

Procedure

Stress risk assessment

Key messages

- The Trust is committed to promoting a culture in which stress is not seen as a sign of weakness or a reflection of capability, and in which staff should feel able to speak freely about stress and seek appropriate help.
- There are two approaches in which to manage stress in the Trust.
- The first approach is the departmental stress risk assessment approach whereby managers are required to proactively assess the risk of stress amongst their staff and put in place measures to reduce work-related stress so far as is reasonably practicable.
- The second approach is to complete the individual stress identification tool on members of staff experiencing work-related stress so that stressors can be identified and actions taken to address them.
- Support for those affected by stress is provided by [Care first](#), employee relations, occupational health, the individual's general practitioner, union representatives and chaplaincy.

1 Scope

This is a Trust-wide document.

This procedure forms part of the Trust's arrangements for Health and Safety. Please see the Trust's [health and safety policy](#).

2 Purpose

This purpose of this document is to:

- outline the Trust's approach to the management of stress
- outline key responsibilities in relation to the management of stress
- ensure that there are processes in place to identify stress and that staff are fully supported
- comply with health and safety legislation

3 Introduction

Well-designed, organised and managed work is good for us but insufficient attention to job design, work organisation and management can result in work related stress.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as:

“the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”.

This makes an important distinction between pressure – which can be motivating, challenging and improve performance – and stress, which can be detrimental to health. Stress itself is not a disease but if it is excessive and continues for some time, it can lead to mental and physical ill health.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities and take measures to control that risk.

A list of symptoms and warning signs of stress is attached at [appendix 1](#).

4 Responsibilities

4.1 The health and safety committee

It is the responsibility of the health and safety committee to:

- monitor work-related stress across the Trust through the annual Health and Safety Culture Survey and health and safety departmental audit reports

4.2 Workforce directorate

It is the responsibility of workforce to:

- monitor key measures to identify potential areas of stress in the organisation ie sickness absence, turnover data
- advise managers, in conjunction with occupational health, on the management of stress and return to work
- where high levels of stress are highlighted in an area by the annual health and safety culture survey, carry out checks with the affected departments to ensure risk assessments are complete
- provide information and training on managing stress and building resilience (see below)
- provide support, where appropriate, to employees who are being subjected to dignity at work issues

Health and safety department

Workforce directorate

4.3 Health and safety department

It is the responsibility of the health and safety department to:

- review the stress risk assessment procedure on a regular basis
- undertake health and safety audits of Trust departments to establish health and safety compliance, including stress risk assessments

4.4 Occupational health

It is the responsibility of occupational health to:

- provide advice and support to individuals who have referred themselves to occupational health
- provide advice to managers on the effect of stress on health and making recommendations in relation to an individual's return to work following sickness eg phased returns, job realignment
- refer staff, when appropriate, to a relevant service, eg Care First or Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service

4.5 Department/ ward managers

It is the responsibility of department/ ward managers to:

- complete a departmental stress risk assessment, identify and implement appropriate actions to reduce the risks of work-related stress to as low as reasonably practicable
- review departmental stress risk assessments at least annually or if there are any significant changes
- where appropriate, develop action plans in response to the findings of the annual health and safety culture survey
- support staff in the completion of individual stress risk assessments where it is identified staff are experiencing stress; identify, agree and implement appropriate actions
- where appropriate, signpost staff to support services and arrange a referral to occupational health
- follow the Trust's values and leadership behaviours at all times
- attend training in good management practice, resilience and health and safety

[Appendix 1](#) and [appendix 2](#) show ways in which a manager can help identify and decrease stress in their area.

4.6 Staff

All staff have a responsibility to:

- advise their manager if they believe they are suffering stress or are at risk of developing stress-related illness
- ensure that they are familiar with the stress procedure and participate in the stress risk assessment process when asked
- participate in the completion of an individual stress risk assessment when recommended

5 Annual Health and Safety Culture Survey

A Health and Safety Culture Survey is conducted on an annual basis. The survey provides an overview of key health and safety issues including work-related stress. The findings of the survey are fed back to division and directorate leads and action plans developed to address the highlighted risks. Data on stress indicators from the survey findings and progress on the divisional and directorate action plans are presented to the health and safety committee.

6 Departmental stress risk assessments

Managers must undertake a stress risk assessment of their work area. Departmental/ team stress risk assessments should be performed by departmental managers as an integral part of their risk assessment process. To assist managers in recognising particular stressors in their area, the risk assessment template is based on the six key stress risk factors identified by the HSE (see [appendix 2](#)).

To ensure the risk assessment is suitable and sufficient, managers should consult with staff in the work area, for example by discussion at a team meeting or focus group representing the main staff groups. After completion of the assessment an action plan should be completed and implemented. All actions should be given an owner and target date and progress monitored. Action plans should be shared with staff and reviewed at least annually and if there are any significant changes. A record of the assessment should be retained in the department/ ward health and safety folder.

7 Individual stress risk assessments

Once it has been identified that an individual is suffering with symptoms of stress, or a member of staff has advised they are suffering from stress, an individual stress risk assessment should be completed. The individual stress risk assessment is a helpful tool in identifying the likely causes of stress and developing suitable measures to be implemented. Progress on the actions arising from the assessment should be monitored.

Health and safety department

Workforce directorate

The assessment can be completed jointly by the manager and employee and an action plan developed, however if either party do not feel that is appropriate or the member of staff feels that their line manager is the source of the stress, advice should be sought from HR Consult. Consideration will be given as to whether there has been a breach of dignity at work.

Where domestic stress is having an adverse effect on the employee's work, managers should discuss with HR Consult in the first instance.

