation

Whatever action you take, continue to monitor the employee to see if they are not feeling as stressed or if further action should be taken.



06 Be understanding and non-judgemental throughout

There could be a number of reasons why your employee is feeling stressed and providing a supportive atmosphere can be crucial to helping them.

Let's talk

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