

**Human Resources** 

Management of Stress at Work Policy

#### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 This document outlines the policy for the prevention and management of stress at work in for London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.
- 1.2 The School is committed to maintaining the health and safety of its employees in the work environment. The School recognises that this duty of care extends to psychological health as well as physical health. Employees also have a duty of care to report aspects of work that may affect their health and safety as required by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. The School and its employees have a responsibility to identify and manage work related stress by working in partnership.
- 1.3 The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999) imposes a duty on employers to make a suitable and sufficient risk assessment. This duty extends to psychological risks to health and is a statutory duty for all employers.
- 1.4 All employees within the School may be exposed to stress. Non-work related stress issues can combine with work related stress to produce pressures which can be detrimental to the physical and/or mental wellbeing of employees and to the smooth running of the School.

#### 2. **DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1 The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as: "A reaction people have when excessive pressures or demands are placed upon them, and arises when an individual believes they are unable to cope" The common term for these pressures or demands is "stressors" and a person's reactions to stressors are termed "stress responses."
- 2.2 Pressure is part and parcel of all works and helps keep us motivated. But excessive stressors particularly over a period of time can lead to stress which undermines performance and can become detrimental to health. It is important to remember that reaction to stress is a very individual experience. Individual stress can be influenced by our own beliefs, attitudes and unrealistic expectations of others. Individual reaction to stressful situations may also be influenced by our conditioning, cultural background, education, life experiences, states of health and personality type.

#### 3. SCOPE

3.1 This policy applies to all employees of the School and all those carrying out duties on behalf of the School.

#### 4. ACCESS TO THE POLICY

4.1 All employees are entitled to access to this policy which is located on the School's Intranet. Copies are also available from the Human Resources Department and any employee can seek guidance from line management, their trade union representative or the Human Resources Department.

#### 5. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

5.1. To work in partnership with employees and the Trade Union Representatives to develop working practices that reduce the factors that may lead to stress in the workplace and to ensure that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken so as to reduce and control the risk of stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed in particular during periods of organisational change and changes in work demands.

- 5.2 To manage stress through both effective leadership and management practices by providing training for managers and supervisors and by encouraging employees to recognise and to be involved in the management of stressors which affect them.
- 5.3 To provide adequate resources to enable the Health and Safety Committee to develop effective procedures to reduce and manage work related stress in order to support individuals who may be affected.
- 5.4 To provide employees with information/training on the management of work related stress and to offer access to immediate support through their line manager, and Occupational Health.
- 5.5 To provide employees with ongoing support through managers, Human Resources advice, Occupational Health and access to access to mediation, confidential counselling.

#### 6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 The School's Senior Management Team has a responsibility to ensure that the general principles of this policy are followed and that:
  - They are fully implemented and supported by Directors and Heads of Departments;
  - The duty of care under current legislation is fully complied with;
  - Encourage and support activities that aid the promotion of employees' health and wellbeing.

#### 6.2 Managers responsibilities are to:

- Attend training and updates as required by the School in order to raise personal awareness and deliver effective management practices and implementation of specific action plans and interventions for reducing and managing work related stress;
- At the request of Occupational Health, the employee or as identified by the manager, undertake work related stress risk assessments in a timely manner within their working areas and act on their recommendations where possible;
- Ensure that employees have had appropriate training to carry out their duties;
- Monitor planned workloads;
- Monitor working hours, overtime working and the taking of annual leave to ensure that employees comply with the current policies relating to annual leave and working hours management;
- Offer support to employees that maybe experiencing identified stress outside of work e.g. bereavement or family issues;
- Ensure that all employees declaring/identifying anxiety/stress/depression are referred immediately to Occupational Health.
- 6.3 The responsibilities of the Human Resources Department are to:
  - Provide guidance to managers and employees on the School's policies related to the management of work related stress;
  - Assist and support the implementation of the stress management standards within the School;

- Monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating statistical sickness absence evidence;
- Provide, in conjunction with the Occupational Health Services, continuing support to managers and employees in a changing environment and encourage access to counselling and other support services as appropriate;
- Keep the provisions within this policy in line with employment legislation and best practice people management principles.
- 6.4 The responsibilities of the Health and Safety Committee are to:
  - Contribute to arrangements to ensure this policy is implemented across the School;
  - Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress at work;
  - Contribute to the provision of information to the Senior Management Team, regarding the implementation, efficacy of this policy and the measures in place within the school to reduce and manage work related stress
- 6.5 The responsibilities of the Occupational Health Department are to:
  - Provide specialist advice and training as required including training on stress awareness in self and others:
  - Contribute to training and support of managers in the implementation of the stress management standards;
  - Provide, in conjunction with the Human Resources Department, monitoring of levels of occurrence of stress and other illnesses associated with stress;
  - Contribute to sickness absence management by engagement with employees who have been off sick with stress and their managers to provide advice and/or recommendations for a return to work plan;
  - Advice on support services such as mediation, the Human Resources Department, Counselling service and any other external agencies as required;
  - Work in conjunction with the Health and Safety Committee and where applicable on developments in stress at work activity;
  - Support the School in ensuring that all relevant legislation and standards are adhered to.
- 6.6 The responsibilities of all employees and all those carrying out duties on behalf of the School are to:
  - Familiarise themselves with information regarding the management of stress at work and School policies and procedures provided at induction and in the local work environment;
  - Be aware of their own responsibility for health and safety at work;
  - Inform their manager and where applicable the Human Resources
    Department and the Occupational Health Department if they are experiencing
    difficulties at work which are or could result in work related stress.
- 6.7 In addition to this, they should recognise that they are able to:
  - Raise concerns with their line manager, the Occupational Health
    Department or the Human Resources Department regarding any physical or
    psychological stress symptoms which affect them at work;
  - Avail themselves of support mechanisms when recommended e.g. mediation and should accept opportunities for counselling/therapy when recommended.

- Work in partnership with management to ensure that the general principles of this policy are adhered to:
- Be involved in the risk assessment process when applying the stress management standards;
- Be allowed access to statistical and anonymous data concerning stress related issues:
- Attend training and updates as required by the School in order to raise personal awareness and contribute to the development and implementation of this policy.
- 6.9 Managers, the HR department and trade union representatives are responsible for providing advice and guidance to employees on the application of this policy and procedure, as well as bringing any mutually beneficial improvements to this policy to the attention of the School.

#### 7. BENCH-MARKING

7.1 To provide a good bench mark by which to assess the School's current position and to measure the effectiveness of its training and the support mechanisms the School will use any anonymised information such as annual staff survey data, return to work interviews.

#### 8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The Health and Safety Executive requires every employer to conduct risk assessments for health and safety hazards including work related stress.
- 8.2 Risk management is part of every managers day to day responsibilities, it should inform judgements about the appropriateness of policy options and/or service delivery methods, and as such should be integral to both strategic and operational management.
- 8.3 Stress risk assessments should be carried out by managers on the identification or notification of a hazard.
- 8.4 The School is committed to adhering to these HSE requirements in carrying out risk assessments and following the HSE recommendations of a five step approach when implementing risk assessments:

8.5

- Step 1 identify hazards
- Step 2 assess the risks to health who might be harmed and how
- Step 3 evaluate the risk and identify actions develop control measures
- Step 4 record findings and implement action plan
- Step 5 monitor and evaluate effectiveness, communicate results
- 8.5 Managers should meet with staff in groups and individually to help identify areas of concern. Issues relating to wider work processes may be risk assessed as department issues, however issues relating to personal concerns of staff should be examined in a confidential environment again using the above parameters.
- 8.6 It may also be necessary to undertake a stress risk assessment of an area or a review of department or work processes. In addition to individuals raising concerns, managers may become aware of potential issues relating to stress from department

meetings, sickness absence rates, and general morale. This may also be considered when initiating new work processes.

Individual risk assessments should be completed (Appendix 6) where an individual reports work-related stress. This assessment may be completed with the individual with the support of the line manager or by Occupational Health.

Where there are cases of work-related stress in a department this should also act as a trigger for the completion of a departmental risk assessment identified in Appendix 7. Occupational Health should also be notified as they may advise further assessment using the HSE on-line assessment tool. The process for management action is summarised in Appendix 4.

