**Roles and responsibilities regarding work-related stress**

# Board directors/CEOs

It is important that individuals across the organisation see that their directors/CEO believe in this issue; without their commitment, it is unlikely that measures to tackle this problem will be effective. The directors’ roles and responsibilities include:

* To understand work-related stress: what causes it, how it can be prevented, and how it can be managed
* To champion action to tackle work-related stress (e.g. signing communications, attending seminars etc.)
* To lead by example (e.g. demonstrating a commitment to work–life balance initiatives by not working excessive hours)
* To provide commitment to tackling this issue, including providing necessary resources to undertake the *Management Standards for Stress* or an equivalent approach and to implement the solutions identified
* To support human resources managers and health and safety managers in taking action to prevent and manage stress.

# Health and safety managers

Health and safety managers are central to the processes that prevent and manage stress. They are key to ensuring that the risk of work-related stress is properly identified and managed. They will need to work with their HR department in tackling this issue. Depending on how the organisation divides responsibilities, different tasks may be assigned to health and safety managers and HR managers.

Health and safety managers’ roles and responsibilities include:

* To understand work-related stress: what causes it, and how it can be prevented and managed
* To engage and communicate with staff about this issue and raise awareness; this may include working with trade unions
* To undertake the *Management Standards for Stress* or an equivalent approach to identify the hazards and extent of stress in their organisation and what solutions they are going to implement to improve the situation
* To work with others, including their HR department, in implementing solutions identified by staff
* To monitor and review solutions, policies and procedures
* To ensure they collect evidence of their risk assessment for work-related stress to show inspectors
* To support line managers in managing individuals with work-related stress, and in preventing the problem from happening
* To work with others providing support services (e.g. occupational health services) to identify the sources of problems that need action and to manage the successful return of individuals to work
* To identify additional policies and initiatives that may promote health and well-being.

# Human resources managers

Human resources managers are central to the processes that prevent and manage stress. They are key to ensuring that policies and procedures are developed and implemented. They will need to work with their health and safety department in tackling this issue. Depending on how the organisation divides responsibilities, different tasks may be assigned to HR managers and health and safety managers. HR managers’ roles and responsibilities include:

* To understand work-related stress: what causes it, and how it can be prevented and managed
* To develop suitable policies to tackle this issue in their organisation
* To engage and communicate with staff about this issue and raise awareness; this may include working with trade unions
* To undertake the *Management Standards for Stress* or equivalent approach to identify extent of stress in their organisation and what solutions they are going to implement to improve the situation
* To work with others, including their health and safety department, in implementing solutions identified by staff
* To monitor and review solutions, policies and procedures
* To support line managers in managing individuals with work-related stress, and in preventing the problem from happening
* To work with others providing support services (e.g. occupational health services) to identify sources of problems that need action and to manage the successful return of individuals to work
* To identify additional policies and initiatives that may promote health and well-being.

# Line managers

Line managers are crucial to the successful prevention and management of work-related stress within their teams. They tend to be the first port of call when there is a problem and they are in an ideal position to identify and manage stress. But the way they behave can also be part of the problem; if a manager has the appropriate skills they are better able to deal with stress within the team. Line managers’ roles and responsibilities include:

* To understand work-related stress: what causes it, and how it can be prevented and managed
* To engage and communicate with staff about stress and raise awareness
* To be aware of their organisation’s policies and procedures on this issue
* To support and get involved in organisational initiatives to tackle stress (e.g. encouraging staff to complete questionnaires, attend focus groups or suggest solutions)
* To understand their role in preventing and managing work-related stress, including their part in sometimes causing or exacerbating it
* To be aware of their competency in managing and preventing this issue and how this can impact on staff, as well as taking action to improve their competency
* To identify potential causes of stress before they become a problem
* To identify the early signs of work-related stress in their team members and to work with the individuals and HR in resolving the problem
* To support staff in preventing work-related stress and to help them manage it should it occur, including providing access to relevant support services
* To identify and implement solutions that will prevent work-related stress in their teams
* To help staff return to work successfully after work-related stress.

# Employees

Employees have a responsibility to raise concerns and tell their manager or representative about possible problems and sources of stress. If the organisation is not aware of a problem, it can be difficult for action to be taken. Employees’ roles and responsibilities include:

* To understand work-related stress: what causes it, and how it can be prevented and managed
* To raise awareness about this issue with their colleagues and prevent stigma. This includes taking the issue seriously
* To be aware of their organisation’s policies and procedures on this issue
* To identify potential causes of stress for themselves and their colleagues before they become a problem and to raise them with their line manager or other suitable individuals; this may include, where appropriate, sources of stress outside work
* To identify the early signs of excessive pressure that may lead to work-related stress and to raise this issue with their line manager or HR department so they can help in resolving the problem
* To work with their manager or HR department in tackling the issue (e.g. identifying solutions that they think may help)
* To support and get involved in organisational initiatives to tackle this issue (e.g. completing questionnaires, attending focus groups or suggesting solutions)
* To be supportive of colleagues experiencing work-related stress

If they are absent from work because of work-related stress, to work with their line manager or HR department in identifying solutions to help them return to work effectively and quickly.

**Trade union representatives**

Trade unions are key to ensuring that an organisation engages with staff over work-related stress and uses staff suggestions in developing solutions. Trade union representatives may be the first port of call for staff experiencing problems, particularly if the line management chain is part of the problem. Trade union representatives’ roles and responsibilities include:

* To understand work-related stress: what causes it, and how it can be prevented and managed
* To encourage their organisation to tackle this issue and gain commitment to it
* To engage and communicate with staff about this issue and raise awareness
* To work with their organisation in developing an approach, including policies and procedures, to tackle it (e.g. supporting the organisation to undertake the *Management Standards for Stress* or an equivalent approach to identify problem areas and solutions)
* To work with others, including their HR and health and safety departments, in implementing solutions identified by staff
* To monitor and review solutions, policies and procedures
* To encourage staff to identify and address the early signs of stress and to work with their line managers, trade union representatives or other relevant individuals for help in resolving these issues
* To provide support to individuals experiencing work-related stress by helping them to talk to their line managers about the problem, and directing them to suitable services to help them tackle this issue (e.g. occupational health services)
* To work with the organisation in identifying additional policies and initiatives that may promote health and well-being.

# Occupational health services

Occupational health providers have a particular role in working with individuals who are experiencing work-related stress and helping them to remain at work or return to work successfully. They also have a role in supporting the organisation by providing access to anonymous information that can help identify particular problems or trends which may need to be addressed. Occupational health providers’ roles and responsibilities include:

* To understand work-related stress: what causes it, and how it can be prevented and managed
* To provide support to individuals experiencing work-related stress (e.g. helping them talk to their line managers; identifying and advising on possible solutions; and directing them to suitable additional services)
* To help individuals return to work successfully (e.g. by advising on return-to-work strategies)
* To support the organisation in preventing work-related stress by providing reports containing anonymous information about trends and sources of stress which it can use to identify solutions
* To work with the organisation in identifying additional policies and initiatives that may promote health and well-being.

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| Responsibility | How will you undertake this? What actions will you engage in (or are currently engaged in)? What support might you envisage needing? Are there any barriers to obtaining this? |
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