

DERBYSHIRE LA

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS

Headteachers' & Managers' Guidelines

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HEADTEACHERS' AND LINE MANAGERS' GUIDELINES

1 Introduction

In its policy statement, the Governing Body stated its commitment to reducing the risk to the Health and Safety of its employees from stress at work.

Much of the implementation of that commitment will fall to the Headteacher and other Line Managers as part of their day to day line management responsibilities.

These guidelines are intended to assist you in your responsibilities in that process.

2

a) Your Role

As a manager you have a responsibility for the health and safety of employees who you manage as well as yourself. When identifying the hazards employees face you should also consider the effects of stress and take appropriate action to monitor and reduce this as far as is reasonably practicable by:-

- i) assessing employees and their work in relation to stress, just as you assess any other potential hazard.
- ii) taking all reasonable measures to reduce the risks from stress.
- iii) being supportive and encouraging.

When dealing with stress in the workplace you must consider your legal responsibilities and bear in mind other policies and procedures agreed by the Governing Body, which may be helpful when you are seeking solutions to problems. Whatever strategies are used to identify potential levels and causes of workplace stress it is very important that these lead to action. Collecting the information alone is insufficient to demonstrate that the issue has been addressed.

b) Your Skills

The management of stress is a part of your normal general management activities. There is no single approach to the management of stress which is effective, a variety of skills are required. These are some examples of good management skills:-

- be a good role model

- treat team members with respect
- act calmly in pressured situation
- take a consistent approach to managing
- clearly communicate objectives
- monitor team workload
- prioritise future workloads
- deal rationally with problems as they arise
- gives the right level of responsibility
- provides regular team meetings
- acts as mediator in conflict situations
- deal objectively with conflicts
- support employees
- take ultimate responsibility if things go wrong
- speak personally rather than using email
- be available to talk to
- be willing to laugh at work
- take an interest in the team
- treat all with equal importance

c) Prevention

By utilising these skills and by addressing the issues detailed in the risk assessment, work-related stress should be reduced to a minimum.

Although measures should have been put in place to reduce work related stress, it is not possible to reduce all the stresses in an employee's personal life. You must therefore be able to recognise the signs and symptoms of stress in your staff and provide appropriate support either by yourself or with help from others. This should help to reduce the impact on their work performance and/or attendance.

d) Understanding your Staff

Generally, the best way to be aware of another's stress is to understand an employee's normal performance levels, general demeanour and behaviour at work. Then, when there is a change in any of these patterns it could be a sign that he/she is starting to feel the effects of stress.

3 What is Stress?

The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as:

“The reaction that people have to excessive pressure or other types of

demand placed upon them. It arises when they worry that they can't cope”.

Another definition is “A state we experience when the demands that are made of us cannot be counter-balanced by our ability to deal with them”.

A distinction should be made between pressures or challenges which can be stimulating and stress which is the reaction to too much pressure. The motivation to achieve challenging goals can test an individual's skill and resourcefulness in a stimulating and positive way. But when an individual, team, or workforce perceives the demands on their skill and abilities are greater than the professional and personal skills which they have, then stress may result.

In physiological terms, stress is a condition where the amount of physical and mental energy used by the body to cope with pressures is greater than the body's ability to restore that energy.

The physical and behavioural effects of stress are a natural result of excessive pressures or demands. These are usually short-lived and cause no lasting harm. When the pressures recede, there is a quick return to normal. Stress is a part of everyday life and is only a problem when it is excessive and prolonged.

Information on the effects of stress and how individuals can reduce these is included in the Employee Guidelines, appendix ??.

4 How can Workplace Stress be Identified?

This is an ongoing process, monitoring staff and identifying individuals or groups who may be suffering from stress

Stress may be recognised in one of four ways or by considering some elements of all four:-

i) Personal Discussion/informal monitoring

The first way to discover whether an employee has problems is to ask them. This is most likely to be through informal conversation. Alternatively it may arise as part of performance management for teachers or any management supervision processes for support staff which are already in place.

At these meetings there must always be a discussion about the individual employee and their work, which explores how they are coping with the

demands of the role. Managers should record any problems identified and actions agreed.

