

PREVENTING WORK-RELATED MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS BY TACKLING STRESS

NEU Guidance for School Leaders

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This guide is designed to help you as a school leader ensure that your school is a great place to work, with a happy and healthy workforce and low levels of sick leave. This in turn is bound to improve the educational outcomes of your pupils.

As a school leader, you are not, of course, expected to be a medical expert, or to offer medical advice or counselling to staff yourself. It is also recognised that school leaders themselves are under acute pressure in the workplace.

Employers do have a general duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health of their employees at work, and a specific legal duty to undertake risk assessments. In practice this duty will be delegated to the school leader by the employer.

One of the ways of showing you are committed to preventing work-related stress among your staff from developing into mental health conditions is to ensure that a suitable stress risk assessment is undertaken. This task could be delegated to a member, or group, of your management team.

A stress risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what in a workplace could cause staff to suffer from work-related stress so you can assess whether you have done enough, or need to do more.

Appendix 1 to this guide shows how to do this in a straightforward way, which fully involves your staff. Adopting this approach will help ensure that you meet your obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, as well as the Equality Act 2010.

The guide also advises on how to support those members of staff who do develop mental health conditions linked to their work, highlighting legal duties but also practical support measures, in terms of reasonable adjustments.

See Appendix 2 for a list of common mental health conditions, Appendix 3 for the legal position in respect of disclosure of mental health conditions and Appendix 4 for a list of organisations that can offer mental health support for your staff, should they need it.

INTRODUCTION

Stress is one of the biggest workplace health issues at work. The true extent of stress-related problems is largely hidden because very few people are prepared to admit that they are suffering from stress, or to seek help. It is difficult for those who have not experienced depression, anxiety and despair, which often accompany stress, to fully appreciate the effect stress can have on people's lives and on the lives of their families.

HSE research has found that one in five people – an estimated 5 million workers – is 'very' or 'extremely' stressed at work, and that stress, anxiety and depression nationally lead to more than 11 and a half million lost working days each year. The International Labour Organisation has estimated that the cost of stress to the British economy amounts to over ten per cent of its Gross National Product (GNP).

Studies into the extent of work-related stress in Britain have consistently found that school staff are amongst the most stressed workers in Britain. HSE statistics for the years 2010/11 – 2016/17 show that education is consistently one of the 3 occupations experiencing the highest levels of work related stress.

It is not surprising, therefore, that every year teachers and support staff become ill through work-related stress. This is, at least in part, due to constant changes and turbulence in the school sector, arising from fundamental policy changes in delivery, school structures and funding. It is an issue facing all staff in the school community. Significantly, many conscientious and respected teachers are unable to keep up with the impossible demands placed on them, and either choose to leave the profession, or are forced to do so. The Government and Ofsted position seems to be that if teachers – whether leadership or classroom teachers – are placed under enough pressure, this will raise standards in schools. Indeed Sir Michael Wilshaw, the former Head of Ofsted, is on record as saying 'If anyone says to you that staff morale is at an all-time low you know you are doing something right'. This culture has to change. School leaders are not to blame but they do have a role to play in protecting their staff. This guide aims to support you in this task.

In 2014 UNISON carried out a survey of school office staff. It aimed to monitor workplace issues and improve UNISON's understanding of working life in schools today. With 2350 responses, the findings provided comprehensive data on this staff group. Staff frequently said that they enjoyed working in the school environment but were struggling to cope with excessive pressures. It is notable that 84 per cent stated that work related stress was a major concern. This reflects the complex environment in which support staff work, where they have to deal with an increasing workload, low pay, concerns about job security, poor or no CPD, managing challenging behaviour and dealing with pupils' health needs.

WHAT IS GOOD MENTAL HEALTH?

Good mental health is not simply the absence of diagnosable mental health problems, although good mental health is likely to help protect against development of many such problems. Good mental health is characterised by a person's ability to fulfil a number of key functions and activities, including:

- the ability to learn;
- the ability to feel, express and manage a range of positive and negative emotions;
- ability to form and maintain good relationships with others; and
- the ability to cope with, and manage, change and uncertainty.

Good mental health is about positive well-being, about feeling in control of one's life, valued at home and at work, and generally relaxed and positive.

What types of mental health conditions can be caused by stress?

Stress caused by excessive workload, pupil behaviour, poor communication and conflict at work, often unrecognised and unaddressed, can lead to mental illness. Anxiety, depression, withdrawal,

poor concentration, insomnia, low self-esteem, increased dependency on drugs and alcohol and deteriorating personal relationships may result.

The role of school leaders

As a school leader, with responsibility for deploying and managing all staff at your school, and for maintaining a reasonable balance for each member of staff between work and life outside school, you will want to ensure, so far as it is within your power, that your staff remain happy and healthy. They are, after all, your most important resource.

