

The logo consists of the letters 'SH' in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. The 'S' is partially enclosed by a thick orange arc that curves around the top and right sides of the letters.

SH

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A Guide to Effectively Manage Stress in the Workplace



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Introduction

The Road to Wellbeing is an approach and set of ideals for delivering Occupational Health and Wellbeing within the Highways Sector. Its purpose is to provide achievable guidelines under strategic delivery headings which participating organisations can work towards using their own processes and procedures.

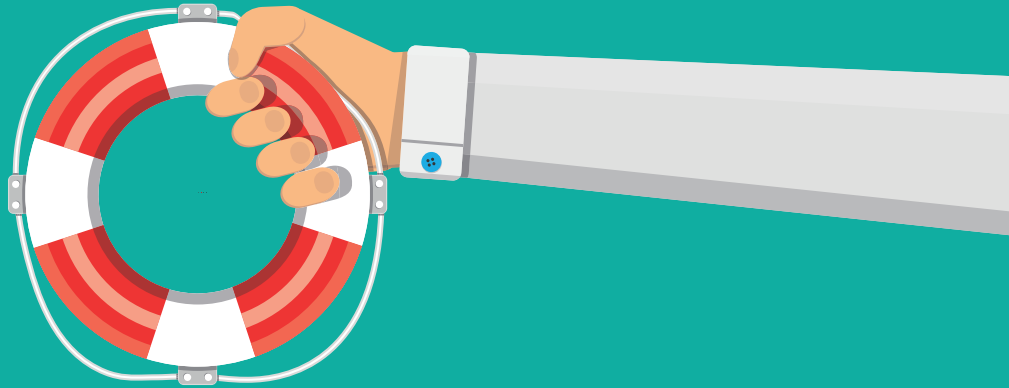
The ideals are taken from the Mind Workplace Wellbeing Index, an existing and recognised set of parameters which many organisations across all industries will already be familiar with.

We have expanded this approach to consider the mental and physical health of the individual as well as the importance of their working environment.

Sourced from existing best practice and legal guidance, our series of review documents are designed to work alongside many other resources that are available in our portal to assist employers, both large and small, to improve standards around Health and Wellbeing.

Whilst the programme was developed for the Highways Sector, we believe the principles and guidance are applicable to the wider construction industry and will also prove beneficial to organisations that work across different sectors.

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What is stress and how big is the problem?

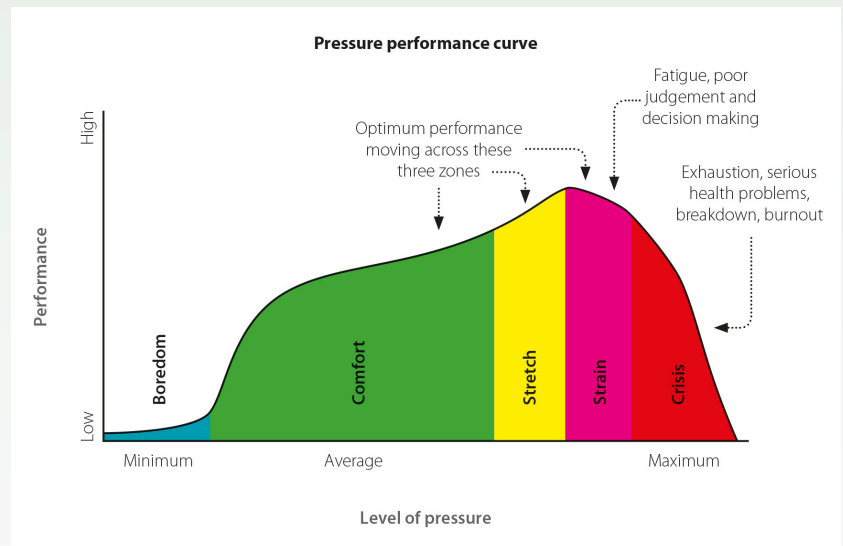
We all know what it's like to feel stressed, but it's not easy to pin down exactly what stress means. A quick Internet search on the word "stress" will reveal several different descriptions of the term.

There's no medical definition of stress, and health care professionals often disagree over whether stress is the cause of problems or the result of them. In many ways this does not matter. We do know what the signs and symptoms of stress look like (so we can recognise when someone is stressed and help them) and the consequences of long-term stress are well established by medical research.

However, if we are to look at how organisations can manage or mitigate stress in the workplace, we need to have a simple definition. For this we will use the Health and Safety Executive's definition of work-related stress.

"Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them [at work]".