#### 9. PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING STRESS RELATED ILLNESS

- 9.1 Stress related illnesses can be managed from three perspectives, by way of organisational, managerial and/or personal self-management (see Appendix 3).
- 9.2 When carrying out a risk assessment management and employees can identify any work related stress using the non-exhaustive list of stressors at Appendix 2.
- 9.3 Once a stress related illness has been identified, it is important that managers, employees and all those carrying out duties on behalf of the School which could include normal day to day responsibilities.
- 9.4 As stress is an individual response to a perceived pressure people will have different coping thresholds and it can be difficult to predict who is likely to suffer with stress. A further complication is that people have different coping thresholds depending on other circumstances in their lives. It should therefore be remembered that stress can be accumulative and is not necessarily predictable.
- 9.5 Good management techniques should alert managers to changes in their employees, such as, personality changes, performance etc. that may indicate that an individual is unable to cope with the workload. However some people will not display overt signs and managers cannot always predict when someone is stressed. Often the first indication is when an episode of sickness occurs with stress/anxiety or depression on the certificate. Once alerted to a potential issue, managers should immediately discuss this with the employee concerned and complete a referral to Occupational Health for ongoing support. Referral forms can be found on the School's intranet.
- 9.6 If an individual feels they are experiencing work-related stress they should report to their manager, if appropriate, in order that a referral is made to Occupational Health and an individual risk assessment is carried out.
- 9.7 Individuals can also seek confidential advice on the management of work-related stress from Occupational Health. The Health and Safety Executive has extensive information on their web site on work-related stress which can be found at www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards

#### 10. MONITORING

10.1 Once a risk assessment has been undertaken and the outcomes implemented a review date should be set. If issues are still ongoing the Human Resources or Occupational Health department should be contacted for further advice.

## **APPENDICES**

The HSE Management Standards For Work Related Stress
Five Steps To Risk Assessment Related To Work Related Stress
Suggested Ways To Try To Reduce The Effects Of Workplace Pressures
And Demands
Overview for Managers
Overview for Staff
Individual Risk Assessment Form
Department/Team Risk Assessment Form

#### THE HSE MANAGEMENT STANDARDS FOR WORK RELATED STRESS STATES:

#### **Demands**

The standard is that:

- employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs;
   and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

#### Control

The standard is that:

- employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

#### Support

The standard is that:

- employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

#### Relationships

The standard is that:

- employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

#### Role

The standard is that:

- employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

#### Change

The standard is that:

- employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns

#### FIVE STEPS TO RISK ASSESSMENT RELATED TO WORK RELATED STRESS

#### **Step 1 – Identifying the Hazards**

Examine existing information - Information may exist which can assist in identifying potential problems, such as:

- Sickness absence information. Look at records of absence generally and stress related absence in particular. Is sickness absence increasing? Are there trends emerging? Is stress cited as a reason for absence? Do some groups of staff have more stress related absence than others? Does gender/ethnicity/age/race or religion affect stress related absence?
- Accidents at work. Identify through recognised incident reporting channels.
- Are there any increases in accidents/near misses? Do some teams/departments have more incidents than others?
- Staff surveys. Checking the results of staff surveys may also help to identify areas of concern.
- Occupational Health. Have the Occupational Health Advisors alerted you to any potential stress related issues affecting your staff in general?
- Ask staff. Managers should engage their staff in the risk assessment process by having group discussions and/or individual discussions to help identify potential hazards. However this process should not be used in isolation and an assessment of the local environment should also be included.
- Turnover. Are these staff turnover figures high in some areas without any obvious reason? Is it attributable to stress related absence?
- Human Resources Department. Employee relations data kept by Human Resources?

#### Step 2 – Assess the risk to health

This non-exhaustive checklist (not in any order of priority) highlights the stressors identified above and can be used by managers and supervisors to assist in the risk assessment process. Non-work based stressors are also included as the combined effect can have a detrimental effect on mental health.

