

# How To – Process for Developing a Stress Action Plan

## Stage 1

The first stage of the process is for the employee to complete part 1 of the [stress action plan](#), which should be provided to the employee by the manager along with the information pertaining to the HSE management standards - [How to - Approach Occupational Stress Proactively](#).

The employee should not complete this stage with their manager but could either complete it on their own or preferably with the support of another person (e.g. trade union representative, family member etc.) to ensure they are being specific enough on the issues outlined below.

- **Employee's perception of stressors**

The employee should write down their perceptions/feelings about the situation (e.g. can't cope with workload, do not understand my role and responsibilities, do not have sufficient knowledge to complete the piece of work requested of me, no one listens to me etc). Simple statements such as 'I feel stressed' are not adequate enough.

- **Evidence of Perceptions**

The employee should provide specific examples of how they have arrived at that belief (e.g. examples of why they feel no one listens to them)

- **The Future**

The employee should write down control measures that they believe will assist to reduce, if not eliminate, the impact of stressors and/or stress-related absences or illnesses.

The manager should agree an appropriate timescale for the employee to return their stress action plan with part 1 completed. If the employee experiences any difficulty in completing part 1 of the stress action plan, the manager should advise the employee not to be concerned. The management standards can be discussed in more detail at the meeting. The manager and the employee can then work through the employee's thoughts in terms of their perceived stressors together at the meeting.

If an employee is absent from work and the manager has been made aware that the reason for the absence is due to work related stress, the manager should ascertain from the employee whether the employee is fit to engage in a supporting health and wellbeing meeting in accordance with the Council's Supporting Health and Wellbeing Procedure to discuss their stressors at the earliest opportunity.

The employee must be given five working days' notice of the supporting health and wellbeing meeting, unless they waive their right to this, and they will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative, or work colleague at the supporting health and wellbeing meeting.

If a stress action plan has been completed previously, this should be enclosed with the invite letter. If not, a [sample stress action plan](#), [blank stress action plan](#) and the information pertaining to the [HSE management standards \(LINK\)](#) should be enclosed.

Depending on individual circumstances it may be appropriate to make a referral to occupational health following the supporting health and wellbeing meeting with the employee for further advice on appropriate control measures.

If the employee advises that they are not fit to engage in a supporting health and wellbeing meeting to discuss their stressors the manager should inform the employee that a supporting health and wellbeing meeting in accordance with the Council's Supporting Health and Wellbeing Procedure will be arranged if it is likely that they will be absent for four weeks or more.

If following the invite to the supporting health and wellbeing meeting the employee advises that they are not fit to attend, the manager should advise the employee that a referral to occupational health will be made to ascertain when it is likely that the employee will be fit to engage.

## **Stage 2**

### **□ Agreeing appropriate control measures**

Stage 2 should involve a meeting with the employee concerned and their manager to discuss the information provided by the employee on the stress action plan in order to agree appropriate control measures. A date should also be set to review the agreed stress action plan.

The manager should complete part 2 of the stress action plan form following the meeting and provide this to the employee for final comment. The employee should provide any amendments within five working days of receipt or it will be assumed that an employee is in agreement unless an extension is requested and agreed.

Depending on an employee's state of health, it may not be possible to discuss and agree appropriate control measures and therefore further supporting health and wellbeing meetings to discuss the employee's continued absence will be required.

At this stage, depending on the circumstances and detail of the discussions a referral to occupational health may also be appropriate, to obtain advice regarding an employee's absence and/or to provide comment on the stress action plan.

### **Stage 3**

#### **□ Review**

Stage 3 involves a further meeting with the employee to discuss and review progress. Changes to the stress action plan and further review dates may be agreed.

At this stage, a referral to occupational health may also be appropriate.