

**Department of Health and Social Care  
Occupational Health Service**

**Step by Step Guide to Completing a Risk Assessment for Stress**

**First Stage – Preparation**

**The first stage is to ensure that the team ethos will enable an open and honest assessment of any issues causing stress and affecting the health of staff.**

**1. Obtain Commitment**

The team needs to have visible top level support for any initiatives. Staff need to feel that their concerns will be taken seriously and that managers will work with them to find solutions.

The team managers must be able to demonstrate that they are the driving force behind this initiative. Consider introducing a formal reporting system at management meetings to raise issues relating to stress management and staff well being.

**2. Evaluate Management Behaviours**

Using the CIPD Management competencies for preventing and reducing stress at work ([www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.pdf)) team managers to self evaluate against competencies, identify areas for development and ensure positive behaviours are applied to the risk assessment process.

**3. Identify any Necessary Resources**

The team should identify one person with the responsibility for completing and co-ordinating any stress risk assessments, and a deputy. This person's responsibilities should be reflected in their objectives.

*Administration Support*

Allocate administration time to allow the collation of information and for communicating the results of the assessment to staff.

*Time in staff meetings*

Ensure that stress and the initiatives to address it are a major agenda item on staff meetings at least once each quarter.

**4. Inform Staff about the Process**

*Identify ways to inform staff about the plans*

Consider raising at staff meetings, newsletters, individual letters to staff.

*Ask for co-operation*

This is essential. Staff must feel that they can be honest about the issues and that they can express their concerns without reprisal. It is important to establish the following:

- The risk assessment for stress can only be successful if all staff contribute.
- It is important that all staff see it as their collective responsibility and that the process does not develop into trying to find others to blame.
- There are some positive issues in every organisation. Staff should help to identify these and build on them.
- Staff may have contributions and ideas which will influence how the assessment is undertaken. Ask at an early stage how they feel they can help the team to tackle stress and improve staff well being.

Use this space to make any planning notes for the preparation stage. Make sure you allow a realistic timescale.

## **Second Stage – Assessing How Well Stress is Being Managed**

**The second stage is to undertake an assessment of the issues which may be a source of stress for staff, use the checklist to assist you in this process.**

### **1. Collect any Relevant Background Information**

There may already be evidence available which will assist in establishing whether staff have health or well being problems. This information should be monitored on a regular basis as this should help to monitor the health of the team.

Examples are:

#### *Known Problem Areas*

Examples include issues which have already been raised at staff meetings, issues identified in any complaints or grievances, any problems with the physical environment of the workplace.

#### *Turnover Figures*

It is helpful to keep a record of why staff are choosing to leave.

*Sickness Absence data*, e.g. absence rates and reasons for absence (staff returning to work following absence should be interviewed so that any work related issues can be identified and addressed. If a member of staff has had a documented stress related absence this should be acknowledged and the issues identified and resolved).

#### *Feedback from Appraisal*

Are there any common themes, e.g. about workload issues.

### **2. Complete the Initial Checklist**

This checklist (Appendix 1) should help to provide an initial overview of the main problem areas within the team. The aim is to identify the broader issues which may be causing stress and which will need a more detailed assessment.

There are several ways of completing the checklist. It could be done by one person in consultation with a number of key colleagues. A large team may wish to use a focus group of staff to go through the checklist, or it could be completed by the management team. A small team may all be able to be involved at a team meeting.

The checklist should identify areas where there is a perceived problem, or areas where it is not clear from an initial look whether there is a problem or not. In both of these cases a more in depth assessment of the problem areas can be undertaken.

At this stage the checklist may identify simple problems with relatively straightforward solutions, or staff themselves may have suggested workable solutions or practical areas of improvement. If this is the case it would obviously be sensible to address these initial issues and move straight on to the action plan stage without undertaking a more in depth assessment. A more in depth assessment could be completed at a later date.

### **3. Ask for Initial Feedback from Staff about the Outcome of the Checklist**

Whatever the outcome of the checklist it is worth checking with staff that the areas identified are a true reflection of the situation. It may be possible to solve many problems at this stage without the need for further assessment.

