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Stress at work Policy

1. What is stress?

Stress is 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'.

Workers feel stress when they can't cope with pressures and other issues. Employers should match demands to workers' skills and knowledge. For example, workers can get stressed if they feel they don't have the skills or time to meet tight deadlines. Providing planning, training and support can reduce pressure and bring stress levels down.

Stress affects people differently – what stresses one person may not affect another. Factors like skills and experience, age or disability may all affect whether an worker can cope.

2. Causes of stress at work

There are six main areas that can lead to work-related stress if they are not managed properly. These are: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change.

For example, workers may say that they:

- are not able to cope with the demands of their jobs
- are unable to control the way they do their work
- don't receive enough information and support
- are having trouble with relationships at work, or are being bullied
- don't fully understand their role and responsibilities
- are not engaged when a business is undergoing change

By talking to your workers and understanding how to identify the signs of stress, you can prevent and reduce stress in your workplace.

3. Signs of stress

If workers start acting differently, it can be a sign they are stressed. Managers should look out for signs of stress in teams and workers, listed below. Think about whether the stress could be linked to work pressure.

Acting early can reduce the impact of pressure and make it easier to reduce or remove the causes. If managers are worried that a worker is showing some of these signs, they should encourage them to see their GP. These signs can be symptoms of other conditions. If there is something wrong at work, and this has caused the problem, managers should take action.

Signs of stress in teams

There may be signs of stress in a team, like:

- arguments
- higher staff turnover
- more reports of stress
- more sickness absence
- decreased performance
- more complaints and grievances

Signs of stress in a worker

A change in the way someone acts can be a sign of stress, for example they may:

- take more time off
- arrive for work later
- be more twitchy or nervous

A change in the way someone thinks or feels can also be a sign of stress, for example:

- mood swings
- being withdrawn
- loss of motivation, commitment and confidence
- increased emotional reactions – being more tearful, sensitive or aggressive

4. Stress risk assessment

Employers have a legal duty to protect employees from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it.

If you have fewer than five workers you don't have to write anything down. But it is useful to do this, so you can review it later, for example if something changes. If you have five or more workers, you are required by law to write the risk assessment down.

Any paperwork you produce should help you communicate and manage the risks in your business. For most people this does not need to be a big exercise – just note the main points about the significant risks and what you decided.

5. Help for workers on stress at work

Spotting signs of stress

If you are stressed you may notice changes in the way you think or feel, for example:

- feeling negative
- being indecisive
- feeling isolated
- feeling nervous
- being unable to concentrate

You may act differently, for example:

- eat more or less than usual
- smoke, drink or take drugs 'to cope'
- have difficulty sleeping

If you are feeling signs of stress at work, it is important to talk to someone, for example your manager. If you talk to them as soon as possible, it will give them the chance to help and stop the situation getting worse.

If the pressure is due to what your line manager is doing, find out what policies are in place to deal with this. If there aren't any, you could talk to your:

- trade union representative
- worker representative
- HR department
- worker assistance programme/counselling service if your company has these or
- GP

Many workers are unwilling to talk about stress at work, because of the stigma stress has. But stress is not a weakness and can happen to anyone.

What your employer must do

Your employer has a legal duty to [assess the risks](#) to your health from stress at work and share the results of any risk assessment with you. Your employer may follow HSE's [Management Standards approach](#), which help identify and manage the main causes of stress at work.

Help with stress caused by non-work issues

For help outside work, [these organisations](#) have useful websites or helplines you can phone for advice in confidence.

▪ This policy was adopted by Lavenham Preschool *(name of provider)*
On January 2025 *(date)*
Date to be reviewed January 2026 *(date)*
Signed on behalf of the provider



Name of signatory Roy Mawford
Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner) Chair of Trustees