



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Estyn's Policy and Guidance for Managing Stress and Wellbeing in the Workplace

Information sheet

Information box

For further advice contact: Lead Officer: Health, safety and wellbeing

Date of publication: August 2013

Planned review date: August 2016

Version control

Version	Author	Date of issue	Changes made
6.0	Lin Poole	28 April 2010	After further review with LG
6.1	Lin Poole	18 May 2010	For Executive Board
6.2	Phil Sweeney	June 2010	Following Ex Brd consideration
7.0	Glyn Coles	1 December 2010	Revised version following consultation
8.0	Gina Carrington	August 2013	Review and revision of 2010 Policy. Impact assessment carried out.

Any enquiries or comments regarding this policy should be addressed to:

Lead Officer: Health, safety and wellbeing

Estyn

Anchor Court

Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to gina.carrington@estyn.gov.uk

This and other Estyn publications are available on our website: www.estyn.gov.uk

This document has been translated by Trosol (English to Welsh)

- A business rationale assessment has been carried out and this policy contributes to Estyn's strategic objectives and delivery principles.
- An equality impact assessment has been carried out and this policy is not deemed to adversely impact on any people on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Contents	Page
Introduction	1
Organisational approach	1
Scope of policy	2
Policy aims	2
To whom does this policy apply?	2
How we manage stress in the workplace	3
Assessing risks	3
Staff surveys	3
Access to confidential counselling services	3
Occupational Health Services	4
Awareness raising and training	4
Policy agreement form	5
Stress Management - Workplace Toolkit	

Introduction

Organisational approach

- 1 Estyn values each of our employees and the contribution they make to our work. We realise that stress and stress-related symptoms can prevent people from performing to the best of their ability and can affect their general health and wellbeing.
- 2 We are committed to meeting the employer's duty under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to assess the nature and scale of risks to health in the workplace, which includes those of a psychological nature, and to introduce control measures to eliminate or reduce that risk.
- 3 We recognise the challenges (both organisational and personal) associated with identifying stress and discussing it openly, and aim to support staff and managers in meeting these challenges.
- 4 The appended Stress Management Toolkit contains detailed guidance designed to help managers and their staff identify and deal with stress-related problems as part of a joint responsibility for their health and safety.
- 5 The Health & Safety Executive defines work related stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them". This definition makes an important distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge (which can be stimulating and motivating) and work related stress, which is the natural but distressing reaction to perceived demands or "pressures" that an individual cannot cope with at a given time. Stress is not in itself an illness, but, if prolonged or intense, it can induce or contribute to ill health.

Scope of the policy

Policy aims

6 Estyn aims to:

- provide a healthy work environment where workplace stress is identified and avoided, where possible;
- provide an open, supportive culture which promotes personal wellbeing, where those affected by stress are encouraged to discuss problems and possible solutions constructively and where managers and staff work together to identify and prevent stress in the workplace;
- consider the potential impact on personal wellbeing of organisational changes such as redesigning roles, changing the work environment;
- work closely with managers, staff and trade unions to promote wellbeing and to reduce stress in the workplace; and
- ensure that adequate resources are provided to support the policy and promote staff wellbeing. This includes training and access to external support services (e.g. counselling and occupational health) as appropriate.

To whom does this policy apply?

7 This policy applies to all permanent employees of Estyn, seconded and temporary staff regardless of their age, gender, gender identity, disability, race, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation or marital status, responsibilities for dependants, working patterns (such as the need, or desire, to work part-time hours) or other irrelevant considerations. It does not form part of the contract of employment.

How we manage stress in the workplace

- 8 Research has shown that dealing with stress-related issues at an early stage can have beneficial effects, not only on the individual's wellbeing, but can also reduce sickness absence in the longer term and enable productivity levels to be maintained.
- 9 Both managers and individuals share responsibility for identifying the signs of stress and for working together to explore solutions to problems.
- 10 Managers engage in regular, open discussion with individual employees and encourage staff to raise issues of concern at the earliest opportunity so that consideration can be given to the potential impact on their personal wellness, and on work performance and the achievement of objectives.
- 11 Estyn will consider issues in a sensitive and non-judgemental way and will offer appropriate support to individuals who may be suffering stress.

Assessing risks

- 12 Estyn:
 - assesses the risks of stress associated with work processes and working practices on a regular basis and works closely with employees to identify individual cases of stress at an early stage, before it becomes a problem; and
 - identifies and reduces the factors that cause individuals to feel they may be under pressure at work by proactive risk assessment of the work processes and by evaluating the responses to staff surveys.
- 13 If an individual displays symptoms of stress or highlights stress as an issue or if he/she has been absent from work with a stress-related illness, Estyn managers will complete an individual stress assessment with the individual (Section 4 of Stress Management Toolkit).

