

University of St Andrews

Manager's Guide to Monitoring Stress

This guide should be read in conjunction with the University's Guide to Managing Stress. It is intended to provide further information to managers on the causes of stress in the workplace and possible steps that can be taken to avoid stress in the workplace.

Common causes of workplace stress

- Too much work and not enough time to do things properly.
- Working long and unsocial hours.
- Conflicts with work colleagues or management.
- Frequent disruption from work as a result of people coming in to the office, telephone etc.
- Job uncertainty and lack of career progression/opportunities.
- Lack of recognition in contribution to work.
- Boredom caused by little or no variety in work/undertaking repetitive tasks.

Possible solutions

The following provides a checklist that can be used to promote good management:-

Provide a supportive work environment

- Deal with staff in a sensitive and caring fashion.
- Monitor staff satisfaction and well-being.
- Ensure staff are aware of individuals they can talk to about problems either within the School/Unit or outwith.
- Facilitate a team approach and good relationships between staff.

Communication

- Is there clear regular two-way communication?
- Are there regular meetings to inform staff of events/issues?
- Is there the opportunity for informal discussion?
- Can staff discuss their concerns?
- Is appropriate action taken as required to deal with concerns?
- Are team objectives, missions etc discussed openly with all members of the team?
- Do you have time for individual staff members?
- Do you give supportive and constructive criticism when required?
- Do you recognise and praise individual or group achievements, hard work and efforts?
- Are staff helped to prepare for proposed changes in staffing, responsibilities, work, and busy periods?
- Do you think through the impact your actions and decisions have on the staff for whom you have responsibility?

Work Design

- Do staff have clear roles and responsibilities?
- Are known work pressures reviewed and monitored e.g. tight deadlines, staffing levels etc?
- Are clear and concise instructions provided to staff?
- Try to identify jobs where stress has been or is a problem to see what can be done to reduce the risk of stress.
- Where possible, ensure that staff have some control of their work and that their work has variety.
- Are staff preparing for busy periods?

Health, Safety and Welfare

- Ensure appropriate health and safety checks are undertaken.
- Deal with problems in the workplace as quickly as possible.
- Visit staff in the workplace and know how long they are working.
- Encourage staff to take their full entitlement to holidays each year.
- Provide a good working environment with the appropriate equipment.

Supporting Stressed Members of staff

- Treat stressed employees in the same way as those with a physical health problem.
- Discuss the issue with the member of staff and demonstrate that you are concerned with their health.
- If work is affected, discuss the problems with Human Resources who may refer the individual to Occupational Health.
- Ask if there is anything as a manager you can do to help.
- Seek advice from the individual on any action that could be taken to alleviate the stress e.g. simple modifications to work for a short period, increase communication etc.
- Advise the individual about sources of help within or outwith the University – see general guidance.
- Actively follow up an individual with stress problems and continue to demonstrate your wish to support them.
- Review and if necessary modify the work tasks and responsibilities of individuals who have had sickness absence due to stress as a result of their work.
- Be aware of the impact of stressed employees on other members of staff.

If you are concerned about stress in the workplace, advice can be sought from Janet Mackinnon, Occupational Health Adviser, ext 2752, e-mail jgm3 or Human Resources ext 3096, e-mail humres.