Return to work meetings, where stress is given as a reason for absence, should always include discussion of the issues, action taken and support provided. Know your team, their individual skills, personalities and how they respond to pressure. Use this as a yardstick.

ii) Sickness Absence Analysis

The second way of recognising stress is by analysis of sickness absence returns. Formal analysis should be routinely scheduled in the Governing Body's calendar of meetings. You should also consider as a part of that process whether or not stress may be a factor.

You should consider:-

- a) individual problems - where there may be increased rates of either short or long term absences; or possible stress related diagnosis.
- b) whether there may be group problems - where there are numbers of employees with increased sickness absence rates or with possible stress related diagnoses.
- c) looking at medical certificates for stress as a specific reason for absence. If this is the case, you will need to ascertain as part of the return to work interview whether or not this is work-related.

iii) Stress Risk Assessment

You may wish to carry out an individual stress risk assessment (Appendix 2).

The Generic Risk Assessment may also be utilised to identify particular issues experienced by groups and to support the identification of actions aimed at reducing the risk of workplace stress.

Section 5 of these guidelines is a 'Management of Stress Flowchart' which details the steps involved in identifying and resolving individual workplace stress. Within this process it is your responsibility to review the situation at regular intervals and at least at each performance management or supervision session.

It is important that a record of any analysis or discussion is made and kept for future reference. This applies regardless of the circumstances

or outcome.

5 Factors Which Cause and Changes Which May Reduce Stress in the Workplace

There are many factors which could cause workplace stress. A combination of these factors may have a greater effect than individual factors. Some causes may affect individual employees and others may affect a number or group of employees.

It may be possible to prevent or reduce workplace stress by considering organisational factors such as:

- Encourage a culture of stress awareness/openness
- task redesign
- reorganised work schedules and physical environment
- employee development
- participation in decision making
- clarification of role
- feedback on performance
- peer support and team building.

The causes of workplace stress and actions to alleviate them must always be considered and discussed with the employee concerned.

Although not an exhaustive list the following are the most common:

i) Factors Relating to the Job.

- **job content:**
if difficulties are caused by any aspect of the job, provide appropriate guidance, training and support.
- **long hours/shift work:**
consider any legal requirements in relation to VDU workers, working time directive
alternative shift or working patterns and rotas
ensure appropriate breaks are taken
ensure annual leave is taken at regular intervals.
- **use of technology:**
ensure appropriate information and consultation under local agreements prior to any new installations, ensure prompt appropriate training, with

follow up for updated versions.

- ***anxiety owing to danger of injury or infection:***
provide sufficient information and/or training regarding risk factors, appropriate work practices and use of personal protective equipment.
- ***workload:***
examine the organisation and distribution of work
- ***repetitive tasks:***
consider job rotation; between individuals consider alternative working methods/technology.
- ***multiplicity of tasks:***
- ***challenging behaviour:***
ensure appropriate training; with prompt sympathetic action in emergency situations.
- ***use of machinery:***
ensure regular maintenance, effective operation, and that it is suitable for its intended purpose.
- ***changes in responsibility/curriculum/working practices***
ensure appropriate briefing, training and support.
- ***OFSTED Inspection:***
ensure all staff are well briefed, trained and receive appropriate support.

ii) **Factors Relating to the Environment**

- ***noise:***
consider whether it is 'nuisance noise' or whether a formal assessment is required in relation to the Noise at Work Regulations.
- ***temperature/ventilation:***
if there are any problems with temperature and/or ventilation, look first at simple methods, such as opening windows, use of desk fans, warm clothing.
- ***lighting:***
consider any recommendations for specific tasks such as VDU work,

otherwise ensure adequate illumination levels for the type of work being undertaken.

- **space:**
consider the layout of the working area, ensure adequate storage space and adequate personal space.
- **ergonomic design:**
ensure there is a minimum amount of fatigue associated with the work being undertaken.

iii) factors relating to the organisation culture

- **involvement in decision making:**
Employees work best in a culture where they are involved in the decision making process.
where the management style is confident, consistent, caring, competent and communicative, where they have responsibility for their work, control over work content and where effective performance is recognised and valued.
- **excessive administration:**
administrative tasks which may detract from the main job purpose, should be reduced to a minimum. Administrative systems and processes should be as efficient and effective as practicable.
- **over emphasis on targets and objectives:**
whilst these are an effective management tool in a successful organisation too many or where they are unachievable will reduce effective performance. This may lead to stress.

iv) factors relating to employee development:

- **training needs:**
these need to be assessed on a regular basis.
- **job security:**
where possible changes are to be considered, keep employees informed on a regular basis.

v) Other Factors

- **verbal or physical abuse:**
provide immediate support as appropriate.

