

How to – Approach Occupational Stress Proactively - Managers

Under the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the Council has a duty to assess the risk of stress related ill health arising from work activities and, under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, to take measures to control that risk.

In order to meet the Council's obligations under the legislation, the Council has adopted the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards approach to determine whether existing control measures will reduce the risk of developing a stress-related illness sufficiently or whether more should be done.

The HSE Management Standards cover six specific areas of work design and, if not properly managed, can be linked to ill health and poor wellbeing, reduced productivity, and increased sickness absence and presenteeism.

The six Management Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work. They are:

Standard	States to be achieved
Demands: Includes issues such as workload, work patterns, and the work environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs; and • systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.
Control : How much say the person has in the way they do their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work; and • systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.
Support: Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors; and • systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.
Relationships: Includes promoting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employees indicate that they are not

positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.	<p>subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.
Role: Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; and • systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.
Change: How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change; and • systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

The 'states to be achieved' describe the organisational behaviour that must be present to achieve the respective standard. They describe good management practice in each of the six areas of the Management Standards.

On a day-to-day basis, **managers** should demonstrate good management practice which will in turn assist the Council in achieving the organisational behaviour which will achieve the respective standard as follows:

Communication

- Have clear, regular two way communication with employees.
- Recognise and praise individual or group achievements, hard work and efforts.
- Give supportive and constructive criticism when required.
- Provide opportunities for employees to discuss their concerns. Listen sympathetically to their concerns and take action about these concerns when appropriate.

- Communicate and discuss Council, Service and team objectives, how this links to employees' objectives and the tasks/duties they perform.
- Involve employees in proposed changes to duties and responsibilities.
- Think through the impact that your actions and decisions may have on employees.
- Give time to individual employees.

Work Design

- Ensure roles and responsibilities are clear and understood by employees.
- Regularly review known work pressures such as excessive workload, tight deadlines, staffing levels and the need for skill development.
- Ensure that instructions and requests to employees are clear and are not conflicting.
- Where possible, ensure employees have some control of their tasks and their work has variety.

Health, Safety and Welfare

- Take health and safety seriously – standard item on Team Meeting Agenda or one-to-one meetings.
- Foster good relations with employees, take time to get to know your team members, so that changes to their normal behaviour are easier to spot.
- Where there are relationship problems, tackle these early, identify issues and agree the steps to try to resolve the matter.
- Know the number of hours employees are working.
- Provide as good a work environment as possible with the right equipment to do the work efficiently.
- Keep up to date with Council initiatives and consider their applicability to situations within your team.
- Make sure concerns which are reported by employees are followed up and any steps taken to address these concerns are fed back to those concerned.

In order to assess the risk associated with each standard, Managers should adopt a regime of risk assessment as follows:



Identify the risk factors

Step 1 - Identify the stress risk factors: understand the Management Standards.

Who can be harmed and how

Step 2 - Decide who might be harmed and how: gather data.

Evaluate the risks

Step 3 - Evaluate the risks: explore problems and develop solutions.

Record your findings

Step 4 - Record your findings: develop and implement an action plan.

Monitor and review

Step 5 - Monitor and review: monitor and review the action plan and assess effectiveness.

As with all risk assessments, the significant findings and control measures proposed should be communicated to those concerned. The risk assessment should be reviewed at least annually and particularly at times of change.

Support and advice in completing the risk assessment process can be obtained from the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team.