



## **STRESS AT WORK TOOL KIT**

### **1.0 WHAT SHALL I DO IF I FEEL STRESSED?**

- 1.1 If your stress is the result of some aspect of your work, you need to discuss this with your manager without delay to see if the cause of the problem can be addressed.
- 1.2 A discussion with your line manager about your work allocation may result in your manager being able to help you adjust your working environment, allow for your work to be re-prioritised to ensure that you are able to concentrate on the important things that deliver results, or enable work to be re-prioritised and reallocated within the team. Workloads and pressures should be discussed at regular supervision meetings.
- 1.3 Taking time out to relax may not seem easy in a busy day, but it is essential for your wellbeing. We all need time to recharge and to get events into perspective. Take your lunch break, even if just for half an hour. Think about a review of your work life balance and working hours. Take annual leave throughout the year to ensure that you are having rest and break from work.
- 1.4 Work to ensure that you personally have a healthy work life balance which is good for both you and your employer; it makes you more productive and creative. Take care of your own health.
- 1.5 If the cause of your stress symptoms is from outside of the workplace, it may be possible to provide some support during difficult times. For example, this may include more flexible working hours.

### **2.0 WHAT MUST I DO IF I BELIEVE SOMEONE I MANAGE IS STRESSED?**

2.1 Be aware of the symptoms. Be aware of the typical symptoms of stress, not just in yourself, but in those you manage.

This list is not exhaustive.

- missing deadlines
- making uncharacteristic mistakes
- becoming bad tempered, irritable or cynical
- tearfulness
- becoming withdrawn
- producing uncharacteristically poor work
- taking little interest in their appearance or hygiene
- taking time off sick or lateness to work

- 2.2 Discuss with your employee. If you recognise these symptoms in a member of your team, you must discuss it with them as soon as practically possible.
- 2.3 Contact HR for advice if a member of your team confirms their stress is work related.
- 2.4 Ask the employee to complete the individual stress questionnaire. If you have management responsibility for the area in which the individual works, you will undertake a “management of stress questionnaire. This will highlight the key areas for attention in the working environment. Completing the stress tool kit will enable you and the employee to come up with an action plan to manage stress and mitigate against the stressors.

### **3.0 WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF STRESS?**

- 3.1 There is no definitive list of the causes of stress at work. However, research has identified the following aspects of work as those most likely to result in reports of stress:
- Lack of personal control
  - Excessive workload through staff reductions
  - Prolonged pressure to perform
  - Excessive working hours
  - Conflicting demands
  - Monotonous work
  - Continuous threat of aggression
  - Changes in the workplace
  - Harassment or bullying
  - Difficulty with balancing the demands of home and work
  - Ill-defined work roles
  - Lack of recognition
  - Poor working relationships
  - Job insecurity
  - Poor communication

### **4.0 HOW DO I UNDERTAKE A “MANAGEMENT OF STRESS” RISK ASSESSMENT?**

There are two types of “Management of Stress” risk assessments:

Individual: i.e. the risks that affect an individual member of staff or job function. (See section 4.1)

Organisational: i.e. the risks that arise from the culture within various levels of SHSC – organisation-wide, directorate, divisional, and team. (See section 4.2)

The following pages detail how to undertake these types of risk assessment.

- 4.1 **Individual Stress Questionnaire.** This section is concerned with assessing the personal issues, i.e. relating to an individual staff member.

The following may be indicators that an individual is under stress:

- The individual suggests that they may be experiencing stress
- Colleagues or others recognise signs of stress
- A member of staff is returning to work after a stress-related absence

This can be assessed by gathering the individual's and manager's views on separate forms. Both assessments will then be used to develop an action plan and to agree the way forward.

## Individual Stress Questionnaire

(Form for completion by the employee and relating to the last 6 months)  
 Completing this question is the first step in identifying stressors. Your manager will complete a similar questionnaire in order to help gain a complete picture and will review the findings with you. If you feel you need support in this process, please contact a member of the HR team.

No	Question	YES	NO
1	Is the work environment free of extreme aspects, such as excessive noise, extremes of temperature or lighting, work outdoors in all weathers, work space limitations?		
2	Do you have a job description?		
3	Does your job description reflect your current duties and responsibilities?		
4	Do you have clearly defined performance objectives and targets?		
5	Do you receive regular feedback regarding performance against objectives?		
6	Are you involved to an adequate extent in decision making which impacts on working practices and priorities?		
7	Are you congratulated for a job well done?		
8	Do you receive sufficient training for your job?		
9	Are your training needs regularly assessed and reviewed?		
10	Do you have an annual training and development plan?		
11	Did you have a relevant departmental induction programme?		
12	Are you clear about your role in your team and as part of the department?		
13	Is there a culture of regular good communications and consultation within your team?		
14	Are regular team meetings held which provide a forum where staff can raise and resolve issues with managers and peers?		
15	Do you have regular workload meetings with your manager?		

16	Do you feel your manager is accessible and approachable?		
17	Do you receive sufficient information regarding new developments in a timely manner?		
18	Are you given the opportunity to comment and ask questions at times of change, in good time to make a difference?		
19	Do you feel you have scope for career progression?		
20	Can you work flexibly in times of workload pressure?		
21	Do you think the work demands on you are reasonable within timescales and resources available?		
22	Do you have enough time in your regular working hours to do all you have to do, including managing information?		
23	Do you take a lunch break of at least 20 minutes every day?		
24	Do you have enough to do, during your regular working hours?		
25	Is there sufficient variety in the work you do?		
26	Do you have good working relationships with your colleagues?		
27	Is your environment free of bullying and harassment?		
28	Is your environment free of discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, disability, religion or any other protected attribute?		
29	Please describe anything else that you feel is contributing to your work-related stress: (Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)		

The questions to which you have answered NO are potential stressors. The extent to which they affect you depends on your perceptions and views at the time of completion.