Staff surveys

- 14 Estyn will use the Cabinet Office staff survey as a tool to help identify the areas in an individual's working life that can contribute to causing stress such as demands, the degree of control over work, the effectiveness of communication, roles, the impact of change and relationships, and the support available.

Access to confidential counselling services

- 15 Where the line manager or the employee considers that personal wellbeing is being affected by stress the employee can seek free, independent guidance from Estyn's Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or from other sources, for example the employee's General Practitioner. The EAP can offer confidential advice, guidance for staff and managers to help them manage pressure and counselling. They can be

contacted on **0800 282 193** . This is a confidential helpline and the identity of anybody who uses the service will not be revealed to Estyn, except in extreme circumstances, for example if there is a risk to life.

Occupational Health Services

- 16 Estyn will consult its Occupational Health provider, as appropriate, to seek advice about individual cases and to agree appropriate return to work programmes or to make adjustments to existing working practices to help reduce the effect of pressure at work on employees, particularly after a period of sickness absence. Occupational health advice will always be sought when individuals have been absent from work for more than 4 weeks with stress-related illness.

Awareness raising and training

- 17 The guidance in the Stress Management Toolkit appended to this policy is intended to help managers and individuals to identify, understand and manage stress in the workplace.
- 18 Estyn will continue to support managers to help them to be able to identify problems at an early stage by providing appropriate awareness-raising training and authoritative advice and guidance. Such support helps managers to deal with individual cases appropriately. We will also continue to support staff to help them to identify potential stressors and to manage them appropriately by providing training and other resources.

Policy agreement form

- 19 Estyn's Policy on Managing Stress and Wellbeing in the Workplace
- 20 This policy and its associated procedures are agreed by Estyn's management and Trades Unions.

Signed on behalf of Estyn's management:



Name: Strategic Director

Date: July 2013

Signed on behalf of Estyn's Trades Unions:



Philip Barry

Names: Huw Collins FDA

Philip Barry PCS

Date: 26 July 2013

29th July 2013



Rhagoriaeth i bawb – Excellence for all

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg
a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru

Her Majesty's Inspectorate
for Education and Training in Wales

Estyn's Stress Management Workplace Toolkit

Contents	Page
Section 1: Definition and possible stress-related symptoms	1
Section 2: Estyn's approach to managing stress	3
Section 3: Individual Stress Assessment	8
Section 4: Guidance on Individual Stress Assessment	13
Section 5: Frequently asked questions	18

Section 1: Definition and possible stress-related symptoms in the workplace

What is stress?

- 1 The Health & Safety Executive defines work related stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them”.
- 2 This definition makes an important distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge (which can be stimulating and motivating) and work related stress, which is the natural but distressing reaction to perceived demands or “pressures” that an individual cannot cope with at a given time. Stress is not in itself an illness, but, if prolonged or intense, it can induce or contribute to ill health.

Stress versus pressure

- 3 People have different coping limits in relation to perceived pressure or stress. It is important to acknowledge and recognise the distinction between the beneficial effects of reasonable pressure and challenge (which can be stimulating and motivating) and stress, which arises when an individual cannot cope with the demands placed on them at a given time, be they domestic or work related.
- 4 All of us can experience stress at some time during our lives which may affect our work performance. In order to be able to address stress-related issues promptly and effectively it is important to recognise the signs of stress in yourself and in colleagues. Common indicators include a change in behaviour or attitude, change in performance, and an increase in short-term sickness absence.

Example indicators of stress

- 5 The following list may be helpful in identifying potential stress. It is not exhaustive, and the presence of one or more of these symptoms does not necessarily indicate that stress is the cause; but it is something that you should consider. If identified you should take appropriate action to determine if stress is an issue, using the guidance and Individual Stress Assessment form in Sections 2 – 4 of this toolkit.

Signs in yourself	Signs in others
Headaches and/or muscular tension, clenched fists or jaw	Uncharacteristic errors
Stomach problems e.g. indigestion, constipation, diarrhoea or nausea	Indecisiveness or uncharacteristic quietness
Tiredness, problems sleeping and relaxing, restlessness, feeling drained	Change in working hours and patterns (longer or shorter working, extended lunches and not taking holidays)
Changes in eating patterns/appetite	Reckless driving

and rapid weight gain or loss	
Frequent colds, flu or other infections; susceptibility to allergies	Making complaints e.g. about time pressures
Palpitations, breathlessness, fainting, dizziness, excessive sweating	Unreliability
Recurrence of previous illnesses	Resistance to change, loss of motivation and commitment
Skin irritations, rashes	Irritability, demonstrating bad temper, mood swings
Increased consumption of alcohol or smoking	Poor concentration, memory lapses
Impaired speech, e.g. stammering, voice tremor	Increase in sickness absence
Low self esteem, loss of confidence, feeling inadequate and unable to cope	Poor relationships with colleagues
Unsociability, moodiness, loss of sense of humour	Changes in demeanour – passiveness or aggression, personality clashes, bullying or excessive criticism of others
Antisocial behaviour, lying	Shows of emotion, crying, sulking
Being accident prone	Loss of confidence, motivation
Apathy, reduced libido, making excuses	Tendering resignation

Section 2: Estyn's approach to managing stress

- 6 Stress is not a sign of weakness, all of us can experience stress at some time in our lives whether caused by work or personal circumstances. Stress affects people in different ways. People have different coping limits, and what one person finds stressful can be normal to another.

