Employee Stress Risk Assessment Guidance

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The following employee stress risk assessment can be used when considering an employee who is displaying possible symptoms of stress, or returning from sickness absence relating to stress

The Outline Employee Stress Risk Assessment is broken down into the 6 HSE (Health and Safety Executive) Management Standards and includes examples of cause and possible intervention. The assessment is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive, but it should be used as a guide to assist those conducting the assessment in looking at the possible causes of stress and remedies.

Who Should Conduct the Stress Risk Assessment?

In most instances the Line Manager is in the best position to undertake the assessment. This is because they have the ability to alter or control a number of the factors which may be causing stress (work load, target dates, etc.).

However, there may be occasions when it is inappropriate for the Line Manager to undertake the assessment, such situations would include:

* Current dispute between the Manager and the employee
* At the request of the employee
* Where Senior Managers consider assessment by the Line Manager inadvisable.

In this case consideration should be given to another Manager in the same work area or the Senior Manager to the Line Manager undertaking the stress assessment.

In complex cases advice should be sought from your HR Adviser as soon as possible.

How to Conduct an Individual Stress Risk Assessment

Where possible, the person conducting the stress assessment should:

* Put the employee at ease by explaining the purpose of the assessment.
* Explain to the employee what stress is:
1. Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or demands placed on them. Stress is not an illness but, sustained over a period of time, it can lead to mental and/or physical illness.
2. There is an important distinction between working under pressure and experiencing stress. Certain levels of pressure and challenge are acceptable and normal in every job. They can improve performance, enabling employees to meet their full potential and realise a sense of achievement and job satisfaction. However, when pressure becomes excessive it results in stress.
3. Pressures outside the workplace, whether the result of unexpected or traumatic events such as accidents, illness, bereavement, family breakdown or financial worries, can result in stress. They can also compound normal workplace pressures.
4. The School recognise that the capacity to deal with stress varies from person to person. Employees react to similar situations in different ways.
5. The School has a legal duty to take reasonable care to ensure that your health is not put at risk by excessive pressures or demands arising from the way work is organised.
* Conduct the interview in a confidential manner, excluding others from hearing and avoiding interruption.
* Seek to achieve a relaxed, informal environment where the employee does not feel threatened.
* Ask 'lead questions' to establish where concerns exist; if no problems are indicated within a particular area then move on to the next. Where concerns are raised then follow-up with more detailed questions to identify the cause(s) of the employee's stress. Typical 'lead questions’ are provided in the Outline Employee Stress Risk Assessment together with possible causal factors and intervention techniques.
* Do not use the Outline Employee Stress Risk Assessment as a questionnaire i.e. going through each question, but use it intuitively; listen to the reply and form your questions in an open format. This allows the employee to express their feelings and discourages yes/no replies.
* Discussing stressing factors can be emotive so Managers should introduce rest breaks within the assessment if necessary.
* Where possible suggest and agree adjustments. Those adjustments may include any of the following:
1. A workload review, reallocation of work, monitoring of future workload or possible redeployment.
2. Investigation under the School’s Disciplinary and/or Grievance Procedures. This would be appropriate where the Manager had a concern about a colleague's conduct or an employee was raising a concern that was appropriate to consider as a grievance.
3. Referral for medical advice, treatment and/or a medical report to be provided by your Occupational Health provider.
4. If the employee is on sickness absence, discussion of an appropriate return to work programme.
* The agreement of adjustments can also be done at a later stage, if detail needs to be checked or other people's co-operation needs to be sought. Whilst possible interventions are included within the outline assessment, others may present themselves depending on the situation met and the employee concerned.
* At the end of the assessment a summary sheet should be drafted. The sheet should record all of the identified key stressors and the appropriate interventions. This document then forms an individual action plan that should be agreed with the employee.

Taking Action on the Findings of the Stress Risk Assessment

Where specific stressors are identified corrective action must be taken to address them. The action plan should be implemented within agreed time-scales and the plan reviewed on a regular basis with the employee to ensure it remains valid.

Outline Employee Stress Risk Assessment

1. Demands:

This includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.

The HSE standard is:

* 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

Question

* 1. Do you find the quantity and level of work expected from you acceptable?

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| --- | --- |
| Cause | Possible intervention |
| Excessive demands | Tasks have to be adequate and achievable in relation to the agreed hours of work |
| Targets to meet | Review targets, agree realistic goals and time scales |
| Conflicting demands | Balance and review the work load |
| Limited demands | Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employeesReview level of responsibility |
| Monotony of work | Review job design |
| Repetitive nature of work | Review job weighting and workload, consider giving more complex work |
| Long hours | Employees encouraged to work within their contractual hours, to take their meal breaks & flexi/annual leaveManagers should set a good personal example – take breaks, etc.Ensure that there are sufficient resources to do the work |

Question

* 1. Is the physical environment in which you work satisfactory (lighting, temperature, etc.)?

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| Cause | Possible intervention |
| Physical environment such as excessive noise, inadequate light, etc. | Employee’s concerns about their work environment are addressed |

Question

* 1. Do you experience any form of physical or verbal abuse or violence whilst at work?

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| Cause | Possible intervention |
| Psychosocial environment such as workplace violence and verbal abuse | Open communication so Managers know what the issues areWorkers training to deal with situationsOffer support such as Employee Assistance Programme, if the School has access to this Review the situation regularly |

1. Control:

How much say the employee has in the way they do their work.

The HSE standard is that:

* 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.