#### Work-based

- Lack of clear organisational objectives, values or role
- Failure to meet objectives or deadlines and to prioritise work
- Poor communication, information, consultation or involvement in change
- Inadequate management support
- High level of responsibility for people
- Career uncertainty or frustration over career ambitions
- Lack of competence or over-promotion
- Poor status or lack of recognition
- Threat to job security (including threat of redundancy)
- Uncertainty in work or restructuring of role
- Low participation in decision making
- Lack of control over workload and pace
- Social or physical isolation
- Interpersonal conflict and poor relationship with peers
- Harassment
- Constant dealing with conflict and complaints
- Sustained work overload (including excessive overtime) or under load (including boring or repetitive work)

- Unsociable work hours and shift working
- Dealing with death and major trauma (including breaking bad news)
- Attending external events as a witness

#### Non- work based

- Personal stress events at home (e.g. divorce or bereavement)
- Change in living conditions (e.g. moving house)
- Social isolation (e.g. lack of friends)
- · Low level support at home
- Long distance commuting
- Sudden change to health
- · Conflicting demands of work and home
- Problems caused by both partners following their careers
- Family care responsibilities and pressures
- Financial pressures

#### **Step 3 – Implement the control measures**

Having identified potential areas of harm, the next step is to identify who is at risk and find ways of reducing the risk. Control measures will vary depending on the risk identified. Examples might include:

- Ensure all staff have access to information/training on work related stress.
- Ensure staff have clear job descriptions and understand their role.
- Have a system of setting objectives that are achievable and monitor performance.
- Involve staff in the decision making process where possible.
- Identify any training needs and ensure training takes place.
- Where high pressure tasks or repetitive work are identified, consider job rotation.
- Consider flexible working options.
- Offer training or support in coping mechanisms.

#### Step 4 – Record your findings

Develop and implement the action plan. This may include prioritising, setting goals to work towards, demonstrating the School's commitment to address staff concerns. An action plan should include:

- What the problem is
- How the problem was identified
- What the School is going to do in response
- How the School arrived at this solution
- Who is responsible for delivery of action plan
- Review date/milestones
- Method of feedback to staff

#### Step 5 - Monitor and Review

Monitor the control measures put in place and revise them as necessary. Review the risk assessment when changes in staffing or process occur. Ensure accurate records are kept.

# SUGGESTED WAYS TO TRY TO REDUCE THE EFFECTS OF WORKPLACE PRESSURES AND DEMANDS

#### **Organisational Approach**

- Work towards improving communication to all levels of staff, so that individuals will be more informed of forthcoming changes and those which have already taken place.
- All individuals should play their part in disseminating information and knowledge which in turn should assist in improving communication.
- Ensure that risk assessments include the potential risks to individuals of "work" related stress.
- Provide training and support to allow individuals to be able to understand their role and cope with their responsibilities.
- Aim to manage existing staff levels appropriately, in a fair and equitable manner, whilst observing the need to meet service demands.
- Acknowledge that individuals are different and respond to stress differently. The School
  will be sympathetic and supportive to individuals who are having difficulty in coping, and
  to not foster a culture which links inability to cope with failure.
- Enable that support is provided to individuals following stressful work incidents.
- Enable individuals to report to their line manager or Occupational Health Services (OH) if
  they are finding their workplace stressful. Individuals under stress are often worst placed
  to recognise stress in themselves and to do something about it. Managers and colleagues
  should feel able to gently prompt people if they feel someone is suffering as a result of
  stress from whatever source.
- Enable individuals to know they can access initial confidential consultations with the OHS, or seek advice from the Human Resources Department, a trade union representative. This can be done directly by the individual themselves or via a Manager, to discuss any problems whether work related or personal. If necessary referral can be made to an external counsellor.

#### **Managerial Approach**

- Enable support/supervision sessions that allow two way communications between manager and individual and from which information and/or indicators in respect of any work related stress issues should be addressed.
- Ensure that stress at work issues are understood and taken seriously.
- Discuss and agree the most appropriate pathway to progress the issue, i.e. OHS, Dignity at Work, or other relevant School policies.
- Keep in regular contact through agreement with the staff in particular if it is a long term absence. If the issue has resulted in absence from work, an appropriate level of mutually acceptable contact should be discussed.