Line managers' responsibility

- 7 Line managers have an important role to play in getting to know colleagues and being alert to any changes in them or the signs of any problems.
- 8 Line managers have a joint responsibility with staff to identify and assess the potential risks arising from stressful situations in the workplace and prevent stress as far as is reasonably practical. If a member of staff shows signs of stress, or is returning from a period of sickness absence where stress was stated as the cause or a contributing factor towards the absence, the line manager should have a discussion with the individual around the Individual Stress Assessment in Section 3 of the toolkit.

Individual responsibility

- 9 Individuals and their managers share responsibility for identifying workplace stress and working together to manage it, so it is important to be aware of the symptoms and acknowledge the effects of stress, so that any issues can be addressed effectively. Provided it is addressed promptly and effectively, it should not normally affect an individual's health or career prospects, although it may be that, in some cases, alternative roles or jobs may provide a relief for the work pressure being experienced.

Possible sources of stress

- 10 Stress affects people in different ways and what one person finds stressful can be normal to another. Many diverse factors can cause stress, some are work-related and some are personal. The list below is intended to facilitate consideration of possible causes of stress but is not exhaustive.

Work/career	Personal
Lack of control over work or decision making	Bereavement
No variety of work – boredom	Illness or injury
Lack of skills/knowledge or training	Family pressures
Fear of technology	Caring responsibility for another person
Amount of work – overloaded or insufficient	Relationship or other personal problems
Conflicting priorities	Financial worries
Fluctuations in workload	Conflict between the demands of home and work
Bullying, harassment, risk of violence or verbal threats or abuse	Travel to work (delays to transport or traffic)

Relationships with colleagues and/or managers	Ill health or disability (whether newly diagnosed, unstable or progressive)
Resources (staff/equipment)	Lack of support at home
Unsociable hours	Change in living conditions e.g. moving home
Workplace location	Domestic violence or abuse
Work environment (heating, ventilation, space, noise, workstation design)	
Job insecurity	
Uncertainty of career path	
Lack of promotion prospects	
Change or restructuring of role	
Lack of recognition of work/contribution	
Lack of involvement or engagement	
Complaints	
Isolation due to new work practices (home-working)	

Individual perspective

- 11 While managers are not expected to be experts on stress and are not doctors or psychologists, good management practice includes being approachable, supportive and leading by example, and can go a long way towards identifying and dealing with stress-related problems. The example indicators of stress at Section 1 are intended to help spot the signs of stress before it becomes a problem for individuals. Make a note of any that you consider may be relevant, use this to construct a tailored action plan, and put it into practice.
- 12 Of course, managers are not solely responsible for the welfare of their employees; individuals are also responsible for their own wellbeing and need to work with you to identify and attempt to find solutions for the symptoms identified possibly using the Independent Stress Assessment in Section 3.

Organisational perspective

- 13 Stress can emanate from organisational issues and must be addressed initially from this perspective. A number of management issues and practices can contribute to individuals' stress such as:
- long working hours culture;
 - control mechanisms e.g. high levels of monitoring;
 - lack of clarity of role/expectations;
 - confusion regarding lines of management;

- lack of management support;
 - conflicting priorities;
 - lack of communication;
 - lack of consultation or involvement;
 - limited responsibility; and
 - little flexibility in working patterns.
- 14 Research has shown that taking time out to deal with difficulties at an early stage will reduce sickness absence in the longer term and enable productivity levels to be maintained. Line managers and employees should be proactive and attempt to eliminate or reduce the likelihood of stress before it occurs.

Estyn's approach to stress

- 15 The following are approaches being taken by Estyn managers to reduce the risk of work related stress and to deal with issues before they become a problem:
- Working with managers, staff and the trade unions to develop appropriate policies and to establish effective working practices to prevent stress in the workplace where it is practicably possible to do so;
 - Communicating regularly and openly with the people being line managed, taking account of those who work remotely or from home;
 - Encouraging supportive working, communication and support between staff;
 - Involving staff in the planning process so that they understand their role, and what support they will have to help them carry out their duties;
 - Consulting staff, particularly during periods of change. Being open and honest about what is happening and how it may affect them. Where possible, managers discuss changes in work, and particularly additions to workload and management expectations, with them in advance;
 - Ensuring that staff have clear, SMART objectives through Estyn's performance management system and that these are reviewed. Where appropriate or possible, consider adjusting timescales;
 - Adopting a partnership approach; encouraging staff to talk to managers at an early stage about work related stress, mental health issues and their concerns about work and to work jointly to tackle work related stress;
 - Initiating regular discussions on a one-to-one basis about job loading and responsibilities. Some staff may need encouragement to talk about their difficulties. Helping them to voice concerns that they may have about pressure,

and about how it is affecting them. Adopting a non-judgemental, supportive approach;

