



Act Now on mental health at work

Work is a major cause of poor mental health. Here is what the law says, and what unions and employers can do to prevent it.

We are facing an epidemic of mental ill health in the UK, and people's work and working environment is a major factor in it. About two-thirds of people with mental ill health believe that long hours, unrealistic workloads or bad management caused their condition or made it worse.

Around half

of all work-related ill health cases are stress, depression or anxiety, says the HSE.

1 in 4

people in England will have a mental health problem of some kind each year.

1 in 6

report a common problem, such as anxiety or depression, in any given week.

The PSP approach: **three steps**

Prevent

Work in advance to prevent work-related stress and mental ill health.

Support

Support individuals who are living with mental ill health.

Positive

Build a positive mental health work environment, for everyone.

How big is **the problem**

1 in 5 people have suicidal thoughts, and 1 in 14 self-harm.

It is getting worse. The Health Foundation's analysis of the Labour Force Survey shows that mental ill health makes up a growing share of the conditions that limit people's work, especially for people under 50. Rates of depression rose during the pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

Why a **union** matters

Inspect the
workplace

See sickness
absence data

Represent members

Press for
adjustments

You have far more rights with a union. A union health and safety rep can legally inspect the workplace, including on work-related stress, and can represent members in meetings about capability or sickness absence.

THE KEY POINT

Stress and mental ill health are workplace hazards. Employers must assess them and prevent them, like any other risk.

1

Is there a stress steering group?

Set up with trade union health and safety reps consulted and involved.

2

Has everyone been trained?

Training for all staff on the HSE management standards approach, and on mental health awareness.

3

Are stress risk assessments done?

Organisation-wide stress risk assessments, carried out and shared with staff.

4

What is causing the harm?

Information gathered and results analysed, to find the main causes of work-related harm.

5

How will risks be removed?

A decision on how each risk will be eliminated or reduced, and changes put in place.

6

Is it reviewed?

Changes are continually reviewed, and the stress standards risk assessments are discussed and acted on.

Support, and a positive workplace

- Signpost people to suicide information and support organisations
- Investigate every work-related stress incident in the accident book, and review the risk assessment
- Recruit and train Mental Health First Aiders
- Encourage open conversations without reprisals, and stop victimisation over mental illness

Legal and other standards for prevention and control

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, section 2(1)
- Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Equality Act 2010: a long-term mental health condition is protected, with a right to reasonable adjustments



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HSE: stress at work

hse.gov.uk/stress

Acas

acas.org.uk/supporting-mental-health-workplace

NHS mental health services

nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services

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