Please transfer the stressors you have identified to the left-hand column of the following table Stress Management – employee self-assessment (stressors), which will help you to highlight the things that make you feel stressed.

You need to discuss these issues, and your ideas for resolving them, with your manager (or the person helping you and your manager work through this process) so that you can agree an action plan.

Your manager will also contribute some ideas to include in the action plan based on his/her experiences and views, particularly regarding organisational issues such as workload, training, communication and change.

**Stress Management – Employee self-assessment (identifying stressors)**

No	Stressor (Transferred from Self- Assessment)	Please give specific examples to show how this stressor affects you – how it makes you feel and why	What do you think could realistically be done about this situation?	Is this something you could do or is it an action for the organisation?

## MANAGER'S ASSESSMENT

(Form for completion by the line manager)

This form will help you to assess the level of stress being faced by an individual member of staff who has confirmed stress-related symptoms, appears to be suffering from stress or is returning to work from a stress-related absence.

Name:			
Job Title:			
Work Area:			
Manager:			
No	Question	Yes	No
1	Are fluctuations in the individual's workload manageable?		
2	Is there a balance of workloads between team members?		
3	Is the individual's workload governed by clearly defined objectives and targets?		
4	Is the individual's workload largely free from ad hoc demands?		
5	Is the pace of the individual's work determined by internal objectives rather than deadlines or externally led requirements?		
6	Is there a match between the work and available resources?		
7	Does the individual have the required skills and knowledge to fulfil the criteria of their role?		
8	Does a large proportion of the individual's work involve direct contact with the public or service users?		
9	Has a risk assessment relating to violence in the workplace been carried out for the role?		
10	Is training available to assist staff to adapt to changes?		
11	Do you measure whether the individual's assessed training needs are being met and evaluated?		
12	Is there good working relationships among colleagues?		
13	Are you as manager aware of the policies and procedures relating to managing stress?		
14	Are systems in place for the regular support, supervision and appraisal of staff?		
15	Does the individual have the ability to work flexible hours?		
16	Does the work involve regular hours free from unsociable hours or shift work?		
17	Is there encouragement from management for a healthy work-life balance?		
18	Are work practices consistent and free from frequent change (e.g. new technology or working methods)?		
19	Please list any other factors that you think may be contributing to the individual's level of stress (e.g. issues outside work).		

Please use the above information, together with the employee's self-assessment, to decide on the level of risk to the individual concerned.

(NB - Some of the issues above may be more significant than others. The fact that most of the questions can be answered positively doesn't necessarily mean that the risk is low, and vice versa).

<b>MINIMAL RISK</b>	No immediate action needs to be taken. A review will be carried out in 12 months or when circumstances change.
<b>LOW RISK</b>	There are some actions required, but they are not urgent. An action plan will be agreed within 20 working days. The assessment will be reviewed in 3 months.
<b>MEDIUM RISK</b>	There are a number of issues, some of which need to be addressed promptly. An action plan will be agreed within 10 working days. The risk assessment will be reviewed in 1 month.
<b>HIGH RISK</b>	There are major issues that need to be addressed urgently. An action plan will be agreed within 5 working days. The risk assessment will be reviewed in 1 month.

I have assessed the risk as:

You need to discuss the issues identified with the individual in order to agree an action plan.

The member of staff shall also contribute some ideas to include in the action plan based on his/her experiences and feelings.

Manager's Signature:..... Date:.....

Minimal		Low		Medium		High	
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## 4.2 Organisational Stress Risk Assessment

This section aims to support managers in identifying organisational factors that may be contributing to stressors within the culture of the team or wider organisation.

- 4.2.1 All managers must promote a positive workplace culture and are responsible for ensuring that:
- Causes and effects of workplace stress are identified, assessed and promptly managed.
  - Work life balance issues are recognised and addressed appropriately.
  - Their staff are effectively supported.
- 4.2.2 Managers will also:
- Make arrangements to publicise the results of the organisational risk assessment to employees.
  - Be prepared to take action to deal with any problems identified by the assessment process or to highlight concerns that cannot be resolved at a higher level within the organisation e.g. area, directorate or Board level.
  - Review risk assessments regularly or after any significant changes to working conditions/arrangements.
- 4.2.3 All employees must:
- Effectively plan and organise their work to meet personal and organisational objectives.
  - Communicate any work concerns to their line manager to enable appropriate support to be planned.
  - Co-operate with the support, advice and guidance they may be offered.
- 4.2.4 Some employees may also find it helpful to use the questionnaire for the organisational stress risk assessment to identify stressors within the culture of the organisation that may not be highlighted by their personal stress risk assessment.
- 4.2.5 An organisational stress risk assessment can be used proactively and will require some thought and planning on behalf of the manager carrying out the process. To affect this it is recommended to use the HSE Indicator tool and user guide.
- 4.2.6 The following document is an embedded Indicator tool from the HSE and subject to Crown copyright as such it may be reproduced free of charge in any format for internal circulation within an organisation. To open the indicator tool go to:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/downloads.htm>

The HSE tools can provide an effective method for carrying out an organisational level risk assessment. Many other resources, including advice on the use of the Indicator and Analysis Tools, can be downloaded free of charge from the link.