People who experience wellbeing in the workplace perform well and are therefore more effective in their roles. Schools with large numbers of stressed, demoralised and anxious staff are not able to function efficiently. The educational experience of young people depends upon the effectiveness of teachers and support staff and their effectiveness depends upon their wellbeing. Acting to reduce levels of stress within your school will lead to less short and long-term sick leave which will, in turn, reduce pressures on other colleagues as well as benefiting pupils.

School leaders are, of course, no less vulnerable to mental health conditions than any other teachers. The NEU and other education unions recognise this fact. In many cases – workload, league tables, appraisal, inspection and other elements of excessive accountability – the pressures on leadership staff are even more acute. As a head teacher you **must** have regard for your own health and well-being, for your own good, and that of those around you. It should also be borne in mind that head teachers who exhibit signs of stress, can frequently pass this on to staff in school, who can in turn suffer stress related symptoms as a result.

As a school leader you have a duty of care to exercise in seeking to safeguard the mental wellbeing of your staff. This relates to preventing problems arising in the first place, but also assisting those who do become ill to make a full recovery and return to work. Assisting those who become ill may involve adjustments to the workplace to allow an easy return.

The purpose of this guidance document is to offer some basic advice on how you can help ensure the mental wellbeing of all your staff. Your employer may offer its own advice on this area. If so, it is important that you follow it. It is likely that there will be areas of overlap between this guidance and any produced by your employer.

What can you do to support the staff in your school generally?

You are not expected to counsel staff yourself or provide medical advice. Separate sections below deal with the support available from occupational health services, the Education Support Partnership and trade unions when teachers and support staff do experience mental health conditions.

Your role, and that of the governing body, should focus on providing the right sort of work environment, so as to minimise the risk of staff experiencing work-related mental ill health. The establishment of a school safety committee provides a useful forum for discussions about strategies to reduce stress levels among staff. Many employers have drawn up policies on tackling stress in schools. The NEU has produced guidance for school management on undertaking a stress risk assessment. It is included at Appendix 1 of this document. NEU guidance on school safety committees is available at www.neu.org.uk.

Suggestions as to how you can help support your staff are described below.

- **Address the stigma of mental health conditions**

One of the first problems you will face in tackling this issue is the stigma attached to it. It is important for staff to know that management is aware of the pressures they face and that there is no shame attached to admitting that there is a problem. It is not a sign of weakness to report that certain aspects of school life, for example pupil behaviour or workload, are having a negative effect on one's wellbeing. If you take a sensitive, yet not intrusive, interest in the personal lives of your staff and are aware of different personalities, you will probably notice when a member of staff behaves out of character, even if that person does not approach you.

If you think that a member of staff may have a mental health condition you could try speaking with them in order to seek to persuade them to see their GP. The most important thing is to let them know that you are there to help and provide support, not to judge them or make them do anything they feel uncomfortable about. Remember also that it is lawful for staff to choose not to disclose their mental health status.

Detailed information about disclosure of mental health conditions both at the recruitment stage and during employment is set out in Appendix 3.

Encouraging staff to discuss problems with sympathetic colleagues and with you will raise the profile of the issue and help reduce feelings of isolation. Early, non-judgemental, intervention is essential in order to protect future health and career prospects. The earlier someone seeks help, the more likely it is that they will get effective help and make a full recovery to lead a happy and fulfilled life again. This does, however, involve much more than telling people to 'pull themselves together'.

- **Undertake a stress risk assessment**

When assessing stress levels in a workplace it is essential to undertake a stress risk assessment. There may not be obvious signs of stress or even work-related mental ill-health amongst your staff so a risk assessment exercise can help provide you with accurate information about stress levels in your school. Please see Appendix 1 for a simple guide on how to undertake stress risk assessments.

Supporting members of staff with mental health conditions

You will want to help those individuals who have been traumatised or distressed at work recover and regain their well-being. If they are covered by the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability (see Appendix 2) then you have a legal duty to make reasonable adjustments where a policy, practice, procedure or feature of the school premises places the disabled worker at a disadvantage in comparison to non-disabled workers. For comprehensive advice on issues affecting teachers in need of reasonable adjustments, see the NEU's 'Making Work Fit' guidance at www.neu.org.uk. Reasonable adjustments can include, but are not limited to:

- making adjustments to school premises;
- allocating some of the disabled person's duties to another person;
- transferring the employee to fill an existing vacancy;
- altering hours of working;
- allowing the employee to be absent during working hours for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment;
- arranging training or mentoring;
- acquiring or modifying equipment.

It is good practice to make adjustments that are 'reasonable' for all staff with mental health conditions, whether or not they may be covered by the Equality Act.

