



AN INTRODUCTION FOR EMPLOYEES



WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is the natural reaction people have to excessive pressures or demands. If it is prolonged or intense it can lead to mental and physical ill health, such as depression, back pain, nervous breakdown and heart disease. Work-related stress can affect anyone in any sector and in any size of organisation. Being under pressure can improve performance and give satisfaction when challenging objectives are achieved. But when demand and pressure are too much they lead to stress.

SIGNS OF STRESS

Some of the effects of stress on an individual include:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Mood swings, depression or panic attacks
- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Loss of confidence/self esteem
- Sleep disorder
- Changes in eating habits
- Irritability/aggression
- Stomach disorder
- Increased smoking
- Increased drinking (alcohol)
- Loss of motivation
- Anxiety

WHAT CAUSES STRESS AT WORK?

Some of the factors that may cause of stress at work include:

- Poor communication and inappropriate management style
- Lack of control
- Change and lack of job security
- Unrealistic deadlines
- Unreasonable workload, unsociable hours, inflexible working arrangements
- Lack of training, resources and opportunities to develop
- Unclear roles
- Interpersonal conflict
- Lack of feedback on performance and feeling undervalued
- Uncomfortable or unsafe working environment
- Bullying
- Harassment
- Nature of the job, such as working with the public, working alone, repetitive or boring work

THE ROLE OF YOUR EMPLOYER

Your employer has a legal duty to ensure your health, safety and welfare whilst you are at work. They also have a responsibility to assess the risks that may affect your health and put reasonable control measures in place to prevent or reduce them.

YOUR ROLE

You have a specific role in identifying the causes of stress through a risk assessment process. Your views about the current situation and how things can be improved will help us to reduce the risks identified. By working in partnership we can create a healthier working environment.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU ARE ALREADY EXPERIENCING STRESS?

If you are experiencing stress it may help to talk to someone. This may be one or more of the following:

- Family/Friends/Colleagues/GP
- Line manager/Supervisor
- Human Resources/Occupational Health
- Staff Representative/Union Representative
- EAP (Employee Assisted Programme)
- External Helplines

If the stress is work-related then you should talk to someone at work as it is a health and safety issue and there may be something that can be done to help.