

Stress & Mental Health at Work

Policy · UK · Updated 2026-07-23 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

A stress and mental health at work policy is the written statement of how your organisation prevents work-related stress, supports staff experiencing mental ill health, and makes it safe to ask for help — covering how stress risks are identified and reduced, what support exists, and how adjustments and returns to work are handled. It treats mental health as a health and safety matter, managed with the same seriousness as physical hazards.

Work-related stress rarely announces itself; it shows up as rising sickness absence, mistakes, short tempers, and quiet resignations. The businesses that manage it well are not the ones with the most generous perks — they are the ones where workload, rotas, and behaviour are designed deliberately and where a struggling person knows exactly who to talk to and what happens next.

This template gives you a complete, ready-to-edit policy: how stress risks are assessed using the HSE Management Standards areas, the support routes available, how adjustments and returns to work are managed, and the confidentiality rules that make any of it usable.

Purpose and scope

This policy sets out how [Your company] manages work-related stress and supports the mental health of everyone who works here. It applies to all employees and workers, and covers both the prevention of stress caused by work and the support offered when someone is struggling, whatever the cause.

It works alongside our absence management, bullying and harassment, and flexible working policies.

Policy statement

[Your company] treats work-related stress as a health and safety risk to be assessed and reduced at source — through workload, rota design, clarity of roles, and standards of behaviour — not as an individual weakness to be managed around. Asking for help will never, by itself, disadvantage anyone's employment, shifts, or prospects at [Your company].

Responsibilities

- [Name/role] owns this policy, the stress risk assessment, and the support arrangements.
- Managers: design workloads and rotas that are demanding but sustainable, hold regular one-to-ones, act early on the warning signs below, and respond to any disclosure promptly, privately, and without judgement.
- All staff: treat colleagues with respect, raise concerns about their own or a colleague's wellbeing through the routes below, and engage with agreed support plans.
- [Mental health first aiders / wellbeing champions, if appointed]: [names/roles] — a trained first point of contact, not a substitute for professional help.

Identifying and assessing stress risks

[Name/role] carries out and maintains a stress risk assessment using the six HSE Management Standards areas: demands (workload, patterns, environment), control (how much say people have over their work), support (from managers and colleagues), relationships (including conflict and unacceptable behaviour), role (clarity and conflict of expectations), and change (how it is managed and communicated).

Evidence comes from sickness absence patterns, turnover, exit interviews, one-to-ones, and [survey/team meeting] feedback. Findings and actions are written down, given owners and dates, and reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually].

Warning signs managers act on

- Changes in behaviour: withdrawal, irritability, uncharacteristic errors, or a drop in standards from someone previously reliable.
- Patterns in absence: frequent short absences, or reluctance to take any leave at all.
- Working patterns: consistently long hours, skipped breaks, or visible inability to switch off.
- Direct signals: a person saying they are struggling — taken at face value, every time.

Support available

- A private conversation with [line manager / named alternative if the manager is part of the problem] — the standing first step, available without needing a formal label.
- [Employee assistance programme / counselling arrangement: provider, contact route, and confidentiality terms].
- [Occupational health referral arrangements, where used].
- Practical workplace measures: temporary workload changes, shift or rota adjustments, time off for appointments — agreed case by case and recorded.
- Signposting to external support, including the person's GP and NHS services.

Adjustments and returning to work

Where a mental health condition affects someone's work, [Your company] discusses and makes reasonable adjustments — changes to workload, hours, duties, environment, or supervision arrangements — recording what is agreed and reviewing it at [interval]. Where a condition amounts to a disability under the Equality Act 2010, adjustments are a legal duty, but [Your company] does not wait for a diagnosis or a legal test to act on an obvious need.

After mental health-related absence, the return is planned with the person before their first day back: a return-to-work conversation, any phased return or adjusted duties, what (if anything) they want colleagues told, and a named check-in point in the following weeks.

Confidentiality

What someone shares about their mental health is confidential. It is recorded only where necessary, stored as sensitive personal data with restricted access in [system], and shared only with the person's agreement

— except where there is a serious and immediate risk to their safety or someone else's. Nothing about a person's mental health is discussed with colleagues without their explicit consent.

Training, records, and review

Managers are trained on this policy — spotting the warning signs, holding the first conversation, and what they must and must not do with what they hear — at [interval], and every new starter hears how to access support during induction.

The stress risk assessment, action plans, training records, and (separately, with restricted access) individual support records are kept in [system/location]. This policy is reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually] and after any serious incident. Owner: [name/role]. Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. Run the stress risk assessment before finalising the policy — the support section should answer the problems your own data shows, not generic ones.
2. Name a genuine alternative contact for staff whose stressor is their own manager; without one, the policy is unusable for the people who need it most.
3. Only list support you actually have: an EAP you fund beats a longer list of vague promises.
4. Fill every [bracketed placeholder], and agree the confidentiality rules with whoever manages your HR records before publishing.
5. Train managers on the first conversation — most policies fail at the moment a disclosure is met badly.
6. Set the review date and owner, and revisit absence and turnover data at each review to test whether the policy is working.

Official guidance

- › [HSE — Work-related stress and how to manage it](#)
- › [ACAS — Absence from work](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/stress-mental-health-at-work-policy> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.