

Stress and Mental Health at Work

What you need to do

What do I need to know?

1. Stress and the mental health of employees is your responsibility under safety law.
2. It costs your business (one in three absences are reported to be due to work-related stress), which is one lost day per year for every three people on average
3. There are practical steps and free resources available to support the management of stress at work, outlined below.
4. You should have a suitable and sufficient Stress Risk Assessment written and implemented which will outline the stresses and how you manage them. This document will also protect you from a claim and/or a prosecution.

What do I need to do?

1. **Decide whether any of the following apply:**
 - a. Responsible for others e.g. as a manager or carer
 - b. Too much work, tight deadlines and demands
 - c. Conversely, not enough work
 - d. Blame culture or fear of failure or the results of failure are deemed unacceptable
 - e. Lack of control for employee or an overbearing or bullying manager
 - f. Job design e.g. shifts or high physical demands
2. **Look out for the signs an employee is experiencing difficulty. e.g.**
 - a. They take more time off than usual
 - b. They arrive for work later than usual
 - c. They are more twitchy or nervous
 - d. They exhibit mood swings
 - e. They become more withdrawn
 - f. They lose motivation, commitment and/or confidence
 - g. You see increased emotional reactions – with them being more tearful, sensitive or aggressive than usual

3. **In the event that you see some or all of the above, or to manage and mitigate the chances of an issue:**
- a. Give new employees an induction that includes a clear description of your expectations
 - b. Ensure they are, and remain, competent (or have the skills knowledge and experience) to do the job.
 - c. Look out for symptoms that indicate an employee is suffering from stress
 - d. Be aware of other stresses such as bereavement or family illness
 - e. Provide supervision and support, referring them to a professional for help, where appropriate.
 - f. Give them some control over the amount of work.
 - g. Communicate effectively, leaving channels open to talk to a manager, director or yourself and explain why decisions were made.
 - h. Maintain a healthy working environment, e.g. workstations, canteens, noise, light, temperature and seating.
 - i. Where appropriate, manage working relationships through formal human resources processes.
 - j. Be aware of non-work stresses such as illness or bereavement.

Other useful information

1. You are not responsible for personal stresses of employees outside of their work.
2. Refer employees with a diagnosed condition to an appropriate medical professional.
3. In the event an employee suffers from stress or mental health issue at work, get the advice of a good HR Consultant and/or Employment Law Solicitor.

Resources

- HSE – guides for employers and employees and a set of management standards
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>
- Mind – Charity that provides training, information and support
<https://www.mind.org.uk/>
- BHSF – and similar not for profit organisations that provide helplines
<https://www.bhsf.co.uk/>
- CIPD – The People Managers Guide to Mental Health
file:///C:/Users/sam/Downloads/mental-health-at-work-1_tcm18-10567.pdf



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For more advice and assistance on what your business needs to do, contact enquiry@greensconsultancy.co.uk or call (0116) 2169224.