



HAZARDS CAMPAIGN



Challenging mental health harm at work – Tackling work related stress

A practical session looking at what employers should be doing, what their legal duty means and what reps can do

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WHEN A FLOWER DOESN'T
BLOOM, YOU FIX THE ENVIRONMENT
IN WHICH IT GROWS,
NOT THE FLOWER.

- ALEXANDER DEN HEIJER

Duty to control the risks to mental as well as physical health

- Mental Health Risks



"The Covid 19 pandemic will leave a deep and lasting scar on the mental health of millions in this country. Prioritising mental health has never been more critical than it is now" MIND, 2020: The Mental Health Emergency.

- Physical Health Risks



Stress can cause serious long term effects on both physical and mental health and can cause depression. It can contribute to problems with the heart and circulation, digestion, the immune system and mental health.



What are the causes of work-related psychological harm?

What are the effects of stress?

- Mental health problem - depression, anxiety- butterflies in stomach, sweating, pounding heart, tearfulness, mood swings, paranoia, anger, loss of concentration, irritability, lack of interest in people and work
- Cardiovascular disease - heart disease, high blood pressure, abnormal heart rhythms, heart attacks, stroke
- Eating disorders - loss of appetite, comfort eating, weight gain or loss, indigestion
- Muscle cramps, back pain
- Headaches, fatigue, sickness absence, nausea, breathlessness, fainting,
- Menstrual problems
- Sexual dysfunction
- Skin and hair problems - eczema
- Gastrointestinal problems

What can we do about it? - we need to regard everyone as at risk and not wait for a crisis when it could be too late

A more preventative, collective, focussed approach to tackle the causes of work stress, and work-related mental health harm with better support and help systems and sufficient time off to recover for those already ill

PSP approach to mental health

Preventing

- Preventing work related stress and mental ill health

Supporting

- Supporting individuals with mental ill health

Positive

- Establish a positive mental health work environment

1. A strategy to prevent work related, stress and mental ill health - collective response

- **Carry out key training and identify individuals to sit on Stress Steering Group**
 - Key stakeholders including trade union reps
 - All to be trained in management standards approach
 - All to be trained in mental health awareness
- **Set up a Stress Steering Group and set out plan to conduct management stress assessments**
- **Gather information**, analyse results, prioritise areas and allocate responsibilities,
- **evaluate the main causes of harm** using stress standards decide who might be harmed and how,
- **Decide how the risks will be eliminated / reduced,**
- **Record all actions** and ensure completed, **periodically reviewed**

Management Stress Standards

Do activity using
management standards
indicator tool

They cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health, lower productivity and increased accident and sickness absence rates. The Management Standards are:

Demands - this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment

Control - how much say the person has in the way they do their work

Support - this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues

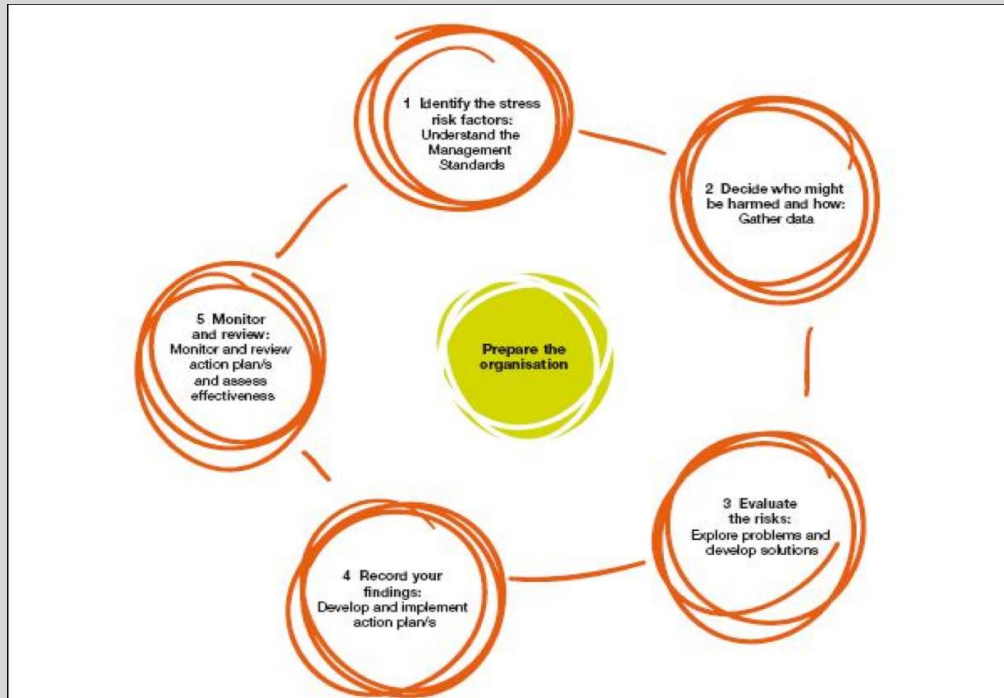
Relationships - this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

