Stress Risk Assessment O-SOP

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1	2021	M.Tarrant	Policy Group	New SOP
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3	2023	C.Tromans H.Thomson	Policy Group	Minor Changes

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Stress Risk Assessment SOP

1. INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

The document provides guidance and tools for individuals responsible for undertaking Stress Risk Assessments (SRA) and to aid them and their teams in the development of practical action plans to control the identified risks. It should be used in conjunction with the Trust's Managing Stress at Work Policy v.9. The SRA tools referenced in this document are based on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards and six risk factors.

2. STEPS TO MANAGING STRESS RISK

2.1 Stress Risk Assessment

An assessment can be completed with an individual or team and once completed should be reviewed annually or more regularly if required. The SRA is based on the familiar 'five steps to risk assessment' model, requiring management and staff to work together. A template and guidance to support the steps below can be found in Appendix B and D.

1. To identify the stress risk factors
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks: explore problems and develop solutions
4. Record the findings: develop and implement action plan/s
5. Monitor and review: monitor and review action plan/s and assess effectiveness

2.2 Identifying the hazards

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards relates to six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and wellbeing, lower productivity, and increased sickness absence.

1. **Demands**: this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment
2. **Control**: how much say the person has in the way they do their work
3. **Support**: this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, management, and colleagues
4. **Relationships**: this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
5. **Role**: whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting role
6. **Change:** how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation

2.3 Recognising the signs of stress

Some common signs of stress are listed below, however, be aware that experiencing any of these for short periods does not necessarily indicate that people are stressed. This is only likely to be indicated when one or more of these signs linger and they have some difficulty adjusting to cope.

2.3.1. Signs of stress in teams

You may notice:
- Arguments

- Higher staff turnover
- More reports of stress
- Increased sickness absence
- Decreased performance
- More complaints and grievances.

2.3.2. Signs of stress in an employee

A change in the way someone acts, thinks, or feels can also be a sign of stress, for example:

- Take more time off
- Arrive for work later
- Be more twitchy or nervous
- Mood swings
- Being withdrawn
- Loss of motivation, commitment, and confidence
- Increased emotional reactions – being more tearful, sensitive, or aggressive

2.4 Decide who might be harmed and how

Having identified the causes of stress within the team it is important to decide who is affected. If as a manager you have identified some of the above signs and are worried about an employee's health you should take action by referring them to Occupational Health, where there are immediate concerns encouraging them to see their General Practitioner and helping them to access self-help resources and or Employee Assistance Programme services for additional support.

If however, the causes of stress are common across the team then this will inform your approach and who you involve in putting controls in place.

2.5 Level of risk

Risk Rating*	Authority/ Ownership	Actions	Risk Register Level	Risk Review Frequency
Low Risk 1-3	Individuals/ Team Managers	Monitor risk & Manage through normal control measures	None as the level of risk is acceptable	Annually
Moderate Risk 4-6	Service/ Department Managers	Review control measures through formal risk assessment	Service level risk register	Quarterly
High risk 8-12	Head of Service/ Governance/ Associate Director	**Action** required *Review with appropriate lead before escalating to this level	Service line (divisional) risk register	Minimum every 2 months
Extreme Risk 15-25	Clinical/ Operational/ Executive Director	**Immediate action** required *Review with appropriate director before escalating to this level	Corporate risk register	Weekly/Monthly

A general guide to assessing the level of risk is as follows, but further information can be found in Appendix B.

Stress Risk Assessment   v.3

2.6   **Prevention and early action**

Managers must have systems in place to monitor stress at work and to be aware of both team and individual actions/behaviour, to identify common signs of stress. It is important to take action to prevent workplace stress and to act quickly to reduce the impact of work-related stress on individuals and service delivery when stress is identified.

Embedding a positive approach to Health and Wellbeing in your area, will help to ensure it is part of people's everyday working lives. This will help to prevent / reduce the impact of stress at work, boost motivation, work performance and maintain good work attendance. An important success factor to achieving this is engaging with individuals to help them recognise the vital role they play in helping look after their own Wellbeing and recognising stress triggers.

2.7 Making a plan

Once the risks have been identified an action plan can be developed to ensure that controls are put in place to reduce the risks, as far as is practical to do so. The best approach is to work with the individual or team to develop the plan. This ensures their ownership, and risks are more likely to be controlled effectively.