In assessing the reasonableness of an adjustment, you are entitled to take the following considerations into account:

- the extent to which it is practicable to make the adjustment;
- the financial and other costs of making the adjustment and the extent of any disruption;
- the extent of the governing body's financial and other resources;
- the availability of financial or other assistance, for example, from the employer;
- the size of the school;
- the extent to which making the adjustment would remove the disadvantage complained of.

The list is not exhaustive and there may be other circumstances that are relevant.

Once you have considered what appropriate and reasonable adjustments could be made in the circumstances, you may take one or more of the following additional steps:

- Put the colleague in touch with appropriate outside agencies (a list is attached at Appendix 4). This of course includes their trade union and for teachers, the [Education Support Partnership](#).
- Ask the colleague about what adjustments they believe will enable them to continue to work or assist their return to work.
- Refer colleagues to occupational health services or welfare support services, where appropriate, and also encourage self-referrals. This must be presented as a supportive, not punitive, gesture which will enable the person to access the support they need to recover. This could include a programme of behavioural therapy or counselling.
- Develop a caring strategy for staff members returning to work, including following any advice given by occupational health professionals, considering what reasonable adjustments might be made and, if necessary, negotiating changes to work patterns.
- Ensure that work-related factors which led to the mental health condition have been addressed, so that illness does not recur. This is probably the most long term issue to address, as it may involve consideration of whole school policy and practice such as pupil behaviour, bullying or workload.
- Ensure that your school's equalities policy, which is required by law for every school, covers steps for encouraging staff to disclose their disability status and training staff on the implications of the Equality Act and the rights granted to staff in this legislation. The legislation introduced general and specific duties to promote disability equality across all school functions. This requires schools to be proactive about how they mainstream disability equality to ensure that disability equality is built into everything they do. Schools need to take account of disabled people when making decisions on developing policy and involvement with the trade unions should be encouraged when developing policies to meet the requirements of the public sector equality duty.

The general duty requires that a school should have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful disability discrimination and harassment;
- advance equality of opportunity and positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- foster good relations between people with a disability and those without.

The role of occupational health

Teachers' conditions of service (the terms of the Burgundy Book) provide that 'in the case of prolonged or frequent absence, the teacher undertakes any examination that the employer may require by an approved medical practitioner nominated by them'. Teachers do not have to pay for this examination and should be informed that they have the right to be accompanied at such an examination by their own doctor.

Occupational health has been given little profile and has rarely been an issue which employers have seen as important. This may be because it lacks the immediacy of safety issues and therefore is often given less priority than the removal of hazards. Yet occupational health schemes can have a major effect in preventing ill health through work and in ensuring that people are able to return to work as early as possible.

The NEU believes that the role of occupational health services should be viewed in a positive light. Where a member of staff has been on sick leave with a mental health condition, particularly where this is known to be work-related, it is important that that person receives support from a medical professional who understands the nature of teaching/working as a member of the support staff as an occupation, who can organise appropriate treatment but also make recommendations as to how that person's eventual return to work should be managed. The role of occupational health services is advisory only. It is up to the relevant manager to accept or decline the advice offered. The NEU would, however, advise its school leader members to consider very carefully before deciding not to take account of advice offered.

You may believe that some members of staff may be developing mental health conditions, perhaps because changes in their behaviour give rise to health and safety concerns. Even if no sick leave has been taken, it may be appropriate to encourage individuals in this situation to request a referral

to occupational health or to ask the person concerned what support they would find useful. Clearly such situations need to be handled in a sensitive way.

You should be aware that it is common for people suffering from mental health conditions to react badly, perhaps irrationally, to what may appear to you to be a perfectly reasonable question or sensitively phrased advice. This is not your fault, but it is something for which you should prepare yourself. Remaining patient and calm at all times is essential.

When you do decide to refer a member of staff to the employer's medical adviser, speak to them about your decision first, as this will provide you with an opportunity to explain the referral process and the reasons behind your decision to make the referral. Try to bear in mind their likely fragile state in any written communications. Sensitive use of language is essential. Advise the member of staff that they will be asked to provide written consent to allow the medical adviser to access medical information from their own GP. You will not see that information for reasons of medical confidentiality. The unions advise their members to co-operate with such requests.

You will need to provide detailed information to the medical adviser including details of the individual's duties and why you believe that the absences may be work-related. Once the medical adviser has met with the person concerned, a report will be sent to the employer's Human Resources Department which will normally incorporate the following points:

- when a person is likely to be fit to return to work;
- whether the person is covered by the Equality Act;
- what the employer can do to facilitate recovery and a return to work, for example, administrative support;
- whether redeployment or other adjustments should be considered;
- whether the cause of the absence is work related or not.

