



# Working Together

## **HSENI Management Standards for work-related stress**

**Joint Union School Leaders Seminar**

**January 2024**

# Our starting point

Tackling stress is paramount to effective management of health, safety and wellbeing in every workplace, including schools.

Ensuring that the welfare or wellbeing of employees is protected during their working day and that outside their working hours they can maintain a positive work–life balance

# HSE NI Helping Employers

HSENI advisors can assist your organisation through the risk assessment process from securing commitment to continuous improvement.

HSE NI mental well-being at work advisors can assist with:

- ✓ securing commitment from senior managers
- ✓ communicating key aspects of the process to staff
- ✓ facilitating the process (development and collation of data from the indicator tool)

Implementing the management standards in your organisation will:

- ✓ help ensure your organisation's compliance with the legal requirements for work-related stress
- ✓ follow best practice approach to risk assessment
- ✓ promote active discussion and working in partnership with employees to help decide on practical improvements that can be made.

# HSENI and work-related stress

Find out more about HSENI's Mental Well-being at Work Advisory Service

- [free resources for employers, line managers and employees](#)
- [Mental Well-being: Questions and Answers](#)

# The Law

Employers have a duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Order (NI) 1978 to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, their workplaces are safe and healthy.

Under the management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, they are also required to assess risk. The union view is that stress should be treated like any other health hazard.

Following the case of *Walker -v- Northumberland County Council (1994)* an employer's legal duty of care has been extended to embrace psychiatric damage (which includes work related stress).

# The Risk Assessment Process



# **HSENI management standards for work-related stress**

**The management standards define the characteristics, or culture, of an organisation where the risks from work-related stress are being effectively managed and controlled.**

# Management standards

**The management standards cover 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**



**the six management standards cover the primary sources of stress at work.**

**Demands**

**Control**

**Support**

**Relationships**

**Role**

**Change**

Includes issues such as workload, work patterns, and the work environment.

**The standard is that:**

- ✓ 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.

**What should be happening/states to be achieved**

- ✓ 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

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

**The standard is that:**

- ✓ 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.

**What should be happening/states to be achieved**

- ✓ 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; and- employees are consulted over their work patterns

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

**The standard is that:**

- ✓ 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

**What should be happening/states to be achieved**

- ✓ 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

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

**The standard is that:**

- ✓ employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, for example, bullying at work
- ✓ systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

**What should be happening/states to be achieved**

- ✓ 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

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

**The standard is that:**

- ✓ employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities
- ✓ systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

**What should be happening/states to be achieved**

- ✓ 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

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

**The standard is that:**

- ✓ employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change
- ✓ systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

**What should be happening/states to be achieved:**

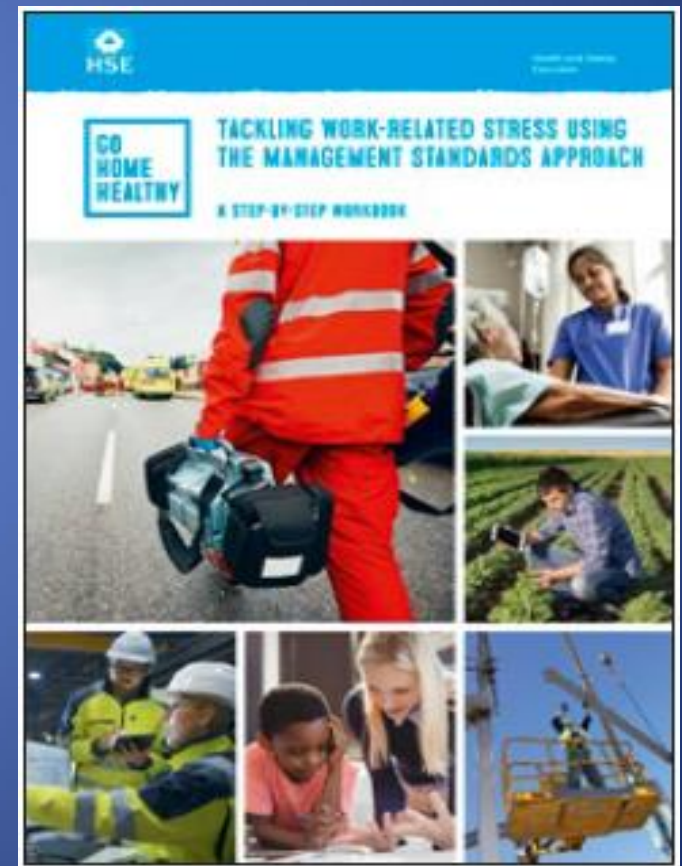
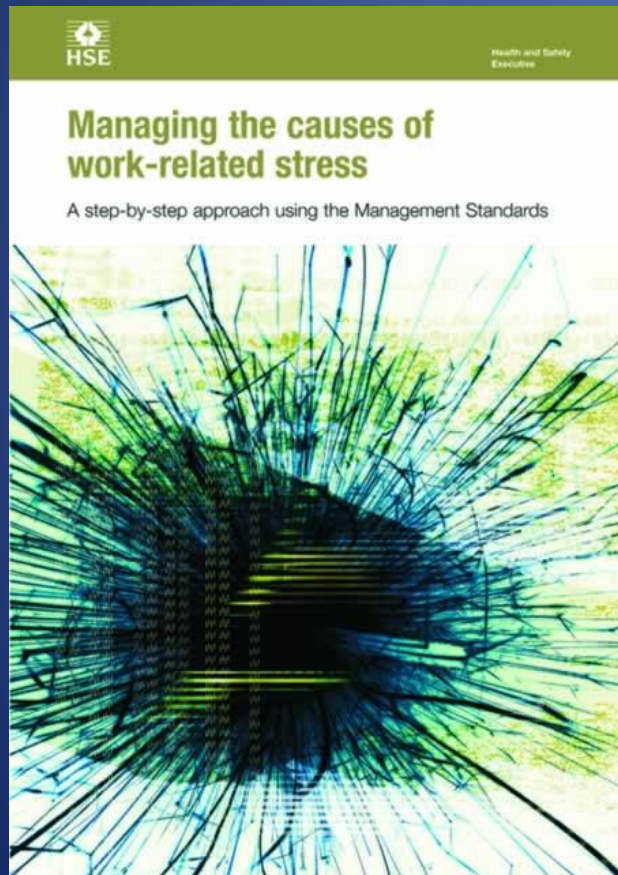
- ✓ the organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes
- ✓ the organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals
- ✓ employees are aware of the probable 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

# Key points about the management standards

- ✓ The management standards represent a set of conditions that, if present, reflect a high level of health and wellbeing and organisational performance.
- ✓ demonstrate good practice through a step by step risk assessment approach
- ✓ allow assessment of the current situation using surveys and other techniques
- ✓ promote active discussion and working in partnership with employees to help decide on practical improvements that can be made
- ✓ **Help simplify risk assessment for work related stress by:**
- ✓ identifying the main risk factors for work-related stress
- ✓ helping employers focus on the underlying causes and their prevention
- ✓ providing a yardstick by which organisations can gauge their performance in tackling the key causes of stress



# Further Guidance



# Useful Links

<https://www.hseni.gov.uk/topic/mental-well-being-work>

Link to HSENI Mental Well-being Topic page

<https://www.hseni.gov.uk/publications/line-manager-competency-indicator-tool>

Link to Line Manager Competency Indicator Tool

[https://www.hseni.gov.uk/publications/topic/mental-well-being-work-40?srch\\_topic=6090](https://www.hseni.gov.uk/publications/topic/mental-well-being-work-40?srch_topic=6090)

Link to HSENI website tools and templates