

Stress and Mental Health Policy

The five main aims of a stress and mental health policy should be:

1. To raise awareness about stress and mental health problems generally for all employees.
2. To prevent stress by identifying causes of stress at work and developing measures to eliminate, avoid or reduce them.
3. To recognise early signs of stress so as to prevent it becoming a major mental or physical ill health problem for an individual.
4. To prevent prejudice and discrimination against people with mental health problems and remove the feeling of stigma which is often experienced.
5. To help rehabilitate individuals who have suffered from stress or mental health problems back into work.

A policy on stress and mental health at work should include:

1. Acknowledgement that mental health problems have many causes, including stresses in the workplace and outside work.
2. Definition of stress at work that recognises it is a health and safety issue.
3. Recognition that stress at work is not just an individual problem, but also an organisational one. This means that the causes of stress can be identified as arising from the way work and the workplace are organised, the physical work environment, job insecurity, working relationships, management style and culture, poor communication systems. The way individuals may respond to any of these is an additional factor to be considered.
4. Recognition that the employer has a responsibility to assess the risk of stress and how individuals may be affected.
5. A statement that it applies to the whole workforce.
6. Commitment from all levels of management to tackling the causes of stress.
7. Procedures for reporting potential causes of stress and for carrying out investigations into these.
8. Procedures for reporting signs of stress in individuals or groups of workers, including guarantee of confidentiality and no discrimination against workers who are suffering from stress or mental health problems.
9. Information about services or support which are available to workers suffering from stress or mental health problems, whether provided within the workplace (for example, by Occupational Health Dept or Human Resources or Welfare) or by arrangements with outside agencies.
10. Procedures for rehabilitation, redeployment or relocation for workers suffering from stress or mental health problems.
11. How the policy will be monitored and reviewed to assess its effectiveness.

How We Can Help

We can help to identify causes of stress in the workplace.

We can help to draw up a stress and mental health policy.

We can provide training for managers, supervisors and trade union and staff representatives about stress at work and stress and mental health policies.

We can provide educational sessions to raise awareness about stress and mental health issues for the workforce.