Ill-health retirement

Some staff may not recover sufficiently to be able to return to their job. In these cases, they may be entitled to ill-health benefits under the relevant pension scheme. The Occupational Health Service will be able to advise staff on the application process and they can also obtain advice and guidance from their teacher or support staff organisation.

As indicated above, before taking any steps including drawing staff's attention to possible ill-health retirement, head teachers are advised to consult and take advice from their personnel or human resources department.

Barriers to accessing support

Many staff are unaware that their employer runs, or contracts, an occupational health service. School leaders can help in this respect by letting staff know what support is available by putting up posters on notice boards and/or inviting service providers into school to promote the services which are available and help allay fears about occupational health being automatically linked with absence management and discipline.

The Equality Act

The Equality Act 2010 places a legal duty on employers not to discriminate against members of staff and to make reasonable adjustments where the school's policies, practices, procedures or premises place a disabled member of staff at a disadvantage in comparison to non-disabled staff.

School leaders do not have the same legal duty as an employer but you do have a delegated management role in implementing reasonable adjustments as recommended by the Occupational Health Service and the HR department.

To assist staff with mental health conditions you should

- provide the person concerned with some information about the sort of adjustments that might help them, and suggest they seek advice from a Union representative;

- provide them with basic information about their rights under the Equality Act, for example from the union or TUC websites;
- if you are unclear whether someone is covered by the Equality Act, assume that they does have rights under the Act and then move onto discussions about what reasonable adjustments might support that individual, after taking appropriate advice from your Personnel or Human Resources department.

Sickness absence monitoring

Positive sickness absence policies can help to pinpoint work-related issues such as health and safety risks, stress and bullying. They can tackle those organisational issues that can give rise to absence and provide support to promote staff attendance through positive interventions, which can have a significant effect on reducing absence. They must be linked to return to work policies and rehabilitation policies.

The NEU has published guidance on absence monitoring, available at www.neu.org.uk.

FURTHER INFORMATION

[NEU Guidance on Tackling Stress](#)

[Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service \(ACAS\) Stress Guidance](#)

[UNISON Guidance on Stress](#)

[UNISON Guidance on Sickness Absence](#)

[UNISON Guidance on Disability Leave and Disability Related Issues](#)

Further information on Health and Safety in Schools is available at www.neu.org.uk and from education@unison.co.uk

The HSE has produced [guidance](#) on health and safety risk management and disability to encourage the employment and retention of disabled workers.



HOW TO UNDERTAKE A STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT – A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

Introduction

Tackling stress is paramount to effective management of health and well-being in every workplace, including schools. Whilst every job brings its own demands and pressures, people's ability to deal with pressure is not limitless; excessive pressure can cause stress which is harmful.

It is widely recognised that teaching is one of the most stressful professions.

- Stress is the predominant cause of work-related illness in the education sector according to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- According to the NEU's September 2017 workload survey, 81 per cent of respondents have considered leaving teaching within the previous years as a result of workload.
- Stress was the biggest concern of safety reps in the education sector who responded to the TUC 2016 Safety Reps' survey

There is clearly, therefore, a 'business' case for tackling stress among school staff.

What is a stress risk assessment?

A stress risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what in a workplace could cause staff to suffer from work-related stress, so that you can weigh up whether you have done enough, or should do more to prevent harm.

Why undertake a stress risk assessment?

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 employers have a general duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health of their employees at work. This includes taking steps to make sure they do not suffer stress-related illness as a result of their work.

Employers also have a specific duty under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to undertake risk assessments that seek to identify, and eliminate or reduce, risks to their employees' health, safety and welfare. Stress is one of the risks to health, safety and welfare that **must** be assessed. Local authorities, governing bodies and all other employers of school staff must:

- consider the risk of stress among their workforce;
- take steps to remove the risk; or
- where removal of the risk is not possible, reduce the risk as far as possible by any necessary changes in working practices or by introducing appropriate protective or supportive measures.

Who should undertake a stress risk assessment?

In practice, this duty will be delegated to the head teacher/Principal by the employer (e.g. local authority, academy trust, college corporation, governing body). They may, in turn, nominate a senior member of staff to undertake the task, but needs to retain oversight of the process and discuss with the Governing Body. Any person undertaking a risk assessment must be competent to do so in terms of knowledge and experience. Doing something about stress in education may seem daunting to head teachers/principals and other managers. You may not know where to start. The unions do not seek to blame school leaders for this situation. Stress is undoubtedly more difficult to tackle than, say, a straightforward slip/trip hazard.

The unions wants to provide assistance to head teachers/principals and others who are responsible for tackling stress in schools and colleges, and who may be daunted by the prospect. We recognise that a collective approach, involving management and trade union representatives, will lead to the best possible outcome.