Question

* 1. Do you feel that you have some say as to how you work and about how much work you are able to do?

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| Cause | Possible intervention |
| Targets forced on workers | Where possible, employee should have control over the pace of their work |
| Excluded from decisions that affect job descriptionsNo say in how to do the work | Where appropriate, employee included in decisions about their job |
| Employee not being consulted on changes to their work patterns | Employee consulted over their work pattern |
| Inflexible working patternWorking patterns dictated to employee | Employee have a say over when breaks can be taken, subject to organisational requirements |
| No choice in what you do at work | Employee encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work |

Question

* 1. Do you think that you are given sufficient opportunities to develop skills or career opportunities?

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| Cause | Possible intervention |
| Lack of opportunities to develop their careerBoring/repetitive job | Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work |
| Lack of training | The development of employees identified on their personal development plans and given training opportunities as appropriate |

1. Support:

This includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

The HSE standard is that:

* 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.

Questions

* 1. Do you think that you receive sufficient information and support from your Manager and colleagues to enable you to work effectively?
	2. Have you had sufficient training or development to enable you to work effectively?

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| Cause | Possible intervention |
| Lack of support from Line Manager | Line Managers support employees Review lines of communication (meetings, informal chats, e-mails, etc.Be approachable |
| Lack of support from colleagues | Encourage good team working, participation and discussion |
| Policies and procedures not known to employee | Ensure that policies and procedures are in place and discussed at team meetings or otherwise disseminated |
| Lack of training for the task | Ensure employees receive adequate training to carry out their work such as IT training in the applications they use |
| Inadequate feed back | Use the reporting system effectively, have regular meetings with employees |
| No feedback on performance from Manager, feedback not constructive | Ensure feedback is given, both good and bad and that it is constructive and Line Manager takes ownership of it Draw up action plans to resolve any issues, monitor progress and review; keep good records of discussions |

1. Relationships:

This includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

The HSE standard is:

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

Questions

* 1. Are you subject to any form of bullying or harassment by Managers, colleagues, children, parents, etc. at work?
	2. Are work relationships strained?

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| Cause | Possible intervention |
| Bullying/harassment | Create a positive culture where bullying/harassment is not tolerated |
| Conflict | Managers promote positive behaviours to avoid conflict. If it cannot be resolved, try to work around it |
| Employees do not know policy, re Bullying, etc. | Disseminate policy appropriately; treat employees equally and fairly in line with current policy |
| Misuse of power or position | Ensure employees are aware of the avenues they can take when subjected to unacceptable behaviour |
| Continual criticism, humiliation, undermining an employee's professional ability | Encourage open two-way communicationSeek advice from HR where necessaryRespect employees’ diversityEncourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour |
| Isolation | Employees share information relevant to their work |

1. Role:

Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

The HSE standard is that:

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

Questions

* 1. Do you understand where your work fits in with the overall aim of the organisation?
	2. Are you clear on what you should be doing and when?

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| Cause | Possible intervention |
| Unclear aims and objectives | Use SMART objectives linked to the business planSet unambiguous objectives; keep a record and keep them under regular review |
| Expectations conflicting and/or unreasonable | Discuss the issues and agree reasonable expectations |
| Receiving work and instructions from more than one source | Agree with the post holder how tasks are issued and from whom |
| Being asked to perform duties outside of their normal job | Ensure that tasks given are within the normal duties or give reasons why if they are outside of the normal duties |
| Role developing and changing | Training provided to carry out new tasksTry to match work to skills |
| A newly created post | Agree a clearly defined role and document employee’s agreementReview the post after a short period to verify role, work and training needs |
| No clear lines of communication | Put in place clear lines of communication |
| No system to raise concerns about uncertainties or conflicts in their role & responsibility | Ensure workers know that they can raise concerns in a confidential manner2 way communication at the reporting meetingsProvide SMART objectives |
| Responsibility without the authority | Responsibility and authority should match |
| Level of authority unclear within the team | Ensure responsibilities and authorities are clear within the team |

1. Change:

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The HSE standard is that:

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

Questions

* 1. Do you think that you are kept up to date about significant changes in the work place?
	2. Do you have sufficient opportunity to question Managers about changes in the work place?

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| Cause | Possible intervention |
| Insufficient information of change provided to enable workers to understand the reasons for proposed changes | Keep workers informed of change and the reason why, especially if it affects them directly |
| Speculation and rumours | Keeping workers informed will prevent rumoursBe honest with workers about change |
| False expectations | Consult with workers when possible to provide an opportunity for workers to influence proposals |
| No consultation with workers on changes | Workers are kept informed of the probable impact change may have on their role and provide support |
| Unsure how change will impact upon them | Workers aware of timetables for changesWorkers have access to relevant support during changes |

Employee Stress Assessment

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| --- | --- |
| Name (of employee being assessed):  |  |
| Job Title: |  |
| Assessing Manager: |  |
| Job Title: |  |
| Date of Assessment: |  |
| Review Date: |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Hazard or risk factor perceived by employee: | Control measures (possible solutions) to be considered: | By who and when: | Monitoring/review by who/when: |
| Demands of the job |  |  |  |
| Personal control over work |  |  |  |
| Support, training or specific individual needs |  |  |  |
| Relationships at work |  |  |  |
| Perception of role |  |  |  |
| Change at work |  |  |  |

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| --- | --- |
| Employee Signature  |  |
| Assessing Manager Signature |  |