



# Stress at work

## H&S Employee Information Sheet

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## Introduction

This document contains general information and guidance for employees on the management of stress at work.

## What is work related stress?

There is a difference between stress and pressure. We all experience pressure on a daily basis, and need it to motivate us and enable us to perform at our best. It's when we experience too much pressure without the opportunity to recover that we start to experience stress. The HSE definition of stress is 'the adverse reaction a person has to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them'.

We can all feel stressed at times when we feel as though everything becomes too much, when things get on top of us, or when we feel as though we are unable to cope. It affects us in different ways at different times and is often the result of a combination of factors in our personal and working lives.

Work related stress can be tackled by working with the employer to identify issues at source and agreeing realistic and workable ways to tackle these.

## Recognising stress

Some of the common signs that may be linked to stress in individuals are:

- Persistent or recurrent moods – anger, irritability, detachment, worry, depression, guilt and sadness.
- Physical sensations/effects – aches and pains, raised heart rate, increased sweating, dizziness, blurred vision, skin or sleep disorders, frequent colds and infections, indigestion, diarrhoea, or constipation.
- Changed behaviour – increased absence levels, difficulty concentrating or remembering things, inability to switch off, loss of creativity, making more errors, double checking everything, eating disorders, by lying to cover up mistakes, an increased use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs, becoming insular, being easily bored or fatigued.

## How can I help tackle workplace stress?

As an employee, you have a duty to take reasonable care of yourself and others with regard to health and safety at work.

You should:

- Familiarise yourself with the [Stress management standard](#)
- Support LCC's stress initiatives.
- Communicate openly and honestly with your manager and colleagues.
- Attend appropriate training which can help you recognise and manage pressure and stress in yourself and others.
- Support your colleagues if they are experiencing work related stress and encourage them to talk to their manager, HR or trade union representative.
- Identify causes of stress in the workplace and report them appropriately to your line manager.

## What should I do if I'm becoming stressed?

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- Try to identify the causes and what you can do to make things better.
- Ideally, speak up if you're experiencing a problem, and talk to your manager to find a solution. If your stress is work related, this will give them the chance to help and prevent the situation getting worse. Even if it isn't work related, they may be able to do something to reduce some of your pressure.
- Help your manager to help you. To put effective plans in place, your manager will need information from you, so take an active part in any discussions, and complete stage one of the [Stress action plan](#) to aid any discussions.

If the source of pressure is your line manager, you can talk to someone you feel confident in talking to, or ask someone to mediate. Other alternatives may be HR, another manager or a trade union representative for example.

You may be reluctant to talk about stress at work from fear that you may be seen as weak, but stress is not a weakness, and it can happen to anyone.

A free, confidential counselling service is available to LCC employees. The service is provided by [AMICA](#), an external counselling organisation. They provide telephone and face-to-face counselling and can be contacted by ringing 0116 254 4388.

It is important to take action at a personal level and to review your lifestyle to see if you can identify any contributing factors. These might include:

- eating on the run;
- smoking, or drinking excessively;
- rushing, hurrying, being available to everyone;
- doing several jobs at once;
- missing breaks, taking work home with you;
- having no time for exercise and relaxation.

In some cases, prolonged stress can lead to physical and/or mental ill health. If you think you are currently experiencing stress-related ill health you may benefit from a discussion with your GP.

## Further information

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Additional information on stress can be found on the following websites:

[www.hse.gov.uk/stress/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/)  
[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/)