By following our simple step-by-step guide to undertaking a risk assessment, you will meet your legal obligations without creating a huge bureaucratic burden for yourself. You may wish to adopt a similar approach in respect of support staff.

The union approach uses the HSE 'Stress Management Standards' system – a voluntary system which can serve as a useful tool for employers in understanding how to carry out a stress risk assessment. The Management Standards identify six key risk factors, or 'stressors', which have been identified as causes of work-related stress.

These are:

- the **demands** of a job;
- the **support** received from managers and colleagues;
- the **role** of the individual in the organisation;
- the **control** someone has over their work;
- **relationships** within the workplace; and
- **change** and how it is managed.

If staff can cope with the **demands** of their job, understand their **role**, have a **say** in how they work, feel **supported** by management and have positive working **relationships**, including in times of **change**, they are unlikely to suffer from work-related stress. **These factors should be considered on a whole school basis, however, rather than relating to individuals.**

Step-by-Step Guide

1. **Explain to staff what you are planning to do and why, and seek their active support for the process.**
2. **Gather evidence**

The obvious first step is to find out **whether** staff at your school are suffering from work-related stress and if so, **why**. Your first step, therefore, is to gather evidence.

- A good way of gathering evidence is to survey your staff. The NEU has devised two questionnaires to help you.

The first, called the 'School staff wellbeing 'Ready Reckoner'', within this document, is designed to elicit information about stress levels generally, i.e. whether staff feel stressed by their work. Unless this indicates that there are high levels of well-being among staff (in which case, revisit the issue in six months' time), you can then go on to use a second survey, the 'Staff Stress Survey' also within this document, which will identify the causes of stress, grouped according to the HSE Stress Management Standards approach.

A good return is essential to get a representative sample. Involving trade union representatives with the initiative will help improve the response rate. Note that staff may be reluctant to complete a survey honestly unless their anonymity is guaranteed. Also, allow adequate time for staff to complete the questionnaires (several days at least). The timing for completion of the questionnaires is important too. Mid-term/end of term responses will give a more accurate picture than those completed right at the beginning of term, when staff are refreshed from their holiday.

To supplement the findings of the questionnaires, you should also look at data from other sources, including:

- Sickness absence figures
- Employee turnover
- Exit interviews
- Return to work interviews
- Reports from union safety representatives and safety committees
- Number of referrals to occupational health.

3. Present findings to staff and union representatives

This could be done at a staff meeting or INSET day or through your school's safety committee. The important point is that staff should be consulted on the findings and given the opportunity to suggest possible changes to working practices which would reduce stress levels. Concentrate on 'hot spots' or priority areas. You do not need to tackle everything at once.

4. Making Changes

You may wish to take account of the following ideas, when looking at the six Management Standards 'Stressors' and discuss with staff and union representatives which would make a difference, depending on the principal 'stressors' in your school.

Demands

It is reasonable to expect that staff should be given achievable demands in relation to their hours of work.

The following strategies may help, if **workload** is highlighted as a key stressor.

- The introduction of a 1265 hours directed time budget, re-negotiated annually, where this does not already exist;
- The rescheduling of other activities, for example, report writing at times of peak activity;
- A limit to after-school meetings (an average of one per week over a term is what the NEU recommends);
- Bringing in additional resources to relieve workload at peak times of the year.
- The opportunity for teachers to take a genuine break at lunch time. The NEU recommends a break of at least one hour.
- No expectation of an immediate response to e-mails.
- Consideration of the workload impact of each new initiative **before** it is introduced.
- Consultation on the introduction of a work/life balance policy. The NEU has a model policy, available at www.neu.org.uk.

These are just suggestions – you need to give staff the opportunity to come up with their own ideas for workload reduction.

Support

Staff should feel that they receive adequate information and support from management. The following points may help stimulate discussion in this area.

Accessibility

- Check whether staff would welcome an open-door policy (so far as is reasonably possible).

Feedback

- Do staff feel that good work is praised and effort acknowledged?
- How can the process of lesson observation be improved upon so staff feel supported? A model protocol is available from the NEU website, www.neu.org.uk.

Practical Support

- Adequate administrative and technical support will help staff concentrate on their core duties. Are staff satisfied with current arrangements?
- An effective system of induction for new and supply staff makes life so much easier for these teachers. For example, provision of welcome packs, maps, timetables, a copy of the behaviour policy, ICT passwords, etc. How could this be developed?

Individual Consideration

- Flexibility, so far as is reasonably possible, when time off is needed, is always appreciated – do staff understand the criteria for granting such requests and are they satisfied with current arrangements?
- Are there concerns about the application of the trigger periods in absence monitoring procedures?
- Are staff aware of the occupational health and welfare support mechanisms that are available to them?