- **harassment or bullying:**
refer to the Governing Body's agreed procedure for dealing with these cases.
- **home/work interface:**
fatigue - causes may be severe physical effort, night/shift work, intense concentration, or interaction with personal/home difficulties. This may be particularly so for vulnerable groups.
- **relationships with colleagues:**
identify source of the problem and take appropriate action.
- **vulnerable groups (young/older/pregnant employees):**
Mental and physical fatigue during pregnancy require specific consideration when carrying out a pregnant employee's risk assessment. You should refer to the Management of Health and Safety at Work (Amendment) Regulations 1999.

With some of these issues, you may feel you need further assistance. A list of those able to provide help and advice is given in Part 10 of this Section.

6 How do I recognise Stress?

The effects of prolonged stress, which may be from events in one's personal life; from events in work life or from a combination of these, may be manifested in three areas – physical, emotional, and/or behavioural.

Please refer to details in Employees' Guidelines, Section 5.

It is not suggested that every symptom will be seen in everyone with stress problems, or that every time someone has these symptoms they have a stress related illness.

Generally, the best way to be aware of another's stress is to understand a colleague's normal performance levels and general demeanour and behaviour at work. Where there is a change in any of these behavioural patterns, it could be a sign that he or she is starting to feel the effects or stress.

No one expects you or your colleagues to act as doctors but it is helpful to be able to recognise changes in performance and ability, particularly since such changes are likely to be noticed first by family and colleagues.

No two people react to events in the same way, so pinpointing the causes of stress can take time. Any change to life's routine can cause stress. It is not always the situation which makes people feel stressed, but their reaction to it; what is stressful to one person may be stimulating to another. Also individuals vary in their reaction over time, some days it is easier to cope than others.

7 Resolving Issues

i) By Yourself:

Many issues related to workplace stress will be straightforward with a solution easily reached in discussions between you and the employee, e.g. workload, environment, relationships, communication etc.

For example:

- if tasks are repetitive, introduce job rotation if possible;
- if there are difficulties with use of technology, ensure training and support is made available;
- during periods of change provide training and support;

If significant changes to working arrangements or patterns are proposed, thorough consultation should take place the actions should be documented with agreed review dates.

Personal Issues

Pressures may arise outside the workplace. Employers do not have a legal duty to prevent ill-health due to stress arising from circumstances outside work. However, external pressures including domestic circumstances may make employees more vulnerable to stress at work as well as affecting their performance and judgement. Any assistance you can offer may lessen the impact.

Some other professional help may be required, but as a manager, you can take some basic steps which may go a long way to helping your employees.

- Ensure that you make time for members of your team when you can listen without being interrupted
- Be supportive, sympathetic and open

- Use policies already in place to assist with time off, e.g. flexi-leave, urgent. domestic leave etc
- Be prepared to consider changes to work patterns
- Where you feel further help is required, you can discuss the issue with the Headteacher or, through them with local authority, other support mechanisms.
- You may wish to direct the employees, where appropriate, for Trade Union support and advice
- Suggest in the case of reaches, they contact Teacher Support Network.
- Consider whether the employee should attend a Coping with Stress course.
- Please remember that personal conversations must be kept in strict confidence, with information being given to others, only with the employee's consent.

i) By Referral to Other Specialist Help:

Where you and the employee are unable to resolve the issue and/or where you feel specialist help or advice is needed. HR Consultants in the LA CAYA Advice and Guidance team can be contacted on 01629 535734 and can provide support for school leaders.

The Authority's Employee Counselling Service, which provides **confidential** employee counselling is able to support employees **in confidence**, contact 01629 536954. The Occupational Health Physician, can carry out an In Service Medical and provide advice to Headteachers and Governors. This Service is available through CAYA HR Advice and Guidance Team.

Schools which have bought the LA's Comprehensive Personnel Service will automatically have access to this service. Other schools can purchase this separately.

Employees may also be referred to alternative independent welfare or counselling services, NHS or private medical services, for which the school or the employee may be charged.

