

# Mental Health in the Workplace Factsheet

Updated May 2017

**Work-related stress is defined as “a harmful reaction people have to undue pressures and demands in the workplace”.**

One in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lifetime.

Workplace mental health issues are often associated with stress. Exposure to high levels of stress at work can cause emotional symptoms such as depression, tearfulness, withdrawal, mood swings, loss of motivation or concentration and behavioural changes such as smoking, drinking, drugs, changes to eating or sleeping habits and nervous behaviour.

Poor employee mental health arising from stress can cost your business time and money in lost productivity and sickness absence.

## Legislation

All employers have a general duty to look after the welfare of employees under the *Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974* and to assess and manage risk to their staff under *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999*.

This includes assessing and minimising the risk of stress-related illness.

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## Guidance

Knowing what you can do as an employer to tackle work-related mental health issues can be tough. The HSE has produced *Management Standards for Work Related Stress* to help.

This sets out six key areas to look at:

1. **Demand**  
Workload, work patterns and work environment.
2. **Control**  
An employee's say in how they do their job.
3. **Support**  
Encouragement and resource provision.
4. **Relationships**  
Promoting positive working and avoiding conflict e.g. bullying/harassment.
5. **Role**  
Helping employees understand their role and responsibilities.
6. **Change**  
Management and communication of change.

## Practical advice for your workplace

- **Demonstrate good practice**  
Use a step-by-step risk assessment to assess your workplace.
- **Promote discussion**  
Promote working in partnership with employees to decide on practical improvements.
- **Focus on underlying causes**  
Help employees to get to the root cause of stress in the workplace.

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