- Liaising with other managers who share staff resources to quantify and prioritise work;
- Recognising and praising staff appropriately for their input and effort;
- Making sure staff have the skills, training and resources required for the job by providing adequate induction, training, feedback etc and assessing development needs continuously;
- Offering practical support, e.g. training, coaching, job shadowing;
- Assessing and prioritising opportunities for personal and job-related development as well as for self-determination and professional responsibility;
- Managing induction and promotion effectively. Being open and honest about promotion prospects;
- Considering and supporting the longer term development needs and aspirations of team members;
- Identifying areas of insufficient resource and alerting more senior managers in order to seek guidance on priorities;
- Monitoring new staff as they may be unfamiliar with the work and the environment;
- Discouraging a long working hours culture and ensuring that staff take a minimum 30-minute meal break every day;
- Ensuring that staff take their annual leave entitlement, unless it is being carried forward for a specific purpose;
- Ensuring a safe and healthy working environment and consulting the Lead Officer: Health, safety and wellbeing regarding any suspected deficiencies;
- Ensuring staff have a workstation assessment and that all the necessary control measures are in place;
- Watching out for symptoms of stress in colleagues (whether physical, emotional or behavioural) and encouraging them to talk about stress without their feeling that they will be criticised for doing so;
- If a problem is reported, investigating the particular circumstances to ensure that the problem is fully understood. Conducting an Individual Stress Assessment as soon as possible to help find out if any disability or health condition may be affecting the type of work that can be carried out, or to identify any training needs necessary to enable the individual to adapt back into the workplace;

- Sensitively managing the return to work of individuals who have had stress-related problems;
- Assessing or reassessing the needs of individuals with a disability for specific aids and equipment, etc, as time progresses, liaising as necessary with Health and Safety section;
- Offering support, particularly at times of crisis, and signposting staff to other sources of support such as the Human Resources section, Trade Union representatives and/or the Employee Assistance Programme;
- Leading by example, and if one's own levels of stress are in danger of becoming harmful, then taking steps to improve the situation, referring to the guidance in the toolkit;
- Taking into account the potential impact of stress when monitoring performance. Using the performance management arrangements, where appropriate, to discuss such issues, (not waiting until end of year or midyear reviews to address them);
- Wherever possible minimising those factors which give rise to stress or make stress worse. However if there is an impact on performance which persists after relevant and reasonable adjustments (in the case of disability) have been made, this should be reflected in the annual report (making reference to mitigating factors where appropriate). More advice on setting objectives and measuring performance is available in Estyn's Performance Management Guidance;
- Ensuring that staff are familiar with Estyn's Equal Opportunities and Bullying Policies and take appropriate action if any breach occurs. Estyn does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, bullying or inappropriate behaviour of any kind, and it will take proportionate action should it occur; and
- Counselling employees into redeployment or retraining for a job role that they will find less stressful.

Section 3: Individual Stress Assessment Form (ISA)

Before completing this form, please read 'Guidance for Estyn managers - Individual stress assessment' at Section 4.
STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT

Name of employee.....Date of assessment.....

Job title of employee..... Length of time in Role.....

Name of line manager

The following risk assessment should be completed by the employee's line manager together with the employee for Individual Stress Risk Assessments.

The questions are based on the HSE Management Standards and look at the key areas of work that, if properly managed, can help to reduce work related stress. The questions are part of supportive process to assist managers and individuals in the: Identification of hazards, deciding why individuals might be affected; evaluating the risks and frequency and recording your findings and proposed actions.

	Question	Yes	No	Possible Action/s	Agreed Action/s
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role Definition: • Are you clear what is expected of you within your role? • Do you understand your duties and responsibilities? • Do you know how to go about getting your job done? • Do you understand Estyn's goals and objectives and how your work fits in with them? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree duties and responsibilities expected ensuring excessive and unreasonable demands are not made • Clarify goals and objectives for the individual and team – ensuring no ambiguity • Provide regular clear feedback on performance 	

