# Stress risk assessment management standards guidance for managers



## Demands

The following list of stages can be used to help allocate resources. It is not Waexhaustive. Further stages may be required for your organisation, or some listed may not be relevant or could be combined into a single step. It may be that for some staff the work done as part of the process would have been done anyway, eg compiling sickness absence data.

| **Area** | Action to be taken |
| --- | --- |
| **The Standard** | Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs. |
| **What should be happening** | * Provide employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work. * People’s skills and abilities are matched to the job demands. * Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees. * Employees’ concerns about their work environment are addressed. |

### Ways to achieve the standard

| **Area** | Action to be taken |
| --- | --- |
| **Workload** | * Develop personal work plans to ensure staff know what their job involves. * Hold weekly team meetings to discuss the anticipated workload for the forthcoming week (and to deal with any planned absences). * Hold regular meetings with individuals to discuss their workload and any anticipated challenges. * Adjust work patterns to cope with peaks and staff absences (this needs to be fair and agreed with employees). * Ensure sufficient resources are available for staff to be able to do their jobs (time, equipment etc). * Provide training (formal or informal) to help staff prioritise, or information on how they can seek help if they have conflicting priorities. |
| **Competency** | * Use the training department to keep training records up to date to ensure employees are competent and comfortable in undertaking the core functions of their job. * Consider implementing personal development/ training plans which require individuals to identify opportunities which can then be discussed with management. * Link training to performance monitoring arrangements to ensure it is effective and sufficient. |
| **Working patterns** | * Review working hours and shift work systems – have these been agreed with staff? * Consider changes to start and end times to help employees to cope with pressures external to the organisation (eg child care, poor commuting routes). * Develop a system to notify employees of unplanned tight deadlines and any exceptional need to work long hours. |
| **Physical environment and violence** | * Ensure your risk assessments for physical hazards and risks are up to date. * Assess the risk of physical violence and verbal abuse. Take steps to deal with this in consultation with employees and others who can help (eg the police, charities). * Provide training to help staff deal with and defuse difficult situations (eg difficult phone calls, aggressive customers). |

#### Do:

* allow regular breaks, especially when the work is complex or emotionally demanding;
* set realistic deadlines;
* design jobs that provide stimulation and opportunities for workers to use their skills to keep staff motivated and interested in their work;
* attend to the physical environment – take steps to reduce unwanted distraction, disturbance, noise levels, vibration, dust etc where possible;
* assess the other inherent risks of the work, eg physical and verbal abuse, MSDs, and take steps to deal with them; these may be stressful and add to the problems;
* provide support to those less experienced or under pressure;
* if you’re a team-leader – learn to say no to work if your team is already at full capacity.

#### Don’t:

* ask people to do tasks that they are not capable of or trained to do;
* allocate more work to a person or team unless they have the resources to cope with it;
* allow workers to ‘cope’ by working longer hours, starting earlier, finishing later, taking work home or working through breaks and lunch;
* contact staff by phone or email (even when they have equipment provided by the employer) outside of working hours or when they are on leave or otherwise ‘off duty’.

## Control

How much say does the person have over the way they do their work?

| **Area** | Action to be taken |
| --- | --- |
| **The Standard** | Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs. |
| **What should be happening** | * Where possible, employees have control over their pace of work, eg have a say over when breaks can be taken. * Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work. * Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work. * The organisation encourages employees to develop their skills. * Employees are consulted over their work patterns. |
| **Ways to achieve the standard** | * Agree systems that enable staff to have a say over the way their work is organised and undertaken, eg through project meetings, one-to-ones, performance reviews. * Hold regular discussion forums during the planning stage of projects to talk about the anticipated output and methods of working. Provide opportunities for discussion and input. * Allocate responsibility to teams rather than individuals to take projects forward:   + discuss and define teams at the start of a project;   + agree objectives and roles;   + agree timescales;   + agree the provision of managerial support, eg through regular progress meetings. * Talk about the way decisions are made – is there scope for more involvement? * Talk about the skills people have and if they believe they are able to use these to good effect. * How else would they like to use their skills? |

### Do:

* allow staff some control over the pace of their work;
* allow and encourage staff to participate in decision-making, especially where it affects them, eg those about the way they work;
* negotiate shift-work schedules that do not impose on staff.

### Don’t:

* monitor employees’ movements in detail (including breaks);
* monitor working style, unless necessary (eg where there are child-protection needs);
* ask staff to stay late without notice.

