



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



STRESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SHEET

N O . 2

Information sheets will:

Help all employees identify stressors that may exist in the workplace

Assist managers in the risk assessment process

Supply information on support services which the HSE can offer to help employees

IDENTIFICATION

This information sheet introduces the first stage of the Cycle of Stress Management; **IDENTIFICATION**. Here, you will find information on how to identify stress and clarify the role all employees play in relation to managing stress. Additional information sheets are available that focus on each stage of the Cycle of Stress Management.

STRESS DEFINITIONS

STRESS is a mental and physical condition which results from pressure or demands that strain or exceed your capacity to cope. The sources of such pressure or demands are called **STRESSORS**.

WORK RELATED STRESS (WRS) are the conditions, practices and events at work which may give rise to stress. WRS is stress caused or made worse by work. While stress may result from different aspects of life, the main focus of this campaign is on work-related stress. Factors that are not work-related can affect you in the workplace.

It should be noted that work generally provides opportunities for developing and maintaining positive mental health and well-being. There is a difference between positive stress, which is associated with a sense of challenge and excitement and negative stress which is dominated by worry, anxiety and agitation.

For more information please refer to the [HSE's Policy on the Prevention & Management of Stress in the Workplace](#)—A Guide for Managers, HSAG 2012/2.

For more Information
visit ;

[http://www.hse.ie/eng/
staff/safetywellbeing/](http://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/safetywellbeing/)

[www.hse.ie/
europeansafetyweek](http://www.hse.ie/europeansafetyweek)

[www.healthy-
workplaces.eu/en](http://www.healthy-workplaces.eu/en)

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF WORK RELATED STRESS



The potential causes of stress at work are:

Demands— Includes issues like workload, work pattern and the work environment.

Control—How much say the person has in the way they do their work.

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

Relationships- Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behavior.

Role— Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

Change— How organizational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

Reward and contribution— Includes pay, benefits, reward and positive feedback.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I MIGHT BE TOO STRESSED?

Stress produces a wide range of signs and symptoms, if you feel your attitude or behaviour is changing to a situation at work or at home it may indicate stress. The following is a non exhaustive list of symptoms of stress:

Behaviour: You may:

- Find it hard to sleep
- Change your eating habits
- Smoke or drink more
- Avoid friends and family

Physical symptoms might include:

- Tiredness
- Indigestion and nausea
- Headaches
- Aching muscles

Mentally you may:

- Be more indecisive
- Find it hard to concentrate
- Suffer poor memory
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Low self esteem

Emotionally you are likely to:

- Get irritable or angry
- Be anxious
- Feel numb
- Be hypersensitive
- Feel drained and listless

Did you know?

Reduced performance due to psychosocial problems may be double the cost of absenteeism

WHAT CAN I DO IF I THINK I AM TOO STRESSED?

- It is important that you raise the issue with your manager.
- Together the sources of stress can be discussed and any reasonable steps to address them can be agreed
- The sooner you discuss the problem, the sooner you can identify a solution with your Manager
- Your Manager may, if you agree, refer you to a support service such as the Employee Assistance, Staff Counselling services, Occupational Health Department and your local HR Coaching Network for professional support.
- If you prefer, you may contact these support services directly. You can do this without discussing the issue with your Manager



MANAGERS ROLE IN IDENTIFYING STRESS – RISK ASSESSMENT



Managers have a crucial role to play in the successful identification of work related stress within their workforce. They also have a legal obligation under the Safety Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, Section 19, to identify hazards and assess the risks associated with them in consultation with their employees:

- Eliminate the source of risks hazards/stressors - often involves affecting change
- Reducing the risk by reducing the hazards/stressors in the workplace and /or limiting their impact
- Protecting employees from the risk by limiting the exposure to the hazards/stressors
- Monitor and review the levels of risk continuously

Risk Assessment is not a one off!

The HSE policy “Prevention and Management of Stress in the Workplace” and the Health and Safety Authority’s (HSA’s) Work Related Stress A Guide for Employers” both promote a three level approach to stress management. The common factor in both is **PREVENTION** that will be discussed in more detail in Information Sheet No. 3.

Risk Assessment Tools:

The National Health & Safety Function along with our colleagues in the Organisational Psychology Unit, HR Services, HSE West have developed a [risk assessment tool](#) for Managers. This tool offers managers a systematic approach to assessing psychosocial hazards using the Health and Safety Executive UK Management Standards. This risk assessment can be used with an individual employee and/or with groups of employees and can assist in assessing the risk for a service or department. Click on the following link to find out more: <http://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/safetywellbeing/>.

In addition to the above the Health and Safety Executive (UK) developed a questionnaire for staff to assist managers in the identification of WRS within their organisation. The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) incorporated these questions into their **Work Positive** tool, click on the following link to find out more information: http://www.hsa.ie/eng/Workplace_Health/Workplace_Stress/. The Work Positive tool includes an online survey that can be used to identify potential workplace stressors as well as a process to identify potential solutions. You may use the results of this survey to measure your service against the Management Standards.

As a manager, you may wish to collate information from a number of sources e.g. employee questionnaires (surveys such as work positive), sickness absence records, interviews with staff and exit interviews to name but a view. Following review of this data it may be necessary to take appropriate action to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Read Information Sheet No. 3 - Prevention

Improvement notices have been issued by the HSA for failing to have control mechanisms for hazards that may lead to stress