	Question	Yes	No	Possible Action/s	Agreed Action/s
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control: • Do you have any say in how you do and plan your work? • Can you set your own work speed? • Can you decide when to take a break? • 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where practicable, enable staff to exert autonomy within role • Involve staff in developing team operational plan • Encourage delegation and empowerment of others • Encourage training to support delegation (to individual and team) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Pressures – High: • Are your deadlines within role unachievable? • Are you required to work long hours? • Are your time pressures unrealistic? • Are you subject to work demands from different groups that are hard to combine? • Are you able to balance work and home life effectively? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer support in prioritising tasks and cut out unnecessary work and bureaucracy • Try to give warning of urgent jobs • Assist in the scheduling of work to ensure adequate and appropriate resources • Ensure job demands are matched in terms of quantity, complexity and intensity to individuals skills and abilities • Support staff when undertaking new and unfamiliar tasks • Meet regularly to review workload • Avoid encouraging staff to work long hours, take work home or build excessive flexi. • Encourage staff to take annual leave allowance 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Pressures – Low: • Is your work boring, monotonous or unchallenging? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where reasonably practicable, rotate boring and repetitive jobs • Where possible increase the variety of tasks e.g. through projects, support to colleagues, etc 	

	Question	Yes	No	Possible Action/s	Agreed Action/s
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships at Work: • Are you subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour? • Are relationships at work strained? • Is there friction and anger between colleagues? • Are you subject to bullying? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage team working • Encourage team members to give open and honest feedback to each other • Demonstrate and encourage appreciation of others and difference • Promote an atmosphere of mutual respect • Ensure all staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour at work will not be tolerated. • Refer to the Anti Harassment and Bullying Policy and attend the training to support this policy • Seek the support of HR if an allegation of Harassment or Bullying is made 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support: • If work gets difficult are colleagues / manager available to offer help and support? • Are you given supportive feedback on the work you do? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend the 'Giving and Receiving Feedback' workshop • Explain how to raise concerns and call on your support • Ensure you have attended Stress Management training • Encourage and enhance team working / support. • Hold regular team meetings • Be approachable and receptive to feedback 	

	Question	Yes	No	Possible Action/s	Agreed Action/s
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change: • Are you consulted / updated about changes at work that affect you? • Are you clear about how the change will affect you in practice? • Is there adequate consultation about workplace issues / changes? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure clear and appropriate communication on proposed changes • Ensure individuals understand the reasons for change and the likely timescales • Ensure adequate consultation wherever possible and provide opportunities for comment and input. • Give support to individuals during the change process 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training: • Do you require additional training to undertake your role? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training as required • Ensure identified training and development opportunities are implemented • Ensure changes to the employee's role are supported with relevant training 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Demands and Work Environment • Does your role involve excessive physical demands such as heavy lifting; standing for long periods of time; repetitive movements that are causing concern? • Is your work environment adequate / comfortable? • Is it free from hazards such as cigarette smoke and unacceptable levels of noise? • • 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a H&S Risk Assessment • Where appropriate refer to Occupational Health for advice • Encourage suggestions on how to improve work environment – and give these due consideration • Manage risks with the support of Estyn's Health and safety Officer (e.g. hard hats, noise defenders etc)) 	

	Question	Yes	No	Possible Action/s	Agreed Action/s
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other Issues: • Are there any other issues / stressors that need to be taken account of – e.g. difficulties at home, unexpected life changes, etc? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support employee where possible • Offer to support them through to Employee Assistance Provider 	

*The Possible Actions column details some suggestions for consideration / action by the line manager and / or the employee. This list is not exhaustive.

*The Action/s column should include details of what the issues are, what measures are currently in place, what improvements can be made and what actions will be taken to make the improvements.

A copy of the completed Stress Risk Assessment Tool should be kept by both parties completing it.

Following completion of questions above it is suggested:

- Both parties consider the possible actions and discuss and agree proposed actions for reducing the pressures that lead to stress, as far as reasonably practicable and annotate proposed actions within the action/s column.
- Refer to Occupational Health for assessment if employee or manager considers there may be a medical element leading to increased susceptibility to stress. Please include a copy of the risk assessment with the referral.
- Both parties keep a record of proposed actions and agree a date for review.

Section 4: Guidance for managers – Individual Stress Assessment Process

Preparing for the assessment

- Consider if you are the appropriate person to conduct the stress assessment. This will usually be the immediate line manager but if there is any doubt about this or any aspect of the process ask the Human Resources section for advice and guidance;
- Guidance on how to deal with stress is provided in Policy and Guidance for Managing Stress and Wellbeing in the Workplace;
- Agree a date for the assessment with the member of staff;
- Allow sufficient time for the meeting and ensure that a private area, where you won't be interrupted, is available. Don't underestimate how much time it may take for the employee to express their concerns; and
- Read the guidelines in the toolkit and review the suggested questions which you can use to structure the assessment. Pick and choose the ones that are relevant, not all of them will be, and think of any others that might help.