Support from the Health and Safety manager can be provided to assist with the SRA and development of actions plans and additional resources are provided within the HSE Action Plan Management standards for tackling work-related stress - Action plan template (hse.gov.uk)

2.8 Monitor and review

SRAs should be updated at least annually or more often for high risks or if circumstances change. However, monitoring should form part of day-to-day operations.

It is good management practice for managers to regularly discuss workplace Health and Wellbeing. This should be a standard item for discussion at 1-1 meetings in relation to individual Wellbeing (see the Trust 1-1 template) and at team meetings in terms of wider team Wellbeing, monitoring and proactive action planning to improve health and wellbeing at work; a `Team Check In` system may be of use. High level risks should be raised through Service Line Governance Meetings.

3.   USEFUL RESOURCES

3.1.   More information and guidance on promoting employee Health and Wellbeing, accessing supporting resources and how to reduce workplace stress can be found:

- HSE website
- HSE Talking Toolkit
- ACAS
- NHS Employers

3.2.   Several practical tools for managers have also been included in the Appendix C.

4. GLOSSARY

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), provided by Vivup, is a confidential, free, and impartial assistance to help you in times of need including a helpline operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year. To register, individuals can visit **solentnhs.vivup.co.uk** to discover what employee benefits are available.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Line Manager Competency Indicator Tool (HSE)

Managers play an important role is helping to prevent and manage stress at work, but managers also need to think about their own behaviour and how it can affect others stress levels.

There are a range of tools available on the HSE site to set expectations and help managers reflect on their behaviour and management style to help assess whether they currently have the behaviours identified as effective for preventing and reducing stress at work:

http://www.hse.gov.uk/STRESS/mcit.htm

Name/Team:	
Date:	
Responsible manager/ champion:	

What are the hazards? (HSE 6 factors)	Who is impacted by the hazards and how?	Overal l Risk Rating *	What are you already doing to manage the hazards?	What else do you need to do?	By who?	By when ?
1. **DEMANDS** (Demands of the job experienced by employees, i.e. workload, time, pressure)						
2. **SUPPORT** (The support employees receive from managers and colleagues)						
3. **CONTROL** (The level of control employees have over their work)						
4. **ROLE** (The clarity of an employees role within the organisation)						
5. **RELATIONSHIPS** (The nature of relationships at work)						
6. **CHANGE** (The way that change is managed)						

Table 1. How do you decide if it's a low, moderate, high, or extreme risk?

Risk Rating*	Authority/ Ownership	Actions	Risk Register Level	Risk Review Frequency
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Risk = Likelihood x Consequence

Table 2. Likelihood score overview

Likelihood Score	Descriptor	Frequency
1	Rare	This will probably never happen/recur
2	Unlikely	Not expected to happen/recur but it is possible
3	Possible	Might happen or recur occasionally
4	Likely	Probably happen/recur but it is not a persistent issue
5	Almost certain	Will undoubtedly happen/recur possibly frequently

Table 3. Consequence score overview

Consequence Score	Domains
1	Negligible
2	Minor
3	Moderate
4	Major
5	Catastrophic

For example:

- As a team, you discuss and highlight that high workload is a risk to your team (falls within the hazard 1: Demands)
- To rate this risk, it would be the likelihood of this happening/recurring multiplied by the consequence
- For example, high workload is possible and happens/ recurs occasionally (likelihood score of 3), and the consequence is moderate because this results in staff sickness, poor patient care etc (consequence score of 3)
- Therefore, the overall risk is 3 x 3 = 9
- A risk rating of 9 is categorised as a high risk, so follow steps within Table 1 -
- High risk – risk is owned by head of service/governance/associate director - action required – add to service line risk register- review at minimum every 2 months

Appendix C: Supporting documents

- Guide to completing a risk assessment [Talking Toolkit: Preventing work-related stress (hse.gov.uk)](#)
- Action Plan [Management standards for tackling work-related stress - Action plan template (hse.gov.uk)](#)
- Line Manager Resource https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/manage-mental-health.pdf

Appendix D: Stress Risk Assessment Workshop

The stress risk assessment workshop session plan and further support can be requested by emailing snhs.wellbeing@solent.nhs.uk