When specialist advice and support is requested, you should ensure any useful background information or risk assessments which have already been carried out are available.

Teachers can ring **Teacher Support Network**. This is a **free confidential 24-hour** telephone counselling support and advice service available to all teachers. The number to call is 08000 562 561. (See Employees' Guidelines, Section 8)

8 Training

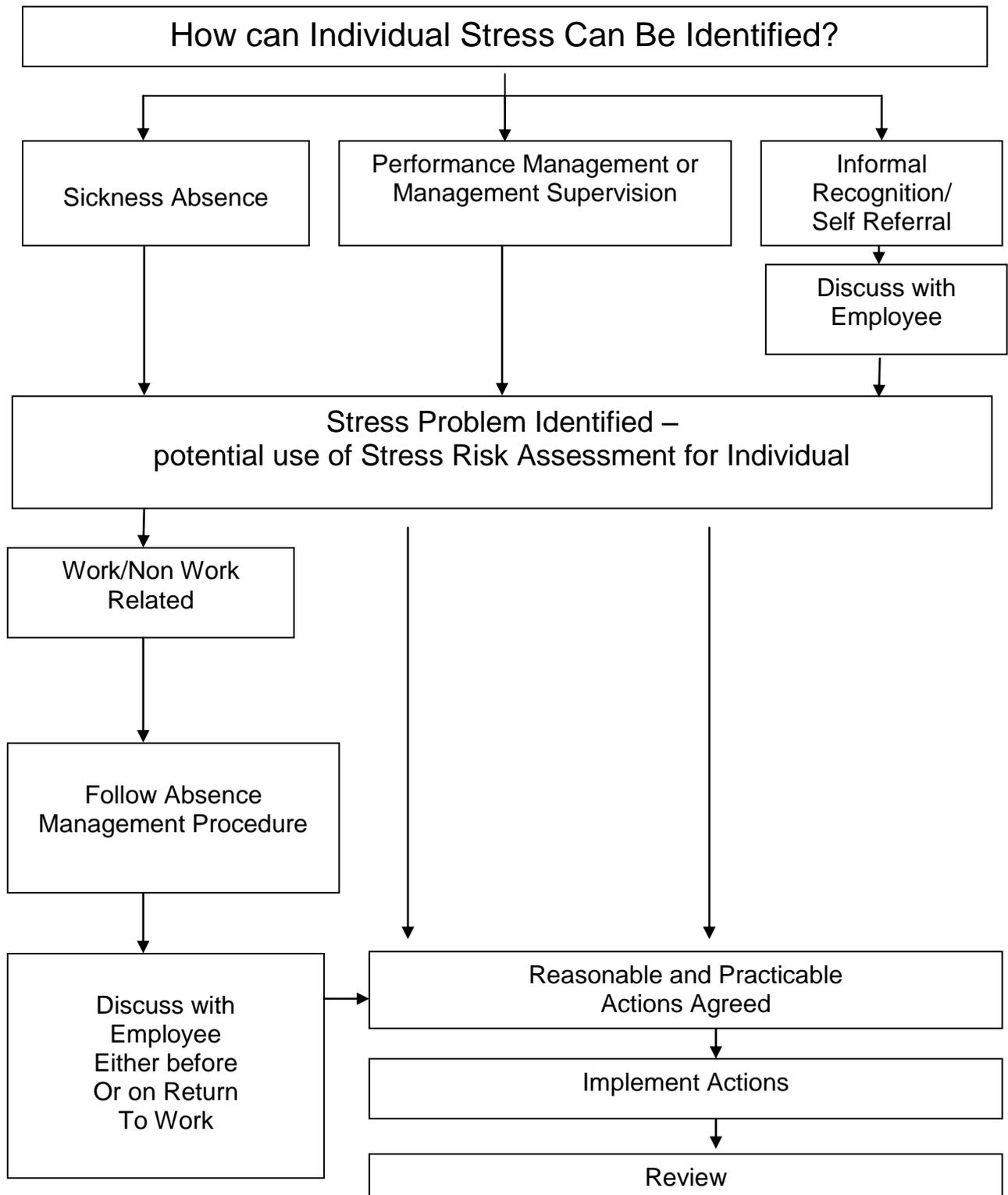
As part of a strategic approach to managing stress the Governing Body, through the Headteacher, will ensure appropriate training and development is provided for managers and employees.