At the assessment

- Explain what you are doing and why. Address any concerns the member of staff may have about carrying out an assessment;
- Allow the member of staff to explain their concerns. Do not be judgmental, defensive, or argue that what is said is untrue, or otherwise minimise what he/she says, just listen;
- Use the suggested questions, or any others you feel might help, as necessary;
- Listen to all of their concerns before discussing what actions you both should take. They may have several concerns, the biggest issue may not surface until you are some way through the discussion;

- If you think the member of staff's current behaviour is adding to the problem, and that they should change, save this until you discuss the best action to take;
- The member of staff may become distressed during the assessment, it's not easy to discuss things that make you stressed. Be prepared for this;
- If they raise issues that relate to their personal life, these may impact on their ability to cope at work, so it is appropriate to discuss them if the member of staff is willing;
- Use the **Individual stress assessment form (ISA)** at Section 3 to record your discussions. You should take notes during the meeting. Make sure the member of staff knows you are paying them full attention, and treat the notes as PROTECT, PERSONAL;
- It may be appropriate to have a break (even for a day or so) before discussing what action to take. Outlining the issues can be emotionally draining for someone who is feeling stressed; and
- You will need to ask a member of the HR section for advice before deciding what action to take, especially if you can't see a solution to the member of staff's problems.

Taking action

- There is always some action that can be taken, even if you can't provide a solution to all of the member of staff's problems, you may be able to reduce their effects. Perhaps the person (or a colleague) needs to change their perceptions, to agree to differ or to put something aside. If the member of staff accepts there is something they cannot change, you can still provide them with support;
- Sometimes a combination of issues can seem overwhelming. If you can resolve some of the person's issues, they may be better able to resolve or cope with their other issues;
- You have a responsibility to take action to help and support the member of staff. Equally, if it is appropriate, you should encourage the person to consider what they can do to help themselves;

- Consider contacting Estyn's independent counselling service provided as part of our Employee Assistance Programme and other sources of support;
- Set a date to review progress; and
- At review meetings, discuss and record the progress the member of staff has made, agree any further actions, and set a further review date, if necessary.

Suggested questions

Demand

- Are the demands of the employee's job realistic?
- Does the employee have the necessary skills and ability to do the job?
- Does the employee have the necessary resources (time/equipment) to do the job effectively?
- Does the employee find the job repetitive and monotonous?
- Are there any problems with the physical work environment?
- Is the employee exposed to the threat of physical violence/verbal abuse from the public?
- Is the employee in the right job or role? Is there a need for retraining or redeployment?

Control

- Does the employee have a say in the way their work is undertaken?
- Is the pace of the work driven by a source beyond the employee's control (e.g. a machine)?
- Is the employee encouraged to show initiative and use their full range of skills?

- Does the employee feel able to air concerns about their work environment?

Support

- Does the employee get appropriate support from colleagues?
- Does the employee know how to access, and actually get, support from managers?
- Is the employee aware of and encouraged to use other sources of support?
- Has the employee had proper training for and support in their role?

Relationships

- Is the employee aware of procedures to resolve work place conflict?
- Does the employee feel able to report any concerns?
- Does the employee work alone or as part of a number of teams?
- Does the employee feel that openness, honesty and respect are encouraged in the work environment?

Role

- Does the employee experience conflicting demands at work?
- Has the employee received proper induction?
- Has the employee got a clear and up to date job description?

- Does the employee understand how their job fits in to the organisation?
- Is the employee able to organise his/her work effectively?

Change

- Does the employee understand any change that is affecting their role/work environment?
- Has the employee had a discussion or explanation about how the change will impact on them?
- Is the employee aware of the support available to help him/her through the period of change?

Section 5: Frequently asked questions

How do I know if I am stressed / How do I recognise stress in somebody who works for me?

- 16 There are likely to be changes in the individual which may be physical (outward appearance or sickness), behavioural, emotional and / or intellectual (change in performance). Section 1 of the Toolkit gives examples of indicators of stress, though the list is not exhaustive.
- 17 Individuals often do not recognise the symptoms of stress in themselves. They are not aware that they are stressed until their health deteriorates or someone points out that their behaviour or character has changed. The list of possible stress-related sources of in Section 2 may help you to recognise the symptoms in yourself (or in others), whether they are caused by work or by other factors outside work.

What is the legal background?

- 18 Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Estyn has a statutory duty to assess the nature and scale of risks to your health in the workplace, (which includes those of a psychological nature), and to introduce measures to eliminate or control the risks identified. This is normally achieved through a risk assessment.
- 19 Employees have a responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions.
- 20 This means that staff should consider stress-related issues jointly with their manager.

If I feel that I am stressed, what should I do and who should I speak to?

- 21 If you consider that you are experiencing stress, look at the guidance in the toolkit and work with your line manager (if appropriate) and other sources of available help, to help reduce the stressing factors.
- 22 If you wish to seek support, you can discuss the matter with anyone you choose. You are encouraged to speak to your line manager, particularly if you think that your work is contributing to your stress or may be affecting your performance or health. Your

manager cannot help you to alleviate a stressful situation if they are unaware of it.

