

Work Related Stress Risk Assessment Manual

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Cross-Referenced in Primary Document: MPD370

Work Related Stress Risk Assessment Manual**1. Introduction**

Pressure is part and parcel of all work and helps to keep us motivated. But excessive pressure can lead to stress, which undermines performance, is costly to employers and can make people ill.

The HSE defines stress as:

“the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”.

Work Related Stress has a huge impact upon the UK economy, specifically:

- A third of all new incidences of work related ill health.
- Each case lead to an average of 23 working days lost in 2014/15.
- A total of 9.9 million working days were lost to stress, depression and anxiety in 2014/15.

Employers also have legal requirements to manage work-related stress:

- Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations to assess the risk of stress related ill health.
- Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act to take measures to control that risk.

Stress in the same way as a physical risk need to be assessed and controlled.

2. Health effects of Stress

Work Related Stress is not an illness but it can contribute to ill health as shown in the table below:

Signs and Symptoms of Stress	
Intellectual Symptoms: How stress can affect the mind?	Emotional Symptoms: How stress can make you feel
Memory problems Difficulty making decision Inability to concentrate Confusion Seeing only the negative Repetitive or racing thoughts Poor Judgement Loss of objectivity	Moody and hypersensitive Restlessness and anxiety Depression Anger and resentment Easily irritated and “on edge” Sense of being overwhelmed Lack of confidence Apathy
Physical Symptoms: How stress can affect the body	Behavioural Symptoms: How stress can make you behave
Headaches Digestive problems Muscle tension and pain Sleep disturbances Fatigue Chest pain, irregular hearth beat High blood pressure Weight gain or loss Asthma or shortness of breath Skin problems Decreased sex drive	Eating more or less Sleeping too much or too little Isolating yourself from others Neglecting your responsibilities Increasing alcohol and drug use Nervous habits Teeth grinding Losing your temper Overreacting to unexpected problems

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3. The HSE Management Standards

The HSE Management standards are designed to:

- Help simplify the risk assessment process for stress
- Encourage partnership working to ensure staff are involved in the process
- Provide a benchmark for organisation to determine their performance in stress management

The Management standards define the characteristics or culture of an organisation where stress is being managed effectively. Using the standards as a benchmark, it is possible to identify where we as an organisation are and what we need to develop to achieve compliance.

The six management standards are:

Demand

*'Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs.
Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns'*

In order to achieve this standard, organisations need to provide employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work. This requires managers to monitor the workload given to staff and by means of KSF performance reviews ensure that the workload is not unreasonable.

The skills and abilities of staff also need to match the demands of the job they undertake. This again can be determined through the performance review process but also by good management practices including providing staff with learning opportunities when engaging in new processes.

Jobs need to be designed within the capabilities of employees and a good knowledge and use of the capability policy will assist managers in this process.

Control

*'Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work.
Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.'*

This standard can be difficult to achieve, particularly in a process driven environment, however, managers should encourage staff to participate in the planning and organisation of a work activity.

Staff should have some control over the pace of work and be encouraged to use their skills and initiative to achieve a good standard of work.

Learning and development plays a large role in achieving this standard as a healthy working environment should offer staff opportunities to learn and develop skills.

Consultation and a team ethic are vital components in giving staff the involvement that this standard seeks.

Support

*'Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors.
Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.'*

Organisations must have systems in place that provide a support mechanism to staff to proactively manage stress and to deal with cases where potential stressors have been realised.

Policies acting in this regard include:

- Capability policy
- Disciplinary
- Code of Conduct
- Equal Opportunities Code of Practice
- Grievance
- Harassment
- Time Off Work Policy

It's important that organisations and specifically departmental managers ensure that staff are aware of relevant policies so that they can access support when required.

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Managers also need to develop a culture where staff receive regular and constructive feedback allowing consistent and ongoing support.

Relationships

'Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, eg. bullying at work. Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.'

It is a minimum legal requirement that organisations have systems for dealing with relationship breakdowns at work. However, the relationship standard requires organisations to promote behaviours that avoid conflict and ensure fairness.

Team working and good communication at a local level can help achieve this standard.

Role

'Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities. Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.'

Staff need to have a clear understanding of their role within the organisation. Job descriptions and KSF outlines should explain clearly the elements of the work expected. Where a change of duties takes place, adequate consultation and retraining should take place.

Change

'Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change. Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.'

Change is a necessary part of organisational performance and can sometimes be challenging for staff and employees to deal with. The standard requires that organisations provide employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reason for the change. Consultation should take place with an opportunity for employees to influence proposals. As soon as possible, employees should be informed of any specific changes to their role together with a timetable of change.

Support mechanisms such as the employee assistance program, additional training and counselling should be provided to limit the potential stressors experienced by staff.

4. Risk Assessment Technique

The process of using the HSE Management Standards is shown on Fig.1.

It is mandatory that for anyone undertaking such risk assessments, they must be competent. NHSBT requires that any such risk assessment is carried out by someone who has successfully completed the Risk Assessment course and also the Work Related Stress Risk Assessment Course.

As part of this training, a partnership approach is encouraged.

As the risk assessments are based upon job roles within the organisation, it is important that the risk assessor checks with their directorate H & S co-ordinator to ensure that duplication is not experienced.