9 Who can Help with my Stress?

You are not only a manager but also an employee too, possibly with your own set of work and personal problems. It is difficult for you to support others if you are not prepared to look for support and help for yourself when it is required.

If you are having difficulties discuss these initially with your Headteacher, or Line Manager, to try to resolve them. If your problem is with your Headteacher or Line Manager, discuss it with the Chair of Governors or your Headteacher respectively or with your Trade Union or Professional Association representative. You should then seek other appropriate advice and support through the formal and informal support networks set out in Section 8 “Employees Guidelines”.

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS – FLOWCHART



If the employee does not agree to any offer of specific action at any stage this should be recorded and reconsidered at the next review meeting.

SPECIMEN LETTER TO EMPLOYEE TO ARRANGE STRESS ASSESSMENT

(To be amended as appropriate)

**Letter to Employee From Headteacher
Or
From Chair of Governors to Headteacher**

Dear

Stress Risk Assessment

I was concerned to hear you feel you are experiencing stress at the present time.

As we agreed at our meeting on [Date], I have asked ***[your line manager]*** to arrange to see you/*or I would like to meet with you on.....* to conduct a stress risk assessment.

This will provide an assessment of the reasons for the stress you feel at the present time and enable a discussion of possible recommendations to reduce the causes. You may, if you wish, find it helpful to be accompanied by a friend or by your trade union representative.

I will arrange to see you again when I have received the outcome of the assessment from ***[your line manager*]***. ***Or please confirm whether these arrangements are suitable.***

Yours sincerely

** In certain circumstances you may wish to request the assessment is conducted with a Local Authority Officer.*

INDIVIDUAL STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT

Department/section					
Name/job title of employee					
Name/job title of manager/supervisor					
	CULTURE	YES	NO	N/A	REQUIRED ACTION/COMMENTS
1	Are you (or have you previously) suffered from stress related illness?				
2	Do you take your annual leave entitlement?				
3	Do you regularly work excessive hours?				
4	If you report that you are suffering from stress is action taken?				
5	Are there good, open and regular communications between staff up and down the management line at all levels?				
6	Is there a feedback process in place for your comments and/or complaints.				
	DEMANDS				REQUIRED ACTION/COMMENTS
7	Are your skills and ability matched to the job?				
8	Is the allocation of work to duties monitored by your manager?				
9	Have you received induction and job training?				

	DEMANDS (continued)	YES	NO	N/A	REQUIRED ACTION / COMMENTS
10	Were your working hours agreed on recruitment?				
11	Do you understand the reasons for temporary increases in work?				
12	Do you have any problems with working environment factors (noise, vibration, ventilation, humidity etc.) ?				
13	Are there adequate resources to do the required work?				
14	Is there sufficient, suitable equipment available to do your job?				
	CONTROL				REQUIRED ACTION / COMMENTS
15	Do you plan your own workload?				
16	Do you plan your own work schedule (ie timescales/deadlines)?				
17	Is there an element of flexibility in duty allocation and hours of work?				
18	Do you and your manager get together regularly to make decisions on how work problems should be tackled?				
	RELATIONSHIPS				REQUIRED ACTION/COMMENTS
19	Are you aware of the policy on bullying/harassment?				
20	Are you able to discuss relationships with colleagues with your manager (or someone else)?				
	RELATIONSHIPS (continued)				REQUIRED ACTION/COMMENTS
21	Are you consulted and involved in changes that may affect you?				
22	Are you kept informed during periods of change?				

23	Do you receive a regular appraisal/erview?				
24	Do you have a clear job description?				
25	Is the correct training available for all jobs you do?				
	SUPPORT/TRAINING/OTHER FACTORS				REQUIRED ACTION/COMMENTS
26	Are you aware of the services of the Occupational Health Unit?				
27	Do you wish to discuss this assessment with anyone else?				
28	Has the process for training and career development been explained to you?				
29	Are you aware of the process for transfer or promotion?				
30	Do you wish to undertake stress awareness training?				
31	Are there any other workplace factors which should be taken into account?				