If lots of problems or complex or major issues are being flagged up you should proceed to undertake a more in depth assessment using a questionnaire or involving specialist help. (Contact Occupational Health on 642150 or [occupationalhealth.dh@gov.im](mailto:occupationalhealth.dh@gov.im))

#### **4. Complete a More Detailed Assessment if Necessary**

Remember that the initial checklist is to highlight specific organisational and work issues and is a starting point. The checklist will not provide the answers or the solutions. Use the results of the checklist as a starting point for discussion. Involve the staff in identifying solutions and in developing an action plan.

Use this space to plan your assessment:

Identify where you are going to obtain any background information and summarise the conclusions from this.

Decide how the initial checklist is going to be completed (e.g. one person, a focus group, a team meeting). Summarise your main conclusions.

Plan here how a more detailed assessment is going to be completed, if needed.

### Third Stage – Action Planning

Every team is expected to identify areas where improvements could be made which will affect the well being of staff. There may be a number of problems identified which could be relatively easily and inexpensively rectified. Other problems may have a number of possible solutions and will require meetings and consultation with staff to resolve the issues.

It is essential that the work required is integrated into the team plans and objectives, so that progress can be monitored and documented. It may take six months or more to solve major problems such as communication and consultation issues and it is important to allow a realistic and achievable timescale for this.

Use the Action Plan Template (Appendix 2) to document the actions required. Send a copy of the Action Plan to the Wellbeing Steering Group c/o Occupational Health, Garaghyn Glass, Strang, Braddan, Isle of Man, IM4 4RJ.

### Fourth Stage – Document and Review

**All of the relevant key activity, action and outcomes should be documented.**

We recommend that you document everything undertaken in connection with the assessment work and keep it in one place. Create a "Stress Risk Assessment File" and include the notes of meetings so you develop a record of progress. It will also help the team to demonstrate the action they have taken to address stress if for example this information was requested by an Inspector from the Health and Safety Inspectorate.

| Use this space to list / reference any documents relevant to the assessment    |      |         |
|--|------|---------|
|  |      |         |
| Use this space to document any issues which were referred to Senior Management |      |         |
| Issue Referred   | Date | Outcome |
|  |      |         |

**Record the date you completed your action plan and sent a copy to Occupational Health.**

## Review

You should set a date for a formal review of the assessment. Six months is the interval we would recommend. Involve the staff by asking them about their perceptions of change. Check and document whether the action plan targets have been achieved and / or need to be modified.

Remember that an organisation can never "finish" a stress risk assessment. It should be a continuous process which needs to be refined and adjusted as the pressures change with time. This documentation should be an ongoing record of how you are constantly reviewing and improving the well being of staff.

Use this Space to Set Dates for Reviews

## Useful Information

Isle of Man Government Policy for the Prevention and Management of Workplace Stress July 2010 provides background information on work related stress and is the minimum standard to which Departments should be working. Summarises Government arrangements for the management of stress (appendix I), has a list of contacts for information and support (appendix II) and lists CIPD recommended management competencies (appendix V). Link to Isle of Man Government Policy for: ['The Prevention and Management of Workplace Stress'](#)