Role

For this standard to be met people need to understand their role within the organisation. You need to ensure, so far as is possible, that the different requirements upon employees are compatible and that sufficient information is provided to enable employees to understand their role.

- Do individuals have a clear picture about their work objectives, your expectations of them and the responsibilities of their job? If a job changes, then that needs to be reflected in a revised job description;
- Does the school handbook explain clearly the roles of all staff?

Control

All staff should be satisfied that they are able to have some say about the way they work. The following points could be discussed.

Empowerment

- Do staff feel they have too much authority delegated to them, do they feel they are managed 'under a microscope', or is the balance about right?
- Do staff have control over the way in which lesson plans are produced?
- If the way that classroom observation is undertaken is unacceptable, whether in terms of the manner or overall number, seek agreement on a classroom observation model protocol. The NEU has such a model at www.neu.org.uk.

Development

- Do staff feel that they are encouraged, and have enough opportunities, to go on training courses to develop in their role, and then use the new skills acquired?
- Can they access mentoring and coaching where necessary?
- Can they access CPD on a fair and equitable basis?
- Can they use training days for individual CPD? If not, could this be introduced?

Relationships

Meeting the 'Relationships' standard involves promoting positive working to avoid conflict as well as dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

How can head teachers, supported by the leadership team, help achieve this standard?

Managing Conflict

- The school behaviour policy should be robust and adhered to. Do staff have any concerns?
- Discipline, grievance and bullying/harassment procedures for staff should be in place and accessible to staff. Are staff satisfied that where bullying or harassment is taking place, management takes steps to stop the behaviour?
- Do staff feel encouraged to report violent incidents, including verbal abuse, and are victims offered support, with appropriate management action taken?
- Complaints should be taken seriously and investigated. Do staff have any concerns in this respect?

Change

Staff need to feel that management engages with them during any period of organisational change. Discuss with staff how the following three good practice recommendations could be implemented in your school.

- Change of whatever sort should be preceded by consultation with staff. Where appropriate, training to enable staff to cope with new systems, initiatives or equipment should be offered:
- Organisational change needs to be accompanied by suitable resources;
- Whenever the impact of a new initiative/workload demand is being considered, work life balance should be taken into account, in order to achieve downward pressure on working hours.

Next Steps

Following the meeting, or series of meetings, with staff, you will be able to devise an action plan for tackling the particular issues in your school which are causing stress. It is essential that the consultation with staff leads to concrete action for reducing stress, based on what have been identified as the key stressors. Without this the risk assessment will not be complete.

5. All that then remains is for a review process to be established. This could involve including stress as a regular item on the agenda of health and safety committee or staff meetings, so that new 'stressors' can be identified and addressed.



Staff wellbeing 'Ready Reckoner'

About the staff wellbeing 'Ready Reckoner'

This questionnaire may be used by school management as the starting point for a stress risk assessment. The findings will give an indication of general levels of stress. The NEU's 'Staff Stress Survey' can then be used to identify the causes of stress.

Higher scores are suggestive of greater levels of well-being amongst subjects of the questionnaire, whilst lower totals tend to indicate elevated degrees of stress/poor mental health. Please note that a score of 100 or more does not necessarily indicate the absence of a problem. Wherever evidence of stress emerges – the earlier it is tackled, the easier it is to put right. Union representatives and local officers will always be willing to work with school management when there is a genuine desire to tackle work-related stress.

Instructions: For each of the following questions, enter the number matching the description which most closely represents how you feel.

1 = Not at all 2 = Not much 3 = Sometimes 4 = Mostly 5 = Very much so

Do you feel able to concentrate on what you are doing at school?

Do you feel that you are playing a useful part in school life?

Do you feel capable of making decisions at school?

Do you feel generally relaxed in your home and school life?

Do you feel most problems you encounter at school can be surmounted?

Do you generally manage to keep your sense of humour?

Do you feel happy at work, all things considered?

Are you sleeping well?

Are you eating well?

Are you drinking sensibly?

Do you cope well with changes to your job?

Do you have a reasonable amount of energy?

Do you feel in control of your job?

- Do you feel you are coping well in the classroom?
- Do you receive appropriate support when you need it?
- Do you get on well with your pupils?
- Do you get on well with your colleagues?
- Do you get on well with your managers?
- Do you feel free from the threat of bullying/harassment at school?
- Do you enjoy a reasonable degree of autonomy, unaffected by excessive monitoring regimes?
- Do you manage to leave work 'on time' fairly regularly?
- Do you find your job satisfying and fulfilling?
- Do you have a life outside work?
- Do you intend to remain in teaching for the foreseeable future?
- Do you look forward to returning to school after a weekend or holiday?

Now add up your score.