This can be best described using the 'Pressure vs Stress diagram



We all need some pressure to help us perform and the source of this can be internal (the desire to do a good job) or external (deadlines).

Stress is the negative reaction when all the pressures we are under exceed our internal resources and ability to cope.

Stress isn't a psychiatric diagnosis, but it's closely linked to your mental health in two important ways:

- Stress can cause mental health problems and make existing problems worse. For example, if you often struggle to manage feelings of stress, you might develop a mental health problem like anxiety or depression.
- Mental health problems can cause stress. You might find coping with the day-to-day symptoms of your mental health problem, as well as potentially needing to manage medication, health care appointments or treatments, can become extra sources of stress.

This can start to feel like a vicious circle, and it might be hard to see where stress ends and mental health problems begins.

In addition, your general mental health can impact your ability to cope. A person in good mental health will have a greater capacity to cope with the pressures of work and life, whilst someone in poor mental health will be able to cope with fewer pressures before becoming stressed.

How big is the problem?

Work related stress develops because a person is unable to cope with the demands being placed on them. Stress, including work related stress, can be a significant cause of illness and is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as more errors.

As well as absenteeism, presenteeism can be detrimental to a person's wellbeing at work.

Presenteeism refers to employees who are suffering from the effects of work-related stress but remain at work.

The latest estimates from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) show:

The total number of cases of work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2018/19 was 602,000, compared to 526,000 in 2016/17

The total number of working days lost due to this condition in 2018/19 was 12.8 million days. This equated to an average of 21.2 days lost per case.

In 2018/19 stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 44% of all work-related ill health cases and 54% of all working days lost due to ill health.

The reasons cited as causes of work-related stress are also consistent over time with workload, lack of managerial support and organisational change as the primary causative factors.



Recognising the signs of stress

As described in section 2, pressure turns into stress when you feel unable to cope. Stress can manifest itself in many ways, both physical and mental, some of the more common signs and symptoms as shown in the table below.

Cognitive symptoms		
Memory problems	inability to concentrate	
poor judgement	focusing on the negative	high levels of anxiety
constant worry	nervousness	
Emotional symptoms		
Moodiness	irritability or short temper	agitation, inability to relax
feeling overwhelmed	sense of loneliness or isolation	depressed or general unhappiness
Behavioural symptoms		
Eating more or less	sleep disturbance	
isolating oneself	procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities	
using alcohol or drugs to relax	nervous habits (nail biting, pacing...)	
Physical symptoms		
Muscle tension and aches	gastrointestinal disturbance	nausea or dizziness
chest pain, rapid heart beat	loss of sex drive	
frequent colds	allergic reactions such as eczema	

The signs marked in **red** may be detectable by colleagues, who can be encouraged to express their concern to the individual. The symptoms marked in **blue** may be obvious to the individual and being made aware that these are indicative of stress could encourage them to seek support.



Stress in the workplace

Recognising signs and symptoms as an employer.

As an employer there are many indicators to lead you to the conclusion that your workforce may be under undue stress.

In isolation each one of these may seem insignificant, however, combined may lead to a high loss in productivity

These include:

- absenteeism
- high staff turnover
- poor time-keeping
- disciplinary problems
- Increased reporting of harassment
- reduced productivity
- Higher accident rates
- Minor errors
- Increased costs from compensation or health care.

It is important to offer confidential support to employees suffering stress. It is helpful to help employees recognise stressors in their work and home life and learn how to manage them effectively.

Whilst each individual's work and personal circumstances may differ as to the causes of stress, there are a number of measures employers can take to ensure that they minimise the risk to the workforce

These include:

- Encouraging employees to share problems with family or friends
- Allowing sufficient time for employees to make more time for your interests and hobbies
- Making sure that employees take a break or holiday free from the distractions of work
- Availing employees with adequate time to take some regular exercise and make sure that they have the capability within the workplace to practice eating healthily
- Ensure that those on shift patterns get adequate sleep.



Stress in the workplace

Our legal obligation.

All employers have a legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Etc Act 1974 (HASAWA) and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure the health safety and welfare at work of their employees. This includes minimising the risk of stress related illness or injury to employees. Control measures to reduce health risks such as work-related stress, once identified, are required.

The Equality Act 2010 covers disability and discrimination and brings together and replaces previous anti-discrimination legislation and regulations including The Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

One aim of the Equality Act 2010 is to protect people with disabilities and prevent disability discrimination. The Act permits greater scope for positive action and attempts to enhance the legal protection for people with disabilities, particularly mental illness.