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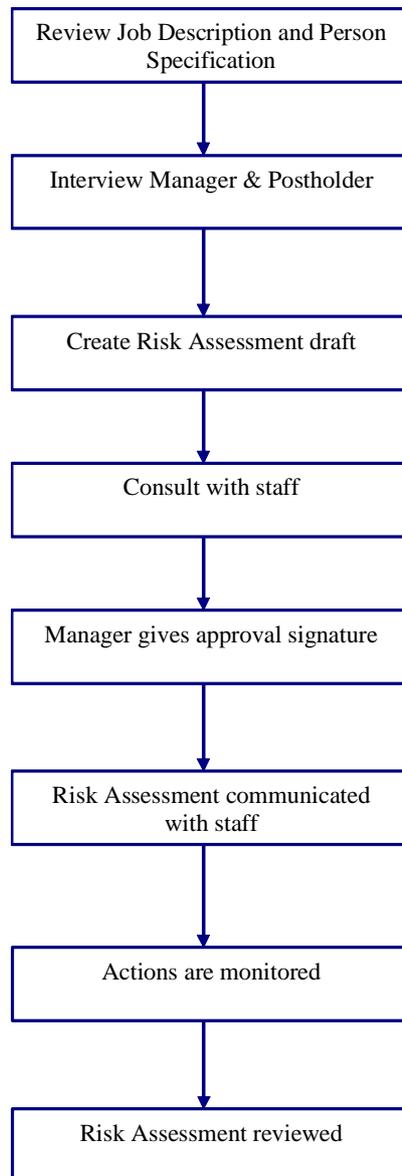


Fig 1 – Process flow for development of work related stress risk assessment

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Step 1 – Review Job Description and Person Specification

Using the relevant job description and person specification, a study must be undertaken to identify any potential stressors that are considered within the management standards. This exercise is best carried out within a group.

A risk assessment template is issued as part of the training that enables this process. Risk Assessors must then build upon this detail with the specifics of the role considered.

Step 2 – Interview the Postholder

Interviewing the post holder assists the process by providing additional information of the potential stressors within a position.

The interview must be structured and carried out in a positive manner. A stress risk assessor is given training in how to achieve this together with a template of suggested questions.

Step 3 - Create Draft Risk Assessment

This is the first stage in documenting the findings of the risk assessment process.

The Stress Risk Assessment form must be used and follows similar steps to general risk assessments:

- Look for the hazards
- Decide who might be harmed
- Evaluate the risk
- Record the findings
- Review

As part of the training course for stress risk assessment, control measures are discussed. Suggested examples include:

Demand

Time management training
Opportunities to discuss priorities with manager
Team meetings
Specific role related training

Control

- Setting up effective communications
- Team meetings
- Personal Development Reviews

Support

- Appropriate recruitment and selection
- Required training needs are addressed
- Regular feedback on performance
- Employee Assistance program

Relationships

- Interpersonal skills training
- Appropriate procedures with regards interpersonal conflict, bullying or harassment
- Assertiveness training
- Regular support meetings with manager

Role

- Job description/Person specification agreed
- Performance reviews
- Opportunities for feedback and discussion

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- Specific training

Change

- Adequate information
- Training
- Employee Assistance Program

Once the risk assessment is drafted, consultation begins.

Step 4 - Consult with staff

Consultation gives staff an opportunity to comment upon the findings of the stress risk assessment. It is a legal obligation to share this information and forms a useful stage in ensuring that all stressors have been considered. Risk assessors should check their directorate consultation process before issuing the draft risk assessment.

Step 5 - Manager gives approval signature

The draft document should be presented to the manager who will then approve the document. Should a manager not agree with the findings, contact should be made with the relevant Health and Safety Advisor.

Step 6 - Risk Assessment communicated with Staff

Once agreed, managers and staff need to be issued with the document. Managers must complete any actions immediately and communicate the document with staff.

Step 7 - Actions are monitored

Some actions may take time to implement such as training or performance reviews. Managers must continuously check progress and are encouraged to share this information with staff.

Step 8 - Risk Assessment reviewed

Should there be any change to the job or the individual, a process of review must take place. This follows the same process as with general risk assessment. If there are no changes, the risk assessment should be reviewed on an annual basis as part of the performance development review process.

5. The Role of Occupational Health

As stated previously, the initial role of carrying out a work related stress risk assessment excludes any personal factors that may be affecting an individual. Occupational Health professionals are the body within the organisation competent to consider such factors. Therefore, should an individual show signs of stress, they must be immediately referred to Occupational Health. The Occupational Health (OH) Advisor will review the individual against the work related stress risk assessment created for their post, and consider in an outcome summary report whether the stress is work related. The outcome summary report must then be reviewed by a case conference involving the OH Advisor, H&S Advisor, HR Advisor and Line Manager. This case conference can be done via telephone conference. If decided work related stress is an issue, then the line manager must raise a bespoke referral for a work-based counsellor to provide a specific risk assessment for the individual. Occupational Health may suggest changes to a job role or individual measures in order to reduce the health effects to an individual. They may also recommend that counselling is provided for the individual on a short term intervention basis. This can be provided by management referral to the Employee Assistance Programme with the individual's consent. See MPD 788 for Occupational Health process.

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The Role of the Employee Assistance Program

Staff and managers can access the employee assistance program in order to gain professional advice on life's problems.

Access can be gained online, over the telephone and if necessary through face to face counselling.

Specific issues that can be supported include:

- Legal
- Financial
- Health
- Emotional
- Debt
- Childcare
- Education
- Change
- Pensions
- Relationships
- Family
- Work Stress
- Bereavement
- Eldercare
- Careers
- Housing
- Mortgages

As part of the risk assessment process, managers should ensure that staff are aware of this confidential service and actively promote its use.