More than 100 = low evidence of stress – **but see caveat above**;
51 to 100 = moderate evidence of stress;
Up to 50 = high evidence of stress.



STAFF STRESS SURVEY

Instructions: Rank the following statements from 1 to 5 :

1= Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Ambivalent, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

	DEMANDS	1	2	3	4	5
1.	My physical working conditions are acceptable					
2.	Our rest facilities are clean and well maintained					
3.	My total working hours are satisfactory					
4.	The number of after school meetings is manageable					
5.	Deadlines and time pressures are achievable and reasonable					
6.	Ofsted/Estyn inspections do not cause me excessive pressure					
7.	The balance between work and home life is about right					
8.	The school values the time I put in at home					
9.	I am able to take a proper break during the school day					
10.	Lesson planning requirements are realistic					
11.	Marking requirements are sensible and not overly bureaucratic					
	CONTROL	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I have opportunities to express my ideas and points of view					
13.	I have enough time to carry out all of my tasks					
14.	Classroom observation is not excessive					
15.	I am encouraged to use my skills and initiative to do my work					
16.	I feel trusted by management to carry out my role					
	SUPPORT	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I receive appropriate training					
18.	My managers are supportive					
19.	I regularly receive positive feedback on my own work					
20.	There are enough support staff in the school					
21.	The school benefits from effective leadership					
22.	The appraisal system is supportive rather than critical					
	RELATIONSHIPS	1	2	3	4	5
23.	I have a good relationship with my line manager					
24.	I get on well with colleagues					
25.	Management promote positive behaviours to avoid conflict and ensure fairness					
26.	Staff are able to complain without risk of repercussions					

27.	I rarely have to deal with disruptive pupils					
28.	I rarely have to deal with violent pupils					
29.	I do not have to worry about violence from aggressive parents					
	ROLE	1	2	3	4	5
30.	I'm clear about what is expected of me at work					
31.	My skills are well-used					
32.	I feel valued in my role					
	CHANGE	1	2	3	4	5
33.	I can cope with the pace of organisational or curriculum change					
34.	I do not struggle with new initiatives					
35.	There is full staff consultation when any significant change is proposed					
36.	Changes are accompanied by appropriate support and training, where necessary					

Selecting up to five statements, please indicate which factors listed above have the biggest impact on your workplace stress. Please list the numbers below;

Please list any issues causing work related stress which are not addressed in the questions above (continue on a separate sheet if necessary):

Please return completed questionnaires to:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

APPENDIX 2

The most common mental health conditions are briefly described below.

Stress

Pressure is an essential motivating force but may become stress, and therefore a problem, when a person feels they don't have the resources to cope with the demands placed upon them. Symptoms may be emotional (e.g. irritability, tearfulness) and physical (aches and pains, high blood pressure etc). The person may find it difficult to make decisions or perform tasks and may be unable to attend work.

The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as:

'The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand on them.' – HSE

Some staff who are experiencing stress may fall within the remit of the Equality Act 2010 and you should contact your Human Resources department for guidance on individual cases.

Depression

Depression is on a spectrum from mild to severe. Depression is common in the general and working population. Symptoms include low mood and lack of energy. Motivation can be affected and people may experience thoughts of life not being worth living, which in extreme cases can lead to suicidal behaviour.

Anxiety

Anxiety becomes a problem when feelings of tension and fear prevent a person from carrying out everyday tasks. In extreme cases people may suffer panic attacks or phobias. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a form of anxiety where people have recurrent, intrusive thoughts, which they may feel 'forced' to act on (e.g. fears of contamination leading to repetitive hand washing).

Psychotic Conditions/Schizophrenia

In contrast to depression and anxiety, which are common in the general and the working population, psychosis is very uncommon. Psychosis is a term used when a person appears to lose touch with reality. People may hear, see or believe things that aren't real to others (e.g. hearing voices, thinking that others are 'out to get them'). If the illness becomes chronic (long term) the person may withdraw from the outside world and neglect themselves. In these circumstances a psychiatrist may diagnose schizophrenia.

Bi-Polar Disorder/Manic Depressive Illness

Both terms are used to describe this condition where a person may 'swing' between episodes of extreme low mood and depressive symptoms to being 'high' and elated. During a manic episode a person may have high energy levels, grand or unrealistic ideas and become reckless (e.g. taking risks, overspending). People may go through mood cycles at different rates and times.

Mind and Bipolar UK provide concise guidance on employing people with mental health problems. See Appendix 4 for details.

Models of Disability

There are two dominant models of disability which are commonly used to describe the way society has structured itself in relation to disabled people. The application of these models in practice can have serious impacts on the way disabled people experience the world. The NEU and UNISON advocate the approach explained below under the heading 'the social model'.