8 Management of stress related absence

The manager should manage stress-related absence in accordance with the [managing employee attendance procedure](#). When the employee's absence meets the Trust's trigger levels for sickness absence, consideration should be given to using the [managing long term sickness and ongoing health problems procedure](#). Advice should also be sought from HR Consult.

9 Information and training

Stress management awareness training is delivered by the following means:

- All staff can access [how to: deal with stress](#) on Connect for information on the management of stress.
- Further information is available through Care First, Psychological Wellbeing Service (contact details below) and Health and Wellbeing pages on Connect.
- Managers are provided with more in-depth training on stress management through the Skilful Leaders Programme.
- Resilience courses are available for managers and staff as well as bespoke resilience sessions for teams as standalone sessions or incorporated into broader team development session.
- E-learning package being finalised for all staff/ managers.

10 Support Services

10.1 Care First

'Care first' is a free service to staff providing advice, information and a counselling service, 24 hours a day. The number to call is free phone 0800 174319. In addition to telephone counselling, all staff are entitled to four face-to-face counselling sessions from Care first.

In certain circumstances Care first may be able to provide counselling for groups of staff or support such as facilitation/ mediation.

Health and safety department

Workforce directorate

10.2 Psychological Wellbeing Service

The Psychological Wellbeing Service (IAPT) offers cognitive behaviour therapies and other talking therapies for common difficulties such as depression, anxiety and stress. It is available to all staff either through self-referral or a supported referral via Occupational Health. The service operates two clinics a week (Tuesday and Friday) at Cambridge Health at Work and can be contacted on 01223 726789.

10.3 Other support services

Support for those affected by stress is also provided by employee relations, occupational health, the individual's general practitioner, union and staff side representatives, and chaplaincy. A mental health group 'It's not just you' is also available for staff to attend.

11 Further Information

- [Stress: HSE webpages](#)
- [Stress: Individuals dealing with stress](#)
- [Health & Wellbeing: Mental Health pages on Connect](#)

12 Monitoring compliance with and the effectiveness of this policy

The occupational health department will be responsible for undertaking an annual audit using the audit standards/ tool at [appendix 2](#). The audit will review the implementation of the policy including the level 3 NHSLA risk management standard 3.10 relating to stress, as follows:

- process for identifying workplace stressors
- the requirements to undertake appropriate risk assessments for the prevention and management of workplace stressors

The results of the audit will be presented to the health and safety committee on an annual basis by a representative from occupational health/ risk and patient safety. The committee will agree and monitor any actions required to bring about improvement. A re-audit will be undertaken annually.

13 Associated documents

13.1 Risk assessment forms

- [departmental stress risk assessment template](#)
- [individual stress risk assessment template](#)

Health and safety department

Workforce directorate

13.2 Policies and procedures

- [dignity at work policy](#)
- [dignity at work – a simple guide](#)
- [disciplinary procedure](#)
- [domestic abuse – support for staff policy](#)
- [flexible working procedure](#)
- [grievance procedure](#)
- [how to: deal with stress](#)
- [managing employee attendance procedure](#)
- [managing long term sickness and ongoing health problems procedure](#)
- [organisational change policy and procedure](#)
- [supporting staff following traumatic or distressing events policy](#)

Equality and diversity statement

This document complies with the Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust employment equality and diversity statement.

Disclaimer

It is **your** responsibility to check against the electronic library that this printed out copy is the most recent issue of this document.

Document management

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Appendix 1: symptoms and warning signs of stress

There is a clear link between insufficient attention to job design, work organisation and management and subsequent ill health. The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them should be identified early and its cause investigated to try and control the issues before they cause stress-related ill health and absence.

People vary in how much stress they can experience before it has an effect on their health. Stress can have a negative effect both physically and emotionally. Some general signs to look out for in the workplace, which may mean someone is stressed, include:

- fatigue
- mood swings
- skin problems
- altered work performance
- low self esteem
- anxiety
- poor concentration
- poor memory/ forgetfulness

Signs of stress in a group include:

- disputes and disaffection within the group
- increase in staff turnover
- increase in complaints and grievances
- increased sickness absence
- increased reports of stress
- difficulty in attracting new staff
- poor performance

Possible causes of work-related stress include:

- feeling there is too much or too little to do
- work that feels too difficult or easy
- little freedom or flexibility of work
- lack of clarity about where you fit into the workplace
- conflicting work demands
- feeling that there is little scope for your role to develop
- lack of communication or involvement in decision making within the organisation
- trying to balance working and home life demands
- relationships at work which do not feel supportive

Appendix 2: Health and Safety Executive (HSE) stress management standards

The HSE has identified six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. These are called the stress management standards. These are set out below detailing the standards that should be achieved in each key area:

The departmental and individual stress risk assessment templates are set out to reflect these key areas.

Demands – this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.

Good practice:

- employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns
- the organisation provides 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

Control – how much say the person has in the way they do their work.

Good practice:

- employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns
- where possible, employees have control over their pace of work
- 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 have a say over when breaks can be taken
- employees are consulted over their work patterns

Support – this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

Good practice:

- employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns
- 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

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- employees have or know how to access the required resources to do their job
- employees receive regular and constructive feedback

Relationships – this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

Good practice:

- employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, eg bullying at work
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns
- the organisation promotes 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

Role – whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures they do not have conflicting roles.

Good practice:

- employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns
- the organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible
- the organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities
- the organisation ensures 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

Change – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

Good practice:

- employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing and organisational change
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns
- the organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes
- the organisation 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