## Support

Includes encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

| **Area** | Action to be taken |
| --- | --- |
| **The Standard** | Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors. |
| **What should be happening** | * The organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees. * Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff. * Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues. * Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it. * Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job. * Employees receive regular and constructive feedback. |
| **Ways to achieve the standard** | * Hold regular one-to-one and team meetings to talk about any emerging issues or pressures. * Include ‘work-related stress/emerging pressures’ as a standing item for staff meetings and/or performance reviews. * Seek examples of how people would like to, or have, received good support from managers or colleagues – can these be adopted across the unit? * Ask how employees would like to access managerial support, eg ‘open door’ policies or agreed times when managers are able to discuss emerging issues or pressures. * Introduce flexibility in work schedules (where possible) to enable staff to cope with domestic commitments. * Develop training arrangements and refresher sessions to ensure training and competencies are up to date and appropriate for the core functions of employees’ jobs. * Talk about ways the organisation could provide support if someone is experiencing problems outside work. * Disseminate information on other areas of support (human resources department, occupational health, trained counsellors, charities). * Offer training in basic counselling skills/access to counsellors. |

### Do:

* ensure staff receive sufficient training to undertake the core functions of their job;
* provide constructive, supportive advice at annual appraisal;
* provide flexibility in work schedules, where possible;
* allow phased return to work after long-term sickness absence;
* hold regular liaison/team meetings;
* provide opportunities for career development;
* deal sensitively with staff experiencing problems outside work.

### Don’t:

* trivialise the problems of others;
* discriminate, or allow other to discriminate, against people for any reason.

## Relationships

Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

| **Area** | Action to be taken |
| --- | --- |
| **The standard** | Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, eg bullying at work. |
| **What should be happening** | * Managers promote positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness. * Employees share information relevant to their work. * The organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour. * Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour. * Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour. |
| **Ways to achieve the standard happening** | * Develop a written policy for dealing with unacceptable behaviour and grievance and disciplinary procedures for reporting incidents – communicate these to staff. * Agree and implement a confidential system for people to report unacceptable behaviour. * Agree and implement procedures to prevent, or quickly resolve, conflict at work – communicate this to staff. * Encourage good communication and provide appropriate training to aid skill development (eg listening skills, confidence building). * Select or build teams which have the right blend of expertise and experience for new projects. * Discuss how individuals work together and how they can build positive relationships. * Identify ways to celebrate success (eg informal lunches). |

### Do:

* encourage good, honest, open communication at all levels in work teams;
* provide opportunities for social interactions among workers;
* provide support for staff who work in isolation;
* create a culture where colleagues trust and encourage each other;
* agree which behaviours are unacceptable and ensure people are aware of these and how to report incidents.

### Don’t:

* allow any bullying behaviour or harassment.

## Role

Do people understand their role within the organisation? Does the organisation ensure the person does not have conflicting roles?

| **Area** | Action to be taken |
| --- | --- |
| **The standard** | Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities. |
| **What should be happening** | * SBC and managers ensure that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible. * SBC and managers provide information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities. * SBC and managers ensure that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear. * Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities. |
| **Ways to achieve the standard** | * Hold team meetings to enable members to clarify their role and discuss any role conflict. * Display team/department targets and objectives to help clarify unit and individual role. * Agree specific standards of performance for jobs and individual tasks and review periodically. * Introduce personal work plans which are aligned to the outputs of the unit. * Introduce or revise job descriptions to ensure the core functions and priorities are clear. * Hold regular one-to-one meetings to ensure individuals are clear about their role and know what is planned for the coming months. * Develop suitable induction arrangements for new staff – make sure all members of the team understand the role and responsibilities of the new recruit. |

### Do:

* provide a clear job description and define work objectives (eg through a personal work plan);
* define work structures clearly, so that all team members know who is doing what, and why;
* give all new members of staff a thorough induction to your organisation;
* avoid competing demands, such as situations where it is difficult to meet the needs of the business and the customer.

### Don’t:

* make changes to the scope of someone’s job, or their responsibilities (eg at promotion) without making sure that the individual knows what is required of them, and accepts it.

## Change

How is organisational change (large or small) managed and communicated?

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| --- | --- |
| **Area** | Action to be taken |
| **The standard** | Employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change. |
| **What should be happening** | * SBC provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes. * SBC ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals. * Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs. * Employees are aware of timetables for changes. * Employees have access to relevant support during changes. |
| **Ways to achieve the standard** | * Ensure all staff are aware of why the change is happening – agree a system for doing this. * Define and explain the key steps of the change. * Ensure employee consultation and support is a key element of the programme. * Establish a system to communicate new developments quickly. * Agree methods of communication (eg meetings, notice boards, letters, email, feedback forums) and frequency (eg weekly, monthly). * Ensure staff are aware of the impact of the change on their jobs. * Provide a system to enable staff to comment and ask questions before, during and after the change, eg for staff who want to raise their concerns. * Review unit and individual work plans after the change to ensure objectives are clear and workloads are appropriately distributed. |

### Do:

* explain what the organisation wants to achieve and why it is essential that the change(s) takes place;
* consult staff at an early stage, and throughout the change process;
* involve staff in the planning process so that they understand how their work fits in;
* explain timescales and how changes will impact directly on them.

### Don’t:

* delay communicating new developments;
* underestimate the effects of minor changes.