Role - whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles

Change - how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wbk01.pdf>

The Risk Assessment



- Evaluate the risk and using a control hierarchy approach put in place controls

Number	Stress factor	Hazards	People at Risk	Existing Control Measures	Risk Rating	Further Action
<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1 contd</p>	Demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Concerns about the amount, difficulty and pace of the workload, eg the number of different tasks, the complexity and intensity of the workload including emotional demands, deadlines and targets <li>■ Roles and responsibilities are not clearly specified within the job, eg up to date job description <li>■ Staff have none or little control over the way they do their job, eg working to tight deadlines/targets <li>■ Concern at demands of working with others <li>■ Concern over working patterns including long 				<p>Institutional policies and procedures, eg violence at work and lone working policies and procedures.</p> <p>Analysis of workload and tasks for particular jobs leading to a workload agreement. The redistribution of workload/tasks.</p> <p>Analysis of working patterns – eg cuts in working hours, re allocation of tasks, an agreement on multi site and off site working including travelling time.</p> <p>Clear job descriptions</p> <p>Adequate resources and support to carry out the job.</p> <p>Participation in decision making processes</p> <p>Work life balance initiatives, eg flexible working patterns</p> <p>Safe working practices document</p>

2. Support individuals with mental ill health at work



**Reasonable
adjustments
disability
passports**

- Use a disability / reasonable adjustment passport (individual)
- No pressure periodic reviews supported by trade union reps
- Mental health first aiders etc
- All stress related incidents reported in accident book, investigated and RA updated if necessary
- Signposting to other services where necessary

3. Establish a positive mental health work environment

- Mental health awareness training - managers
- Encourage open conversations without reprisals
- Ensure victimisation/inappropriate behaviour on mental illness stop
- Ensure management stress standards risk assessments are discussed and implemented
- Management training in effective and supportive people management
- Improve communications

In summary

Managers

- Provide a safe supportive environment to disclose about work related stress / mental ill health
- Be trained on the issues and support/reasonable adjustments needed
- Be aware of the additional pressures and concerns on individuals during the pandemic - training, workload reviews, flexible working, zero tolerance on abuse/violence/bullying/sexual harassment/discrimination etc
- Set up Stress Steering Group and conduct Management Stress Standards/RA
- Communicate with staff

Members

- Know that there will be no recriminations by reaching out for support
- Inform management if experiencing any symptoms of work-related stress and / or mental ill health
- Discuss with health and safety/trade union representative about any issues causing stress and ask them to take it up as a collective issue.

Reps

- Conduct a virtual/actual inspection on the stress by speaking to all reps and managers and inviting members to participate
- Report to management and inform members
- Request a stress steering group is set up to conduct Management Stress standards/RA with full involvement of safety reps
- Ensure management have carried out Stress Risk Assessments - review if necessary
- You may need to conduct a survey to identify areas where stress is prevalent and map the workplace by departments, including sickness and absence, grievances, bullying, workload, incidents, injuries, Covid-19 illness and positive test results
- Contact all your members to inform them what you are doing on the issue and invite them to speak to you about any work-related stress issues.
- Hold virtual meetings with members on the issue

Links:

- www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm
- www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns
- www.hazards.org/diyresearch/getmapping.htm
- <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus-mental-health>
- <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus-mental-health/supporting-staff-mental-health>
- <https://www.acas.org.uk/mental-health-resources>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>
- <https://gmhazards.org.uk/index.php/fact-sheets/>
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