- Whenever appropriate, hold meetings to try to resolve individual issues as soon as there is an awareness that they may cause stress related health issues among individuals.
- Involving individuals when changes to jobs/work environments are taking place and ensuring that training is adequate to maintain the individual's competence to perform.
- Taking action to reduce any uncertainty in respect of changes and job security through prompt and open communications systems.
- Give credit for a job well done!
- Discuss a rehabilitation plan with Occupational Health. It may be necessary to alter hours
  or duties for a short period on the person's return to work or consider suitable alternative
  duties for a period of time.
- Where appropriate, meet with the person before their return to work to ensure any workplace stressors are identified.
- Review the stress risk assessment and review if any additional control measures are required.

#### **Individual Approach**

- Acknowledge and try to identify the causes of the stress.
- Talk to colleagues, friends or family about how you are feeling. They may be able to give you a different perspective on how to tackle your problems.
- Seek professional help if you feel out of control.
- Manage your time effectively. Try to prioritise work. Make time to think about this.
   Celebrate your successes.
- Be assertive and learn to say no if you cannot cope.
- Take advantage of training opportunities to extend your knowledge and skills for personal and professional development.
- Learn to delegate. Try not to control every aspect of work processes this can be stressful to both you and other work colleagues.
- Take care of your physical health. Exercise even for half an hour each day can have significant benefits to both physical and mental health. You do not have to join a gym!
- Walking, cycling or swimming are all very effective and convenient ways of taking regular exercise.
- Avoid depending on caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes or other stimulants to get you through the day. They can often make stress symptoms much worse.
- Enjoy your time away from work. Make time for activities you enjoy and which you find relaxing. Plan regular treats to give yourself something to look forward to.

#### **OVERVIEW FOR MANAGERS**

Employee approaches you complaining of stress at work OR Employee is absent due to stress at work

If employee is absent from work, with HR advice, complete the form for referral to Occupational health (OH) as soon as possible.

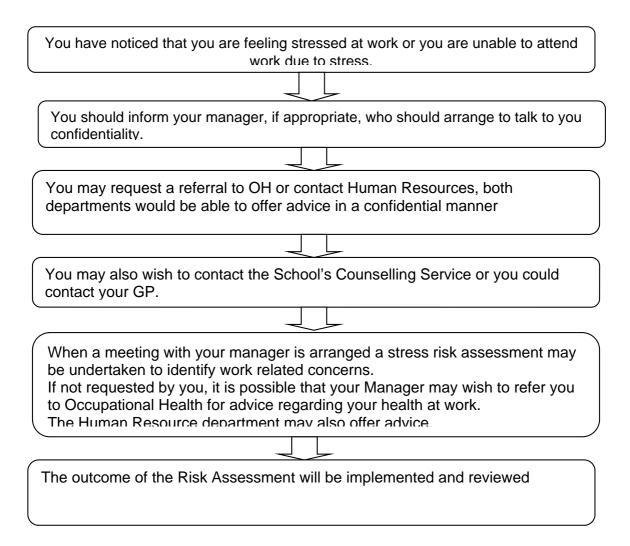
If employee is currently at work, arrange to meet with member of staff to discuss work related concerns, Talk to Human Resources for guidance on how to structure the meeting and discuss a referral to OH.

On receipt of OH report, with HR advice, meet with the employee, conduct stress risk assessments where appropriate.
Has the member of staff received Stress Management Training?
Has the member of staff received an appraisal?

