

The Six Sources of Stress at Work:

Detailed Guidance on specific factors to take into account when conducting a risk assessment

1. Demands

Demands refer to the demands of the job as a whole. Jobs have many features or characteristics such as how much work they involve, the variety of tasks involved and how much support is available. The main aspects to consider are:

Work overload : Too much work to do without sufficient resources (eg Time, equipment, admin support etc. Where work is too difficult for the employee to do (due to a lack of training, intellectual or physical capacity)

Work underload: Can occur when an employee is not being sufficiently challenged by their work

Working patterns: Including long working hours, working over contracted hours, multi-site and off site working and travelling time

The physical environment: Factors include noise, vibration, temperature, lighting, etc.

Psychosocial environment; factors include levels of aggression and violence

Support: Lack of support and help available from management and colleagues

2. Control

Control refers to the amount of say staff have over how their work is carried out. The following factors should be taken into account when doing a risk assessment:

- Little or no opportunity to participate in decision making processes
- No say over working hours and when breaks are taken
- Being overly monitoring and not constructive in feedback
- Little support when undertaking new tasks
- Pace of work is driven by a source beyond the employees control
- Employee does not feel they can ask for help when dealing with a difficult situation

3. Relationships

This factor describes the way we interact with other people at work. At work, relationships with managers, peers and others can dramatically affect how staff feel at work. The following factors should be considered when conducting a risk assessment:

- Unfair treatment by managers and decision makers
- Harassment by colleagues or manager
- Bullying or intimidation from manager or other staff
- Ineffective procedures to help staff raise concerns
- Conflict between team members
- Poor communication from others, both vertical and horizontal
- Lack of support from line manager
- Lack of social space/ canteen facilities at work

4. Role

This relates to the persons understanding of their role and responsibilities in the organisation which should be clearly defined and understood. There are two potentially stressful areas associated with a person's role in the organisation. These are:

Role Conflict: When person is torn between conflicting job demands or by competing tasks that the person feels is not part of their job. It can also occur when a person is not comfortable about something they are required to do

Role Ambiguity: When a person does not have a clear picture of their work objectives. Examples include:

- Lack of clarity about role and what is expected
- Unclear job description
- Job changes without consultation

5. Support

This refers to a range of formal and informal activities undertaken by management that support staff. It also includes support from colleagues. The following factors should be taken into account when assessing for risk of stress:

- Lack of career development and promotion routes
- Few or no training opportunities
- An over competitive or blame culture
- Staff feeling undervalued
- Staff given responsibility without the authority to take decisions

- Poor communication
- Lack of consultation with staff
- Lack of respect for staff
- Lack of opportunities for staff to receive support from colleagues and peers

6. Change

This refers to how change is managed in a team; how well staff feel consulted about and supported through change. Factors that should be considered are:

- Failure to consult over changes
- Lack of opportunity for staff to discuss issues before, during and after the change
- Lack of understanding the rationale for change
- Lack of communication and updating about progress when making changes
- Job insecurity experienced as a result of restructuring, mergers, redundancies etc.
- Relocation of jobs
- Failure to provide resources and time to manage change
- Lack of support for staff undergoing change