The 'Medical Model'

The medical model of disability is when people are defined and automatically disadvantaged by their medical conditions. This model means that the 'problem' is the person with a mental health

condition, and so they need medical interventions and treatment to make them more like people who do not have mental health conditions.

The 'Social Model'

The social model of disability says that disabled people are excluded from society because it has not evolved to include disabled people, in terms of attitude, social policy, the built environment and employment structures. In order to tackle the exclusion faced by disabled people, this model firmly places the onus on society to change to make itself inclusive.

It is important that employers are aware of these different approaches to thinking about mental health, so that using the social model of disability as their starting point; this approach encourages consideration of how to promote measures which revolve around organisational change rather than focusing on teachers with a mental health condition. The 'problem' may not be within the teacher but within the system.

Is stress a disability?

This is a question which employers need to consider.

Stress is not a disability in itself. However, 'stress' may become a condition protected by the Equality Act where it results in a mental or physical impairment which has a long-term and adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

The purpose of this document is to help head staff identify and deal with work-related stress before it becomes a disability.

DO STAFF NEED TO DISCLOSE A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION?

It is lawful for disabled people to choose not to disclose their mental health status.

Disclosing a mental health condition, either in the recruitment process, or whilst in employment, can be one of the most difficult issues for people to deal with.

People with mental health conditions may be very reluctant to disclose their impairment, because they fear that it would impact negatively on their chances of getting a job, or keeping a job once they are employed.

The Equality Act 2010 discourages employers from enquiring about the health of job applicants. Health enquiries should normally be made only after a person has been offered employment on a conditional or unconditional basis. At recruitment stage, prior to a job offer, questions about health or fitness to teach should be limited to those concerned with reasonable adjustments for the recruitment process.

Disclosure at recruitment stage

School leaders should not make assumptions about what tasks or level of responsibility a person with mental health conditions could or could not undertake. For example, it is commonly incorrectly assumed that people with mental health conditions would have difficulty undertaking a promoted post because of the stressful nature of the role, or it might be wrongly assumed that staff with depression might seek to pursue early retirement on the grounds of ill health.

Employers should make a clear statement in recruitment literature about their willingness to make reasonable adjustments to enable people with mental health status to perform the role. Such statements may also serve to instil confidence in people to disclose their condition.

Disclosure of mental health conditions during employment

There are many routes by which a member of staff may disclose a mental health condition. It may be to a union representative, the occupational health service, their line manager or another colleague. Staff will only disclose if they feel confident that this will not lead to discrimination or harassment of them.

Employers may also undertake routine staff monitoring exercises, to improve their knowledge on the diversity of their employees, and people with mental health conditions may disclose at this stage, especially if the monitoring process is anonymous.

ORGANISATIONS OFFERING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

MIND

MIND is the leading mental health charity in England and Wales, providing information and support to those affected by mental distress, as well as campaigning to improve policy and attitudes.

[Mind Model Mental Health Policies and Fact Sheets](#)

STRESS

[Education Support Partnership](#) is an independent charity that provides practical and emotional support to trainee, serving and retired teachers and their families

ALCOHOL

[Alcoholics Anonymous](#) offer area support meetings

[Drinkline](#) offers advice, information and support to anyone concerned about their own or someone else's drinking

BEREAVEMENT

[Cruse Bereavement Care](#) helpline for bereaved people and those caring for bereaved people

COUNSELLING

[Relate](#) offer relationship counselling and mediation for individuals and couples

DEBT

[StepChange Debt Charity](#) provides help for anyone in debt or concerned they may fall into debt

DRUGS

[UK National Drugs Helpline](#) is a free 24-hour service for drug users and solvent mis-users, their families, friends and carers

GAMBLING

[Gamcare](#) offers confidential counselling, advice and information for anyone affected by a gambling dependency

HOUSING

[Shelter](#) offers confidential advice on housing problems

MEDICAL

[Terrence Higgins Trust](#) offer advice, practical support and counselling for HIV and AIDS

[Bipolar UK](#) is a national user-led organisation and registered charity for people whose lives are affected by Bi-Polar.

[Rethink Mental Illness](#) is the largest mental illness charity in the UK and is dedicated to improving the lives of everyone affected by severe mental illness, whether sufferers, carers or professionals working in the mental health field

PARENTING

[Family Lives](#) offers support for anyone parenting a child, including grandparents and step-parents

[The Information, Advice and Support Services Network](#) offers support and advice to parents with children who have particular needs in schools across England.

SUICIDE AND EMOTIONAL CRISIS

[SANE](#) offer emotional and crisis support for people suffering from mental health problems, their friends and families

[Samaritans](#) offer 24-hour confidential and emotional support for anyone in crisis

SMOKING

[NHS](#) advice on quitting smoking is available at <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/take-steps-now-to-stop-smoking/>