

Stress Risk Assessment Guidance (Teams, Services and Departments)

Introduction

A stress risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in work, activity, premise, workplace or groups could lead to stress anxiety and or depression; so that management can weigh up whether they have taken enough precautions or need to do more to prevent harm. It is a process that helps managers make decisions that are informed, rational and structured that will help manage risks, and taking action that is proportionate to the risks identified.

The best results are often obtained by involving more than one person in the assessment process. It is important that the completion of any risk assessments is led by the manager and carried out in conjunction with those who are familiar with, and have the appropriate skills and knowledge of the team or service in question.

It is very useful to refer to other relevant information as part of assessment process, this may include, sick absence records, starters and leavers data, audit reports, accident incident statistics, outcomes from team/service meetings, grievances /disciplinary, any stress or wellbeing surveys and local knowledge.

It must be also noted that not all stressors arise in the workplace, but could also arise from personal home life events which can have dramatic effect on an individual, team or service in the workplace. In these circumstances the approach in supporting those affected would be the same.

Completing the Stress Risk Assessment Template

The Stress risk assessment template works best if completed electronically, it can be used as a paper version, but is not recommended. Each text box is formatted so it will automatically expand depending on the amount data inputted.

Department / Service

Enter the name of the Department or Service the assessment belongs.

Date

Enter the date or dates of the assessment

Person(s) completing the assessment

Name all the persons who are involved in the assessment.

Brief description of the team or service

Offer a brief description of the team or service, how many persons, is it a frontline service, recent structural changes etc; as this offers context and understanding to the assessment.

What are the hazards/stressors?

By using the guidance information below (**Pages 2- 3**) as reference; identify and record the perceived, potential or actual hazards/stressors associated with the team or service.

Affected persons or groups

Identify all the persons or parts of the team or service that may be affected by each hazard/stressor. It is possible that different persons or team members will be affected by different elements of the workplace.

What action has been taken and or what controls do you have in place?

By using the guidance information below (Pages 4- 6) as reference; identify all the existing controls that are in place.

Is it enough? What else can be done?

Ask the question, do you need to do more, have you got gaps? You may have to review your controls to ensure they are working and where you have gaps then implement suitable controls if you have actions to complete set reasonable target dates and who is going to action them.

Name and Date

When the assessment is complete it should be signed by the manager to say that all identified actions have been implemented. Even if there are no remedial actions to the assessment should be signed by the manager.

Assessment Review

The name of the person who is carrying out the review needs to be entered and the date the review took place.

Notes of the review

Brief notes need to be recorded here to offer an indication of what changes additions or deletions have taken place.

As a number of reviews take place, it will show how the assessment has evolved and remained "live."

Potential Hazards/Stressors

The following lists are just a selection of potential hazards (stressors) which may affect your employees, teams or services. These lists are not a complete but should be used as a guide and to trigger discussion regarding other potential hazards (stressors).

The following hazards are listed in the same format as the Stress Risk Assessment Template. It is acceptable to use the wording below for your assessment; however you may need to add some additional wording to ensure the hazard listed is specific to your team or service.

Role

- Lack of job description
- Unclear job description
- Lack of understanding of team goals and objectives
- How your role fits into the overall aims of BMDC
- Responsibility for managing people
- Responsibility for managing budgets
- Requirement to attend high number of meetings
- Contact with customers, members of the public
- Risk of violence/threatening behaviour

Exposure to:

- Frequent repetitive tasks
- Lone or isolated working
- Long uninterrupted working periods at computer, workstations or machinery
- Inappropriate noise or vibration levels
- Weather conditions inc extreme heat cold wet
- Monotonous work

Control

- Inability to plan workloads and how the work will be completed
- No involvement in decisions effecting individual jobs or workload
- Uneven distribution of workloads
- Lack of opportunities to delegate work to those with spare capacity
- Inability to take regular breaks
- No flexibility on holidays due service requirements

Support

- Feedback received on work undertaken
- Inability of line manager to help with work problems
- unavailability of line manager to discuss work issues
- Lack of emotional support at work
- Lack of encouragement at work
- Employees reacting to being challenged
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Demands

- High expectations of employees at work
- Intensity of work
- Normal workload too low or lack of work
- Conflicting demands that are hard to combine
- Tight deadlines for work to be produced
- Tight deadlines are the norm
- Level of interruptions during working day
- Expectation or pressure to work long hours
- Employees expected to work very quickly
- Pressure to achieve without adequate resources
- Pressure to attend work even when ill
- Expected to put job before self or family
- Vacant posts in team unfilled for long periods

Relationships

- Poor communications
- Relationships with colleagues are strained
- Friction between colleagues
- Managers adopting confrontational approach
- Employees feel undervalued
- Blame culture
- Over-competitive culture
- No training received to undertake duties
- Bullying or harassment in workplace
- Toleration of discrimination/harassment
- Inability for colleagues to offer support
- Little respect received from colleagues
- Inability to talk openly to colleagues
- Few or no training opportunities
- No time allocated for training or development

Change

- Little or no consultation regarding potential changes at work
- Lack of opportunities to question and have input to change at work
- Little or no understanding how changes will be implemented

Suitable Controls to Consider

Once you have identified your hazards (stressors) and who is affected, it is important to identify the current controls you have in place and also what else you may need to do.

