

Don't let stress affect your staff

Work-related stress is defined as a harmful reaction that people have to undue pressure and demands placed on them at work. Across the UK, work-related stress accounts for over half of all working days lost to ill health.

The law requires employers to tackle work-related stress, and whilst employers are not responsible for diagnosing or treating stress, it is essential to assess the risk of work-related stress and have processes in place to manage those risks.

As well as the general health and happiness of your workforce, taking action on stress brings business benefits, such as reducing absence, improving staff retention, boosting morale and improving productivity, all of which saves money for the business in the long term.

There are six key areas that have been identified in the HSE Management Standards as causing work related stress:

Demands: All employees should feel able to cope with the demands of their jobs and that their abilities are matched to their job role.

Control: Employees are consulted about the way that their work is organised and undertaken, and they have regular opportunities for discussion with their manager about their work.

“ Over 12 million working days in the UK are lost to stress

Labour Force survey

Support: It should be clear that employees can expect support from their manager as well as other employees, and that there are resources in place to help line managers support their teams.

Relationships: The organisation promotes positive behaviours at work and employees are not subjected to workplace bullying, harassment or unacceptable behaviour.

Role: Every employee should have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities within the organisation.

Change: Employees are provided with timely and accurate information when undergoing change and are aware of any probable impact to their job.

One of the key issues when managing work-place stress, is how you help an employee that is having problems.

Best practice suggests that you encourage them to talk to someone that can help, such as their GP or – if you have one – your occupational health team.

The HSE talking toolkit has a wealth of information on how to start conversations around the six key areas of work-related stress; you can also contact the NCC

Benevolent Fund (The Fund) for further support and advice for individuals.



The Fund is the industry charity, it supports people working past or present in any sector of the industry. In December, it launched a new support service, centred on a helpline that can support employees and managers when dealing with a difficult situation. The helpline is free to use for both employers and employees, and can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

The helpline is answered by BACP (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy) accredited counsellors and they can provide support for a number of issues such as stress, anxiety and depression. To find out more about the service or to sign your organisation up, contact, Melanie Day, Benevolent Fund Manager at melanie.d@thncc.org.uk

For more information on managing stress in the workplace, including identifying risks and to obtain a copy of the taking toolkit, visit www.hse.gov.uk