- 23 If your circumstances are affecting your work, your manager will need to take your circumstances into account in assessing your performance, but will also be best placed to offer you practical support.
- 24 If appropriate, your manager will conduct an Individual stress assessment (see Section 3) with you to explore, identify and assess potential risks arising in the workplace. The assessment needs to be undertaken jointly. It is important that you are constructive and aim to seek practical solutions to the issues.
- 25 If for any reason you feel that you cannot approach your manager, you may wish to discuss your situation with another manager within your management chain, with the Human Resources section or seek advice from the Employee Assistance Programme, through which you can access support from trained counsellors. The confidential service is available 24 hours a day, every day via a free phone number **0800 282 193**
- 26 The Trade Unions (PCS or FDA) will also be available to offer support and assistance if required.
- 27 In some cases financial support can be considered through the Civil Service Benevolent Fund.

Who is responsible for dealing with stress in the work place?

- 28 Staff and line managers have a joint responsibility to identify and prevent issues in the work place that may lead to stress. This is set out in legislation and is also a practical approach to dealing with issues effectively.

As a manager, what can I do to prevent harmful stress in the work place?

- 29 Carry on following the guidance in this toolkit and in other Estyn policies, e.g. managing attendance policy, performance management guidance etc. Monitoring, regular discussion with staff about workloads and expectations and risk assessments all play a key part in identifying and eliminating, or managing, stress within the workplace.

What if someone I manage considers they are experiencing stress?

- 30 If one of your staff considers that they are experiencing stress, you should arrange a confidential meeting with them and look into the circumstances to ensure that the problem is understood and taken seriously. Avoid excessive questioning which may be perceived as intrusive and can, in itself, be stressful. Staff who have persistent symptoms should be encouraged to seek medical advice, e.g. from their doctor or through Estyn's Employee Assistance Programme. This is something that would follow where management support has not been enough to alleviate symptoms.
- 31 You should consider completing the individual stress assessment (ISA) at Section 3 of the Toolkit, following the guidance at Section 4. The ISA is a discussion tool which can be used by individuals, working with their managers, to explore, identify and assess potential risks of stress arising within the work place. The main focus should be on the discussion, rather than on form filling, and its purpose is not to find areas of blame, but to identify constructive practical actions that can be taken to relieve stress. It is essential to maintain absolute confidentiality at all times in providing support to the individual.
- 32 The Human Resources section can advise on conducting the discussion, if necessary.

What should I do if I consider someone who I manage to be stressed?

- 33 The situation needs to be handled sensitively. Ask to meet the individual in private. Inform them that you are concerned for their wellbeing as you have noticed a change in their behaviour. Let them know that they can talk to you in confidence.
- 34 Do not push the issues if the person does not want to talk to you. Let them know that you are available and provide them with other sources of support or advice, refer them to Estyn's independent counselling service provided through the Employee Assistance Programme.

What if someone I manage goes off sick and has been diagnosed with, or considers that they are experiencing, stress?

- 35 You should follow the guidance in the Attendance Management Policy. When the individual returns to work you will need to conduct a return to work interview. As part of the discussion you should look at the reasons for the illness, consider any recommendations from the doctor on the fit note and practical actions to minimise the risk of further episodes, using the ISA in Section 3 of the Toolkit. If the stress was work related you should seek to address the causes and make appropriate adjustments, focusing on what the individual can do to reduce the risks in the future and what you can do to support them, but bearing in mind

that staff still have to satisfy their employment contracts.

As a manager, how can I help someone if they are showing signs of stress?

36 In the context of the way in which you work, you should be:

- Thinking about your own management style and its potential effect. Seek feedback from others on your style and use that feedback in a constructive way. Try to be self-aware and recognise whether any factors in your own life could be affecting the way you handle issues with colleagues;
- Encouraging a supportive atmosphere where individuals feel comfortable to talk about their situation, without fear or stigma. Take the time to listen to concerns and take them seriously. Studies have shown that people in lower grades may not feel as able to bring their concerns to the attention of their managers;
- Encouraging staff to ask questions when they have uncertainties and to make constructive suggestions as to how any difficulties identified can be addressed;
- Being sympathetic and sensitive to your staff's needs, particularly in times of crisis by being flexible with regard to taking leave at short notice, applying the special leave provisions where appropriate, and being open-minded about requests for different working patterns and implement them where it is practical to do so;
- Seeking support and advice from the Human Resources section and encouraging your staff to seek help through the Employee Assistance Programme where appropriate; and
- Making reasonable adjustments to enable staff to undertake their role if they have a clinically-diagnosed stress-related disability, or one which may increase susceptibility to stress problems.

37 When managing workloads, you should be:

- Meeting regularly with your staff to promote effective working e.g. involve all relevant staff in important decisions such as how work is distributed, and how it fits in with business objectives, and agreed deadlines. Reorganising, tasks and responsibilities following discussion with all those affected. Organising work to ensure balanced workloads, with well-defined tasks, realistic

and reasonable targets, and where possible, with sufficient variety.