The controls and actions you may need to take are listed below and are in the same format as above. Once again it is not a complete list, but they will help with discussions and action planning. You may note some controls feature in more than one sub heading for example, team meetings and 1 to1's.

General

These are the established controls and process which should already be in place

- Team/Service plans
- Suitable safe working processes.
- Induction training, on - job training and refresher training – Training matrices, CPD
- HR policies and procedures – Consultation, Sick absence management, Grievance and Disciplinary.
- Flexible working, Super Flexi, New Ways of Working arrangements
- Holidays, time off in lieu, toil time (schools)
- One to one meetings, team meetings, appraisals
- Services provided by Employee Health and Wellbeing Team including mediation and counselling
- Reporting and investigation processes inc hazards, accidents, violence to staff, etc
- Post incident debrief and or counselling

Role

- Meet with staff to enable them to clarify their role and discuss any possible role conflict.
- Review Job Descriptions and Personal Specification to ensure the core functions and priorities of the post are clear.
- Define work areas clearly so that all team members know who is doing what, and why.
- Discuss and clearly communicate targets and objectives to help clarify work areas and individual role.
- When work is allocated are expectations clear and agreed.
- Is work assigned appropriately in line with the strengths of the team?
- Hold regular one-to-one meetings and appraisals to ensure that members of staff are clear about their role and know what is planned for the coming months.
- Ensure staff are able to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.
- Develop suitable induction arrangements for new staff and make sure that all members of the team understand the role of the new staff member.

Control

- Where possible enable staff to have a say over the way their work is organised and undertaken, e.g., through team/ service meetings, 1-2 -1's, Support and supervision, performance reviews etc.
- Hold discussions as required at various stages of the work or project. Provide opportunities for discussion and input and where necessary resetting targets.
- Talk about the way decisions are made – is there scope for more involvement?

Managers Support

- Identify any emerging issues or pressures by holding regular one-to-one meetings, team meetings.
- Discuss with employees how they would like to access managerial support, e.g. 'open door' policy or agreed times for discussion to take place.
- Discuss the different ways the organisation could provide support if someone is experiencing problems both at work and outside of work. e.g., signposting onto other services e.g., Employee Health and Wellbeing Team.
- Give constructive, supportive advice where appropriate.
- Take problems associated with stress seriously and do not trivialise any problems raised.
- Deal sensitively and confidentially with staff that are experiencing problems, ensuring that no one is discriminated against for whatever reason.
- Ensure managers provide opportunities for sufficient information, instruction and training as well as refresher training to enable them to undertake the core functions of their role. Where possible provide opportunities for career development.
- Do not ask employees to do tasks they are not trained to do/feel uncomfortable about undertaking. Discuss a way forward together.
- Ensure where possible that the physical environment is conducive to the work being undertaken,
- Assess the risks of physical violence and verbal abuse and take steps to record and deal with it.
- Ensure employees have access to adequate welfare facilities and allow regular breaks, especially when the work is complex or emotionally/physically demanding.
- Provide realistic deadlines and actively discourage longer working hours or employees taking work home on a regular basis where possible.
- Provide sufficient challenge/pressure to keep employees motivated and interested

Peer Support

- Manager to address any relationships problems. Examine the relationships within the team; do colleagues treat each other with respect and consideration?
- Manager to establish strong team focus and ethics so that staff are clear about the need to work together as a team.
- Encourage staff to have open discussions as a group.
- Establish a good working relationship with other teams.
- Hold regular team meetings.
- Encourage participation in team building

Demands

- Meet with staff to discuss what the demands are and how these can be better prioritised. Ensure demands are discussed in 1-2 -1's.
- Consider if flexible working arrangements may help.
- Consider specific demanding areas of work, e.g. staff at risk of verbal/physical abuse and what help can be given.
- Discuss with employees when there are unplanned tight deadlines and manage any exceptional need to work long hours.
- Provide support and guidance to help staff to prioritise

Relationships

- Ensure staff are aware of Council's procedures and policies e.g. grievance and disciplinary, bullying and harassment, whistle blowing and general code of conduct.
- Select or build teams which have the right blend of expertise and experience.
- Provide training to help staff deal with or defuse difficult situations.
- Encourage good communication and teamwork.
- Identify ways to celebrate success (e.g. informal lunches, evaluation and feedback on work done etc).

Bullying

- Take cases of bullying seriously
- Take advice from Human Resources where staff indicate they are being bullied.
- Follow the policy and ensure staff are made it.

Change

- Ensure all staff are aware of why changes are happening and what the key stages and deadlines are.
- Ensure regular updates and have appointments to ask questions.
- Agree methods of communication (e.g. meetings, notice boards, letters, e-mail, feedback forums etc) and frequency (e.g. weekly)
- Ensure staff are aware of the impact of the change on their jobs.
- Review team and individual work plans after the change to ensure team and individual objectives are clear.