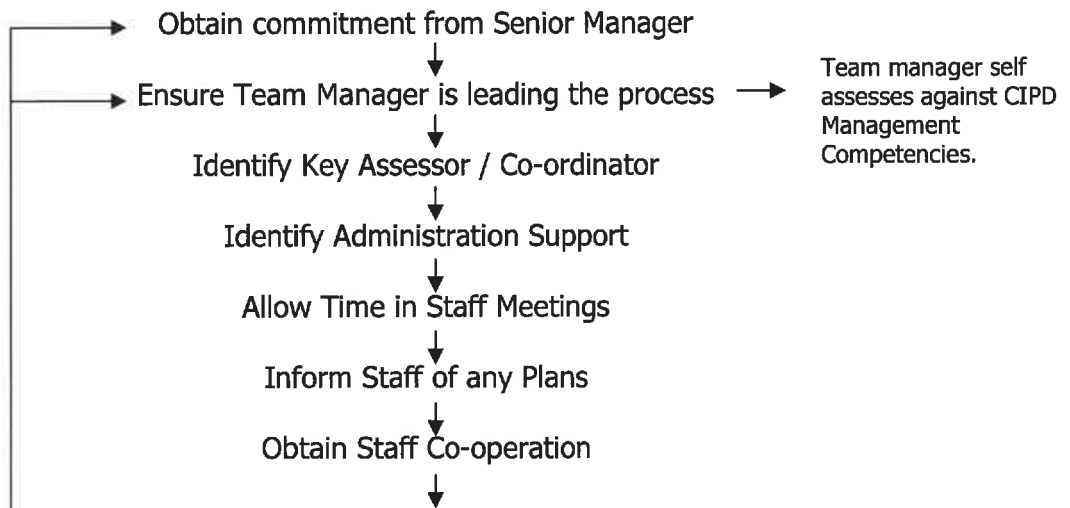
## Sources of Help

Occupational Health and Safety Service (telephone 642150 or email [occupationalhealth.dh@gov.im](mailto:occupationalhealth.dh@gov.im))

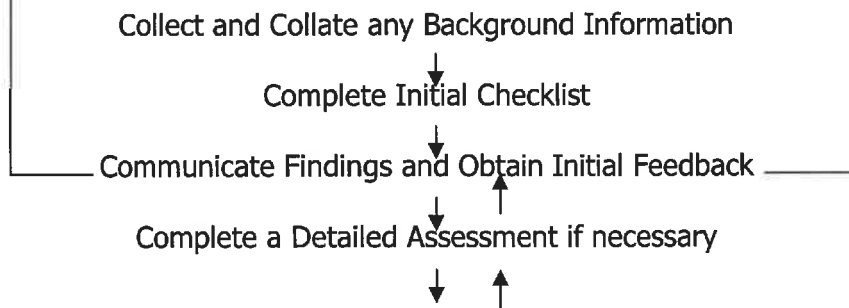
Carole Astbury – January 2012

## Flowchart

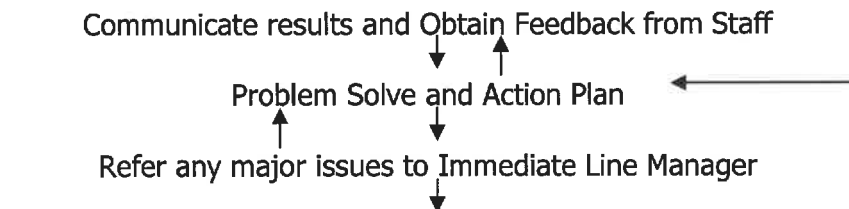
### **Preparation**



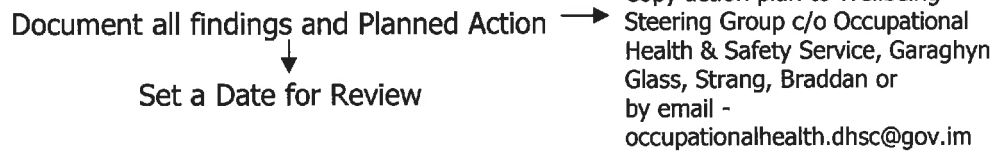
### **Assessment**



### **Action Plan**



### **Document and Review**





## Initial Checklist for Risk Assessment for Stress

|  |           |  |           |
|--|-----------|--|-----------|
| Date of assessment   |           |  |           |
| Name of assessor   |           |  |           |
| Name or description of team to be assessed                                       |           |  |           |
| Job title  |           |  |           |
| Number of employees  | Full time |  | Part time |
| Brief description of functions of the team, the principal job roles and activity |           |  |           |

| <b>Information used to complete checklist</b> | <b>Notes / Comments</b> |
|---|-------------------------|
| Interviews with managers                      |                         |
| Interviews with staff                         |                         |
| Feedback from meetings                        |                         |
| Questionnaires                                |                         |
| Review of current practice                    |                         |
| Turnover figures                              |                         |
| Absence statistics                            |                         |
| Overtime figures                              |                         |
| Accidents                                     |                         |
| Other information used                        |                         |