- Finding out why colleagues are working long hours (if they are) and investigate ways of reducing this. Plan and agree work with staff to avoid the need to work excessive hours, by helping them to prioritise work and review possible adjustments to deadlines. Ensure objectives are SMART.
- Involving staff in co-ordinating work patterns and/or extra hours to meet job demands. Giving staff more control over their own work. Monitor work supportively and ensure workloads are covered during absences as far as possible without overburdening others.
- Considering increasing the workload and/or responsibility of staff with insufficient work in a controlled manner, or reassessing how work is distributed, and whether a fairer or more even allocation of work is required.
- Ensuring staff are adequately trained to do their job effectively, including in relation to using technology.
- Reporting concerns to line managers at the earliest opportunity where it is evident that previously agreed reasonable deadlines are now contributing to stress-related absences or complaints because absences have made deadlines more difficult to achieve.

How much information will I need to give?

- 38 It is entirely up to you to decide how much information you are comfortable divulging. Your line manager or those you contact through Estyn's Employee Assistance Programme will not seek to pressurise you into talking about things you do not wish to discuss.
- 39 Whoever you may choose to speak to, their main concern will be to ensure your health and wellbeing at work. They will therefore simply seek to obtain sufficient information to enable a practical action plan to be agreed with you and to ensure that you are adequately supported.

I don't want everyone to know what is happening to me

- 40 Your right to confidentiality, safety and your decision-making is paramount. No disclosure by your line manager or the EAP provider

will be made without your express permission except in the most extreme circumstances, such as:

- if it is believed you are at risk of serious injury or death;
- if your situation involves a criminal prosecution; or
- when it is believed that there is a substantial risk of harm to staff or people under your care, including any children.

What happens if I do not want to discuss my personal problems with anyone?

- 41 If you decide that you do not wish to talk to anyone at work then your decision will be respected. However if your colleagues or line manager are concerned that you are showing signs of stress, then this cannot be ignored and might be raised privately with you. It is your line manager's duty to ensure your health and safety at work and you also have personal responsibility for your own health and safety. Your manager also has a duty to raise issues of attendance or performance with you. Identifying a stress problem is not a sign of weakness and you will not be adversely affected as a result of raising a problem. We would urge you not to suffer alone or with no support.

My circumstances are affecting my ability to do my job. What can I do?

- 42 If you choose to disclose your situation to your line manager, you will be able jointly to consider what practical measures might assist you.
- 43 You may be able to apply for a period of unpaid leave to deal with a short-term problem, or to apply for flexible working arrangements to meet a longer-term need.
- 44 Most importantly your manager will also be able to discuss specific practical initiatives in the work place which might be necessary in order to relieve or prevent stress.
- 45 They will also be in a position to take account of your circumstances if your attendance, performance or conduct is giving cause for concern. Your manager will adopt a sympathetic and supportive approach to assist you in meeting the required standards and may discuss a move to an alternative role or redeployment where it is the case that you are not suited to a job at your current level of responsibility.

- 46 Remember you can speak in confidence to your manager, Human Resources section, your Trade Union representative, or access the counselling services provided by the Employee Assistance Programme (**0800 282 193**).

Are there any self-help measures that I can also consider?

- 47 Yes. The guidance below is designed to provide some initial support to help you to identify and prevent stress, whether this emanates from work or your personal circumstances.

Work related stress

- Review the list of common factors that may possibly be causes of stress in Section 2 of the toolkit and make a note of any that you consider may be relevant to you. Work with your line manager to construct a tailored action plan based on the sources of work related stress you have agreed and put it into practice, using the individual stress assessment form as a basis for any discussion.
- Reduce pressure on yourself by planning and prioritising. Your manager can offer help and support with this.
- Agree work priorities and timescales with your manager to eliminate the need to work long hours.
- Ensure that your objectives are SMART.
- Consider learning and development opportunities that can offer practical advice and develop the skills needed to manage and cope with work-related stress, eg time management, stress management, assertiveness.
- Take planned leave and do not work excessively long hours.
- Be realistic if your job is making you ill and it cannot be changed, consider other jobs that may be available, or consider a different working pattern and discuss this with your manager and colleagues.

Stress caused by personal factors

- Confide in family, friends or colleagues.
- Concentrate your energies on solving the problem rather than worrying about it.
- Speak to your GP if you are worried about your health.
- Ask for and accept help from others.
- If you smoke, stop smoking or at least try to cut down – get help with this through your GP or local NHS Trust.
- Eat healthily.
- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption – alcohol acts as a depressant.
- Limit your caffeine intake.
- Be physically active – exercise helps to reduce stress and produces endorphins (good mood substances) in the brain.
- Learn relaxation techniques.
- Get enough sleep.
- If you're ill, rest.
- Manage your time and be realistic about what you can achieve, try to be careful to agree to deadlines you can manage at the outset of projects or tasks.