

GUIDANCE - MANAGING WORK-RELATED STRESS

The following guidance provides advice on how to effectively manage an employee who has indicated that they are suffering from work-related stress to enable them to return to work as soon as possible.

The key to effective management of someone suffering from work related stress is taking an early intervention approach to look at what reasonable action can be taken to reduce the source of pressure they are facing. With every case of work-related stress a referral to Occupational Health must be considered at the earliest possible opportunity. For further advice and support on an Occupational Health referral please contact the Council's HR&OD [Mediation & Employee Relations team](#).

It is important to consider that in some circumstances an employee may perceive their manager as part of the reason for their work-related stress. When a manager thinks that this might be the case they should discuss their options with the Mediation & Employee Relations team for further advice and guidance.

Employees may be accompanied by a colleague or Trade Union representative at any stage of the procedure.

Employee suffering from work-related stress

Employee remains at work

When an employee has indicated that they are suffering from work related stress it is vital that their manager take the necessary steps at the earliest opportunity to seek an understanding for the reasons behind this. It is best practice to arrange to meet with them as soon as is reasonably practicable. It is important to explain to your employee that this initial meeting is to investigate the sources of pressure they are facing and if there is anything that can be done to prevent these pressures from building up. Early intervention is particularly important in relation to stress as there may be supportive measures that the organisation can put in place to reduce pressure and support the employee to remain at work.

To seek an understanding for the reason behind an employee suffering from work-related stress Managers should work with employees to complete a self-assessment questionnaire and associated action plan. Managers may find it useful to issue the following [Stress Self Assessment Questionnaire](#) to their employee prior to meeting with them or simply use this as an aid for discussion. On completion of the Stress Self Assessment questionnaire, the employee's line manager should aim to meet their employee within 7 calendar days to discuss, and where appropriate, agree any support or adjustment(s) that can be made within associated timescales. It is important to retain adequate records of any agreed actions and timescales to support any subsequent referral to Occupational Health.

Employee absent from work

Where an employee is absent from work as a result of work-related stress then it is important to arrange to discuss this issue with your employee at the earliest possible opportunity. Where work-related stress has resulted in a short term absence then it would generally be most appropriate to discuss this issue with them at a return to work discussion. Managers may find it useful to issue a [Stress Self Assessment Questionnaire](#) to their employee before their return to work meeting. On completion of the Stress Self Assessment Questionnaire, the employee's line manager should aim to meet their employee within 7 calendar days to discuss, and where appropriate, agree any support or adjustment(s) that can be made within associated timescales.

Where an employee's absence has reached a trigger point then it is important to arrange to meet with them at the earliest possible opportunity to attempt to facilitate an earlier return to work where possible, where an attendance counselling meeting has been arranged then this would be a suitable forum for this discussion.

Managers should be aware that employees may not initially report work-related stress as a reason for absence. It is therefore important to investigate any underlying cause of absence as early as possible.

Referral to Occupational Health

As work related stress can be a complex condition resulting not only from pressure from work but also from an employee's personal life it is advisable to gather some good professional advice at the earliest opportunity. A referral to Occupational Health must therefore be considered with every case of work related stress. Where appropriate it would be beneficial to detail any support or adjustments that have already been put in place by submitting a copy of the self-assessment questionnaire alongside a referral to Occupational Health.

This procedure must be undertaken in conjunction with the procedures outlined within the Attendance Policy.

It is recognised that everyone is vulnerable to stress. The Council has a course delivered by the Wellbeing Team within HR&OD - Mentally Healthy Workplace Training for Managers which includes the management of occupational stress. Please also refer to the [Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy](#) for more detailed information and guidance. Advice can also be sought from the [Occupational Health Nurse Adviser](#) within the Well-being Team.

Please note that stress can be a disability under the Equality Act therefore consideration needs to be given to reasonable adjustments that can be made for the employee.