Implement OH recommendations, and/or any outcome from the stress risk assessments

Review OH recommendations, and/or any outcome from the stress risk assessments to ensure effectiveness

#### **OVERVIEW FOR STAFF**



### **Individual Work Related Stress Risk Assessment Form**

The following Individual Work Related Stress Risk Assessment Form has been developed in line with these Management Standards

	Question	Yes	No	If yes, please provide further details	Provisional actions discussed	Agreed Actions and who is responsible for taking action	Date Completed
[	Demands						
	Work pressures – high						
	- Are your deadlines within role unachievable?						
	- Are you required to work long hours?						
	- Are your time pressures unrealistic?						
	<ul> <li>Are you subject to work demands from different groups that are hard to combine?</li> </ul>						
	Work pressures low						
	- Is your work boring, monotonous or unchallenging?						
	Training:						
	- Do you require additional training to undertake your role?						
	Physical demands & work environment						
	- Does your role involve excessive physical demands such as						
	heavy lifting, standing for long periods of time; repetitive movements that are causing concern?						
	- Is your work environment adequate/comfortable?						
	- Is it free from hazards such as unacceptable levels of noise?						

2	Control			
	- Do you have any say in how you do and plan your work?			
	- Can you set your own work speed?			
	- Can you decide when to take a break?			
3	Support			
	If work gets difficult are colleagues/manager available to help and support?			
	- Are you given supportive feedback on the work you do?			
4	Relationships at work			
	Are you subject to personal harassment in the form of unkind words or behaviour?			
	- Are relationships at work strained?			
	- Is there friction and anger between colleagues?			
	- Are you subject to bullying?			
5	Role			
	- Are you clear what is expected within your role?			
	- Do you understand your duties and responsibilities?			
	- Do you know how to go about getting the job done?			
	- Do you know the goals and objectives for the department?			

6	Change			
	- Are you consulted/updated about changes at work that affect you?			
	- Are you clear about how the change will affect you in practice?			
	- Is there adequate consultation about workplace issues/changes?			
7	Other issues			
	<ul> <li>Are there any other issues /stressors that need to be taken account of – e.g. difficulties at home, unexpected life changes?</li> </ul>			

# TEAM STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT: QUESTIONS TO IDENTIFY CONCERNS IN EACH OF THE SIX MAIN STRESS CATEGORIES

SOURCES OF STRESS	QUESTIONS TO ASK	YES/NO
Demands	<ul> <li>Do you feel you have just the right amount of work to do (i.e. not too much or not too little)</li> </ul>	
	Have you had sufficient training to do your job?	
	Are there any problems with your work environment?	
Control	Are you able to have some say about how your job is done?	
	Do you feel included in decision making in the team?	
	Do you feel you are using the skills you have got to full effect?	
Support	<ul> <li>Do you feel that you get enough support from your line manager?</li> </ul>	
	Do you feel you get enough support from colleagues?	
	Do you take the breaks you are entitled to at work?	
	Do you feel you have a healthy work-life balance?	

Relationships	Are you affected by any conflict in the team?	
-	<ul> <li>Are you subjected to any bullying or harassment at work?</li> </ul>	
-	Do you feel the team works well together?	
Role	Are you clear about your roles and responsibilities at work?	
-	Do you feel that there is any conflict in your role?	
-	Do you understand others roles in the team?	
Change	<ul> <li>Are you made aware of any changes that are happening at work?</li> </ul>	
-	Do you understand why the change is happening?	
-	Do you understand the impact on your job of any change?	
-	Do you feel well supported during change at work?	

- You can give this questionnaire out as a survey and collate responses, or if your team is small, use it as a guide for asking questions with them in a team meeting. Do a basic frequency count of yes's and no's from your team members responses.
- Conduct team discussions/ focus groups to explore any areas that seem to be higher risk (i.e. more negative than positive responses to the questions). You can also use the HSE stress questionnaire tool for more detailed analysis. Please seek advice from the occupational health department or go to the stress at work website on the intranet.
- When you have completed the stress risk assessment, develop an action plan (attached) with your team to address any areas of concern or high risk and review this on a regular basis.

# TEAM STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT FORM – FOR MANAGER TO COMPLETE

Risk	assessment for:
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Dept/Team	Faculty/Department
Manager	Date

Type of Stressor	Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category	Existing workplace precautions already in place	Further action to be taken	Who will ensure the action is done? and Review date
Demands				
Control				

Support				
Type of Stressor	Specific causes of workplace stress identified within each category	Existing workplace precautions already in place	Further action to be taken	Who will ensure the action is done? and Review date
Relationships				
Role				
Change				

Line Manager's signature.....