| Checklist continued   | Present  |    | Details of risks and controls in place | Take forward for detailed assessment |    |
|---|--|----|--|--------------------------------------|----|
|   | Yes  | No |  | Yes                                  | No |
| <b>Stressors Identified</b>   |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| <b>1. Intrinsic to Job</b>  | <i>Standard: Unavoidable stressors intrinsic to the job are acknowledged and controlled</i>    |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Face to face contact or telephone contact with public               |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Verbal abuse or physical violence                                   |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Dealing with death, dying or relationships                          |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Lone working  |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Repetitive, low stimulation, boring, monotonous tasks               |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| <b>2. Home Work Interface</b>   | <i>Standard: Work arrangements do not adversely affect work/life balance</i>                   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Regular requirement to take work home                               |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ On call commitments from home                                       |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Shift work/unsociable hours   |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| <b>3. Physical Environment</b>  | <i>Standard: The working environment is safe and comfortable, wherever control is possible</i> |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Cold, dirty, unpleasant working environments                        |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Lack of work base in those who work in multiple sites               |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Poorly sited premises e.g. remote, in basements                     |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Open plan working where this is noisy / disruptive / distracting    |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Cramped poorly planned working conditions                           |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Travelling for work:  |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| Long Distances  |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| Frequent Journeys   |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| Parking   |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| <b>4. Organisational Factors</b>                                      |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| <b>4a. Demands</b>  |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| <i>Standard: Staff are able to cope with the demands of their job</i> |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| <i>Stressors:</i>   |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Overload  |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Underload   |  |    |  |                                      |    |
| <b>4b. Control</b>  |  |    |  |                                      |    |

| <i>Standard: Staff are able to have a say about how they do their work</i>                    |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| <i>Stressors:</i>   |  |  |  |  |  |
| ○ Imposed changes to roles or work schedules  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ○ Lack of consultation about work patterns  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ○ Lack of involvement in staff over break times / off duty                                    |  |  |  |  |  |
| <b>4c. Support</b>  |  |  |  |  |  |
| <i>Standard: Staff receive adequate information and support from colleagues and superiors</i> |  |  |  |  |  |
| <i>Stressors:</i>   |  |  |  |  |  |
| ○ Lack of or ineffective communication  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ○ Poor team working and support   |  |  |  |  |  |
| ○ Ineffective/confusing reporting structures  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ○ Poor handling of capability issues  |  |  |  |  |  |

| Checklist continued   | Present   |    | Details of risks and controls in place | Take forward for detailed assessment |    |
|---|---|----|--|--------------------------------------|----|
|   | Yes   | No |  | Yes                                  | No |
| <b>4d. Relationships</b>  |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| <i>Standard: Employees are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours e.g. bullying at work</i> |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| <i>Stressor:</i>  |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Bullying  |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Harassment  |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Team conflict   |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Inequity in team  |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| <b>4e. Change</b>   |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| <i>Standard: Employees are frequently engaged when organisational change takes place</i>      |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| <i>Stressors:</i>   |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Ineffective communication re change   |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Inadequate consultation   |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Lack of support during change   |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| <b>4f. Role</b>   |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| <i>Standard: Employees understand their role and responsibilities</i>                         |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| <i>Stressors:</i>   |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Lack of clear role definition   |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Conflicts in role eg service needs –v- budget   |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| <b>5. Influencing Factors</b>   | <i>Standard: Adjustments are made to support staff during time of ill health or personal stress</i> |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Individual Factors identified within the team (NB care with confidentiality)                |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ History of ongoing ill health problems within the team (NB care with confidentiality)       |   |    |  |                                      |    |
| ○ Other stressors identified  |   |    |  |                                      |    |

- For each stressor decide whether or not this is present, whether this is being managed satisfactorily or whether further information and/or a more detailed assessment is required.
- Take forward all the areas for more detailed assessment to a separate sheet.
- If no areas are identified, keep this checklist as a record and note a date for review.

Signature:

Date:

Date for Review:

### **Detailed Assessment if needed**

Results of surveys / focus groups / staff meetings.

**Appendix 2**

**Prevention and Management of Stress Action Plan**

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Person completing the Plan** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date Agreed:** \_\_\_\_\_

| No. Standard | Issue | Action / Solutions | Lead Person | Target | Progress Notes |
|--------------|-------|--------------------|-------------|--------|----------------|
|              |       |                    |             |        |                |

Send copy of this to Wellbeing Steering Group c/o Occupational Health    copy sent     date .....