The Mental Health Act 2007
The Mental Capacity Act 2005

The Human Rights Act 1998
The Management Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

- Employers must not treat a disabled person less favourably than another employee because of disability.
- Employers must not treat an employee badly because you think they have a disability.
- Employers must not treat an employee unfavourably where this is a link to a disability.
- Employers must make reasonable adjustments to work practices, and provide other aids and adaptations, for disabled employees.
- The law covers employees during recruitment, employment and if they are being dismissed for any reason, including redundancy.
- Employers are not allowed to use 'pre-employment questionnaires' to ask about health before you offer a job except in very specific circumstances.
- Reasonable adjustments and flexibility are essential.

Fit Notes

A fit note is a doctor's statement of an employee's fitness for work, which is designed to encourage employers, employees and doctors to work towards a more flexible approach at work, helping employees to return to work as soon as they are able.

The Managers Role

Managers have a crucial role in the prevention of work-related stress but also to minimise and manage stress risks. They set the tone for their teams and are often the first port of call for employees at times of distress. They are the link between the company's aims and objectives and the people who will deliver those ambitions. To their teams, managers represent the company and its culture.

It is therefore important that managers are trained and develop the skills to enable them to effectively support their direct reports.

Skills and behaviours required include:

- Knowing how to create healthy working environments that allow team members to be more resilient
- Demonstrate and exhibit the right culture and behaviours
- Ability to assess, identify and mitigate workplace stressors – what are the current

demands? Is the work design appropriate?

- Awareness of signs and symptoms of stress
- Ability to build a good rapport – Promote an open and honest environment so that employees feel able to voice their concerns
- Show empathy by actively listening and showing an understanding of challenges faced by individuals both at work and home.
- Work in partnership with the employee to make appropriate adjustments to work design and implement effective stress management strategies.
- Managers are not expected to be counsellors, but they should know how and where to refer people to appropriate help.

Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes to enable a person to work more easily and give them equal opportunities.

Examples of reasonable adjustments for an employee with a mental ill health conditions could include changes in shift patterns, allowing time off for cognitive behavioural therapy, or a gradual return to work.

Reasonable considers the time, cost and effort to make the changes, how practical the changes are and the size of the organisation.

What Do Reasonable Adjustments Look Like?

Adjustments to the work schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow more breaks • Allow breaks to take place when needed, rather than a pre-determined schedule • Change their working day to start either earlier or later • Allow them to use paid or unpaid leave for appointments related to their mental health • Offer a phased return to work • Allow part-time working on a temporary basis (or permanently if it is what they want)
Adjustments to role and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review their workload and agree what duties they can do • Re-assign duties they may struggle with among the rest of the team • Discuss vacant positions in the organisation and temporarily transfer them to a different role they want to do
Adjustments to working environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide partitions, room dividers etc. to enhance soundproofing and visual barriers between workspaces • Offer a reserved parking space to make it easier for them to get to work • Offer homeworking for some of the week • Increase size of their personal working space • Position them as far away as possible from noisy machinery • Provide a private space for them to use when they need privacy
Policy changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend additional paid or unpaid leave during a hospitalisation or other absence • Allow additional time for them to reach performance milestones • Allow them to make certain personal phone calls during the day
Ways to provide additional support and assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign a mentor or buddy to support and help them • Arrange a regular one-to-one with their manager to discuss and prioritise tasks • Provide a personal computer to enable them to work at home when they do not feel able to attend the workplace • Offer Additional training on the skills and duties their job requires

These are just some suggestions and you will need to work with the individual and HR representatives to identify the most appropriate adjustments in each case.



RELAX

REFRESH

RECHARGE

Managing stress in the workplace

It is a core principle of Safer Highways not to be prescriptive in telling people “How to...” achieve an ambition. This reflects the fact that our members are diverse. Some are large, others are small; some will already be doing excellent work in this area whilst others are just starting on their journey. However, the following principles can apply.

1. Do your research

Understanding that stress is a real risk in the workplace and recognising that employers have a legal duty to manage the risk is a good first step. Knowing your legal duties, understanding the impacts of stress on your business and your people and identifying the factors that may be causing stress are a good place to start.

2. Develop a policy

A policy does not need to be complicated, but it should acknowledge that workplace stress is a risk and identify how you will identify and manage the causes of workplace stress in your organisation. There are several example policies that you can adapt on the Safer Highways portal. If you already have a HSE policy you can include it within that.

