

Example risk assessment on work-related stress in a small business

Setting the scene

This company bakes bespoke celebration cakes and has nine employees. Work can peak at particular times of year, eg there are more weddings in the summer which is also the time when more employees take leave.

Several employees have complained about feeling stressed because of heavy demands and conflicting deadlines. The owner is concerned that employees may become ill and take time off work. This would also put remaining employees under additional pressure. The owner decided to do a stress risk assessment.

How the risk assessment was done

The manager followed the guidance at www.hse.gov.uk/risk.

- To identify the hazards, the manager:
 - looked at HSE's stress web pages at www.hse.gov.uk/stress, to learn about stress risk factors;
 - talked to members of staff to listen to their concerns and opinions about stress in the workplace.
- She then wrote down who could be harmed by the hazards and how.

- For each hazard, the owner wrote down what controls, if any, were in place to manage these hazards. Where she didn't consider existing controls good enough, she wrote down what else needed to be done to control the risk.
- She discussed the findings with staff and emailed the risk assessment to all employees. She put it into practice, making sure that each identified action was done and ticking each one off as it was completed. She also decided to make it part of training for new employees.
- The manager decided to review and update the risk assessment every year or straightaway if any major changes in the workplace happened.

Important reminder

This example risk assessment is not a generic risk assessment that you can just put your company name on and adopt wholesale without any thought. This would not satisfy the law – and would not be effective in protecting people. Every business is different – you need to think through the hazards and controls required in your business for yourself.

Date of risk assessment: 17/03/17

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Demands	All employees, particularly around tight deadlines and busy times of year, eg summer weddings All employees, dealing with difficult clients	■ Understanding what work-related stress is and what can cause it ■ Responding to a pattern of complaints of work-related stress ■ Talking to employees	■ Agreeing timings etc for projects with employees ■ Planning work to minimise excessive demands ■ Taking on extra resource to support busy times of year ■ People may not identify time off sick as stress so thinking about whether there is an area/job that has high amounts of absence			
Control	All employees at busy times	■ Talking to employees ■ Giving employees own areas of responsibility	■ Asking employees what they think can be done and acting on these issues and ideas			
Support	All employees	■ Spotting early signs of stress and talking to staff about options for support ■ Employees can talk to the owner if they are feeling stressed at work	■ Making sure staff would be supported during and after a period off with work-related stress ■ Having a clear commitment to employee wellbeing and a culture of openness ■ Reminding employees they can speak confidentially if they are feeling stressed at work			
Relationships	All employees	■ Promoting a positive working culture	■ Make sure employees work with different people regularly to help form positive relationships			
Role	All employees	■ Defining roles ■ Employees understanding what their duties and responsibilities are	■ Thinking about whether any employees are particularly vulnerable, eg young workers			
Change	All employees, adapting to new product lines	■ Making sure changes are communicated openly so everyone understands the effects they will have	■ Acting on employee feedback so any new pressures linked to changes are discussed			

Assessment review date: 17/03/18

You should review your risk assessment if anything changes (eg following a case of stress-related ill health in the workplace or if there are any significant changes, such as new work activities).

For more information see www.hse.gov.uk/stress