Stress Policy guidance

Do you know that employers have a legal duty to protect employees from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it?

Good examples of risk assessment templates can be found on the [HSE website.](#)

Did you know that employers are required by law to prevent work related stress?

According to the Mental Health Charity, Mind, workplace stress is common across the UK. Regularly experiencing feelings of stress risks leading to the development of a mental health problem such as depression, and anxiety. Stress can also have a negative impact on an existing mental health problem experienced by an individual.

Knowing the causes, impacts, and understanding of how to treat stress is an important part of life. The average person will spend 90,000 hours of their life within the workplace, so creating a healthy work environment for staff is incredibly important. This policy is all about creating workspace which is open and accessible to the needs of your staff, enabling them to perform their working duties to the best of their abilities. It is important that employers promote openness with mental health, creating safe spaces for staff to share worries or concerns that may be causing them stress, and given the time to access appropriate support mechanisms if they require it.

What factors can lead to the build-up of stress in the workplace?

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), there are six key factors that can lead to stress in the workplace:
- Demands
- Control
- Support
- Relationships
- Role
- Change

The HSE states that a member of staff may communicate these factors by saying 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

View the HSE's guidance here.

These issues can work alone or come together in tandem to have an adverse impact on the amount of stress experienced by an individual in the workplace. If a member of staff is adversely impacted by stress, it is important to know how you as an employer can act to support their needs.

It is important to remember that stress can impact people very differently. Factors that may not contribute to stress for one individual member of the team, may contribute to another. Therefore, ensuring that your workplace is geared to support any staff member going through stress is important.

Actions you can take to support staff:

- *Promote open and honest conversations about mental health in your setting:*

We know that talking about mental health is incredibly important in breaking down barriers and tackling mental health stigma within our society. Therefore, making sure your workplace welcomes open and honest conversations between staff members and management is really important.

- *Make time for conversations in the workday:*

Enabling time for staff to have open and honest conversations about mental health in the workplace is a great way to enable staff to open up about any stress they may be feeling. Consider planning for thirty minutes of free staff time in the workday which can take place in a relaxed environment, such as a break room, or staff room.

- *Signposting:*

Arming staff with the knowledge of where they can access further mental health support if they require it is important. Specialist mental health services are there to provide advice and support to any individual that requires it, at any time of day. Sometimes, individuals prefer self-help resources or opening up to somebody independent from their own lives to help them cope with their mental health.

The mental health charity Mind have great signposting resources, which can be downloaded here.

We also provide signposting on our website here.

Anti-bullying policy:

We know that stress in the workplace can be caused by workplace bullying and harassment. Implementing a safeguard with a strong anti-bullying policy gives the indication to your staff that workplace wellbeing is of paramount importance, and that bullying, in all its forms, is not tolerated within the workplace.

It's important to remember to regularly review and refresh these policies to cover for changing circumstances.

Further Reading:

- [ACAS stress management information.](#)

Every setting is responsible for all of the decisions they take, and you should seek further guidance on any matter you are not sure about.