

Securing management commitment

Many employers across the UK are already committed to tackling stress at work. Some are motivated to do this simply by the desire to be recognised as a good employer.

As you know your organisation best, you should have some idea about what factors will secure commitment to tackling stress at the highest level in your organisation. The following information may be of help.

The legal case: The law requires employers to tackle stress

The Management Standards are not new laws. However, employers *already* have duties:

- Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999:
 - To assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities.
- Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974:
 - To take measures to control that risk.

HSE expects organisations to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for stress, and to take action to tackle any problems identified by that risk assessment. The Standards are intended to help and encourage you to do this and to show that you have done so.

The business case: Tackling stress brings business benefits

Research has shown work-related stress to have adverse effects for organisations in terms of:

- Employee commitment to work
- Staff performance and productivity
- Staff turnover and intention to leave
- Attendance levels
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Customer satisfaction
- Organisational image and reputation
- Potential litigation

It is also worth thinking about the impact that work-related stress could have on your unit or team. For example, losing one colleague for an extended period with a stress-related illness can have a dramatic impact on the workload and morale of the rest of the team.

By taking action to tackle the causes of stress in your workplace, you can prevent or reduce the impact of these problems on your organisation.

The business case for health and safety (some of the more relevant case studies)

The moral/ethical case: Tackling stress prevents ill health

There is now convincing evidence that prolonged periods of stress, including work-related stress, have an adverse effect on health. Research provides strong links between stress and

- **physical effects** such as heart disease, back pain, headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances or various minor illnesses; and
- **psychological effects** such as anxiety and depression

Stress can also lead to other behaviours that are harmful to health, such as skipping meals, drinking too much caffeine or alcohol, or smoking.

Tackling the causes of stress before they lead to ill health can prevent this from happening.