Signed (Manager)

Date

Signed(Employee)

Date

General Health and Safety Risk Assessment for (Description of workplace/activity being assessed)

			REVIEWS			
Section/Establishment Name			Next Review Date	Reviewed by	Date	Changes Made Yes / No
Location						
Employees Consulted						
Trade Union Reps Consulted						
Name of Person Undertaking Assessment						
<i>Signature</i> of Person Undertaking Assessment						
Date of Assessment						
Name of Manager Confirming and Agreeing Assessment						
<i>Signature</i> of Manager Confirming and Agreeing Assessment						
Date of Issue						

Description of work place / activity being assessed: - _____

Hazard	Who might be harmed and how?	Existing Control Measures		Yes	No	N/A	Further Actions	Priority for further action H / M / L	Person Responsible for further actions and completion date
Stress	All: Culture	1.	Is sickness absence monitored for signs of stress related illness?						
		2.	Is annual leave monitored to ensure that staff take their entitlement?						
		3.	Are staff discouraged from working excessive hours?						
		4.	Are reports of stress investigated and action taken?						
		5.	Are there good communication procedures in place so that staff are kept well informed?						
		6.	Is there a feedback process in place for staff comments and/or complaints?						
	Demands	7.	Does the recruitment process correctly match skills, and ability to the job?						
		8.	Is the allocation of work to duties monitored by managers?						
		9.	Is induction and job specific training given?						
		10.	Are working hours agreed on recruitment?						

Hazard	Who might be harmed and how?	Existing Control Measures		Yes	No	N/A	Further Actions	Priority for further action H / M / L	Person Responsible for further actions and completion date
	Demands (cont)	11.	Do staff understand the reasons for temporary increases in workloads?						
		12.	Is there a reporting and review system for working environment factors? (noise, vibration, ventilation, humidity etc)						
		13.	Are there adequate resources to do the required work?						
		14.	Is there sufficient, suitable equipment available for all jobs?						
	Control	15.	Is the job evaluation process followed for all new jobs?						
		16.	Are the Working Time Regulations complied with and work patterns controlled?						
		17.	Where possible do staff get an opportunity to plan their own work?						
		18.	Is there an element of flexibility in duty allocation and hours of work?						
		19.	Is there an employee/ management feedback process?						

Hazard	Who might be harmed and how?	Existing Control Measures		Yes	No	N/A	Further Actions	Priority for further action H / M / L	Person Responsible for further actions and completion date
	Control (cont)	20.	Do management and staff get together regularly to make decisions on how work problems should be tackled?						
		21.	Are employees encouraged to use their skills and initiatives to do their work?						
		22.	Are employees encouraged to develop new skills?						
	Relationships	23.	Are staff aware of the policy on bullying/harassment?						
		24.	Are staff aware of the drug/ alcohol policy?						
		25.	Is the equal opportunities policy complied with?						
		26.	Is the attendance management procedures used correctly?						
		27.	Are employees encouraged to share information relating to their work?						
	Change	28.	Are staff consulted and involved in changes that may affect them?						
		29.	Are employees provided with timely information regarding reasons for proposed changes and timetables?						
		30.	Is 'change' risk assessed in terms of the impact on health and safety?						

Hazard	Who might be	Existing Control Measures	Yes	No	N/A	Further Actions	Priority	Person
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	harmed and how?						for further action H / M / L	Responsible for further actions and completion date
	Change (cont)	31.	Are employees provided with training to support changes in their jobs?					
		32.	Do employees have access to relevant support during changes?					
	Role	33.	Is the employee personal development review process followed correctly?					
		34.	Do all staff have clear job descriptions?					
		35.	Do informal discussions between managers and staff take place?					
		36.	Is the appropriate training available for all jobs?					
	Support/ Training/ Other Factors	37.	Are staff aware of the EAP scheme?					
		38.	Are staff aware of the services of the Occupational Health Unit?					
		39.	Are there opportunities for career progression?					
		40.	Has the process for training and career development been explained to staff?					
		41.	Is there a process for assessing skills and competencies?					

Hazard	Who might be harmed and how?	Existing Control Measures			Yes	No	N/A	Further Actions	Priority for further action H / M / L	Person Responsible for further actions and completion date
	Support/ Training/ Other Factors (cont)	42.	Do staff undertake stress awareness training?							
		43.	Do management hold regular team meetings?							
		44.	Are there any other workplace factors which should be taken into account?							

H – Immediate action required

M – Action as soon as is reasonably practicable

L – Action required within _____ months