3. Know your numbers

Do you know how many of your people are stressed and what might be causing it? Unless you do, you probably won't be able to do much about it. How you find out will depend on the size of your organisation, but typical sources of data might include:

- Surveys
- Sickness absence data
- Staff turnover rates
- Exit interviews
- Number of referrals to occupational health
- Information from existing staff forums

4. Do your risk assessment

Risk Assessments for known significant work-related risk are a legal obligation. Advice can be found on the HSE website. Risk Assessments do not need to be complicated and they can be useful tools for developing an action plan on how to mitigate or manage stress in future.

5. Individual responsibility

Every employee has a responsibility to look after their own safety and wellbeing. They should be

able to identify when they are struggling and raise any concerns they have about their own wellbeing and that of colleagues. However, it is the duty of the employer to ensure that the working environment allows this to happen. This may include education and training, but it could also mean creating a supportive environment where raising these concerns is seen as a positive intervention.

6. Provide Information and Training Recognising the causes and the signs & symptoms of stress (and related illnesses) and knowing how to self-manage it or where to seek help should be a fundamental part of any training that employees get, in the same way that they receive Health and Safety training. Examples of organisations who can provide such information are available on the Safer Highways Portal

7. Provide Support

In any competitive industry some stress is almost inevitable even with the best management and mitigation measure in place. Whilst we should all actively try to reduce the occasions this happens, we should make provision for when it does.

This includes:

- Education and training on how to self-manage stressful situations,
- Access to an Employee Assistance Programme;
- And in the worst cases, access to Occupational Health

This may be costly for smaller employers, however, many larger organisations now provide access to their EAP's to subcontractors. Support can also be found through GPs or some charities such as the Stress Management Society

8. Create the right working environment Creating an environment where employees feel confident that they can raise concerns and be confident that they will be listened to is a fundamental part of Thriving at Work Standards and the Road to Wellbeing. Advice on how to do this can be found on the Safer Highways Portal and MIND's "How to implement the Thriving at Work Standards in your workplace" document.

HSE Management Standards

The HSE has identified 6 core area that have a negative impact on employee health if not properly managed.

Demands - includes workload, work patterns and the work environment

Control - how much say a person has in the way they do their work.

Support - includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

Role - whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles

Change – how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

Relationships - promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

These Management Standards can be used as the basis of a practical approach to manage stress in the workplace. Further information can be found on the HSE website (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/>) and in INDG430 – How to tackle work-related stress.



Reference Documents

Health and Safety Executive

web: hse.gov.uk/stress

Information about health and safety law in the workplace. Specialist information on stress for employers and employees.

International Stress Management Association

web: isma.org.uk

How to manage stress – Mind:

https://www.mind.org.uk/media/1993364/how-to-manage-stress_2015.pdf

Manage and Reduce Stress: <https://www.mental-health.org.uk/sites/default/files/how-to-manage-and-reduce-stress.pdf>

Mind

15-19 Broadway Stratford London E15 4BQ

Tel: 020 8519 2122

Fax: 020 8522 1725

Email: contact@mind.org.uk

Mind Cymru

3rd Floor, Quebec House, Castlebridge, 5-19

Cowbridge Road East,

Cardiff CF11 9AB

Tel: 029 2039 5123

Email: contactwales@mind.org.uk

Samaritans

Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK Chris

PO Box 90 90

Stirling FK8 2SA

Tel: 08457 90 90 90 (UK) Tel: 116 123 (ROI)

email: jo@samaritans.org www.samaritans.org

Construction Industry Helpline

Tel: 0345 605 1956

Email: info@LighthouseClub.org Website:

www.lighthouseclub.org

Anxiety UK

Zion Community Resource Centre

339 Stretford Road, Hulme, Manchester M15 4ZY

Tel: 08444 775 774 (open Monday to Friday 9.30-

5.30) Admin/office line: 0161 226 7727 info@anxietyuk.org.uk

www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Rethink Mental Illness

Head Office

15th Floor

89 Albert Embankment London SE1 7TP

Tel: 0300 5000 927 Email: info@rethink.org

Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland

Thistle House,

91 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5HE

Tel: 0131 313 8777 Fax: 0131 313 8778

Notes

Notes

At Morgan Sindall Infrastructure
we believe that 100% Safe is the
key to success.



A safe and healthy environment for our workforce, road users and communities is at the heart of everything we do - from project concept to completion. We provide:

Safe places which provide security and protection from harm

Safe by choice in that we choose to be safe and healthier from the outset

Safe relationships where we actively engage throughout the industry to share and improve

Safe by design from concept to completion seeking to consider all our stakeholders' needs

Safe lives to ensure the health and wellbeing of our people is a priority.

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Everyone has the right to be

100% Safe