



# STRESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SHEET

NO. 4

## SUPPORT TEAM

### CONTACTS

HEALTH

PROMOTION

OCCUPATIONAL  
HEALTH

EMPLOYEE

ASSISTANCE

HEALTH AND

SAFETY

HUMAN

RESOURCES

PERFORMANCE  
AND

DEVELOPMENT

**DON'T BE AFRAID  
TO TALK!**

Relatives

Friends

Work Colleagues

Manager

Occupational Health

Employee Assistance

HR Coaching Network

## SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE

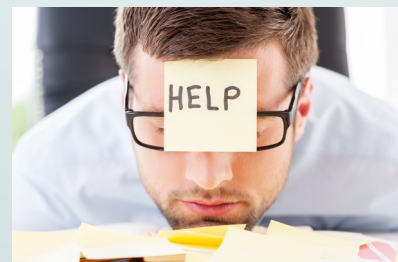
This Information Sheet introduces the third stage of the Cycle of Stress Management, which is **SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE**. Here, you will find information on the support services provided by the HSE.

On the previous information sheets the focus has been on the identification of hazards (stressors) in the work place and the preventative approach that should be taken to reduce the incidents of stress in the HSE (risk assessment).

## HELPFUL OPTIONS

The use of helpful options will help you process the new demands, such as:

- Sitting down with someone else involved and making things clearer through talking.
- Agreeing or mapping a way forward which you think you can manage
- Identifying what you need to keep you stress-free and expressing this assertively
- Ensuring you help yourself by having a healthy life style – sleeping, eating and exercising regularly in line with your mental and physical needs
- Relaxing and enjoying leisure time when not at work. Work-life balance is crucial so that stresses and strains are more easily met, regardless of their source



## ROLE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN MANAGING STRESS AND PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK AT WORK

Occupational Health (OH) provides a confidential independent advisory service whose role is to provide impartial advice regarding fitness for work to line managers, aimed at assisting employees to regain their good health and return to a suitable job as soon as their recovery allows. It is a preventative service not a treatment service and it is not a substitute to attending your General Practitioner. OH services seek to benefit both employees and their employer.

There is a therapeutic component to the employee / occupational health interactions. The occupational health knowledge of the work place positions occupational health in providing guidance to employees and management in certain cases. It is perceived by employees as another form of support or a second opinion.

Counselling is available through the Employee Assistance (Support). Line managers and employees can refer / self refer directly to the Employee Assistance Support Service without the requirement to refer to Occupational Health first – essentially the services are independent of each other.

### Occupational Health roles are as follows:

1. Assessing the employee's fitness to engage with management to complete the [Workplace Stress Risk Assessment Checklist](#) in the case where an employee is certified unfit for duty and stress is cited on the sickness certificate.
2. Assessing medical fitness to work.
3. If appropriate advising on a phased return to work.

### Access to Occupational Health Services:

While it is the managers responsibility to ensure that in the first instance they reduce identified risks to as low as is reasonable practicable, using the risk assessment tool, if further support is appropriate then contact with Occupational Health can be made.

1. Line manager may refer an employee out of concern when;
  - a. An employee presents with symptoms of stress; or
  - b. An employee submits a sick certification citing stress
2. Employees may self refer\*

*\*Typically, when an employee contacts the Occupational Health Department, they are encouraged to inform their manager, even if the stress is from factors outside work. It will be explained that if the manager is unaware of their perceived difficulties, then they cannot be expected to help find a solution. Employees are advised to contact the employee assistance support services and attend their GP if deemed appropriate.*

### Confidentiality:

At the end of an assessment with Occupational Health, the doctor or nurse will make a determination of the employee's fitness for work. The doctor or nurse may make recommendations about "reasonable accommodations" to management. The individual's personal, social and medical history and examination findings are not disclosed as part of the occupational health report except rarely, and even then, only with the expressed written consent from employee. Medical information will only be disclosed to management with employees consent and if it is relevant to the employee's health and safety at work.

### Role of the Employees' General Practitioner (GP) / Family Doctor:

Although stress is not an illness it can cause illness. If the employee has symptoms of stress, presents in a crisis, or has psychological ill health it is the role of the employees General Practitioner to manage the employee from a medical perspective.

**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE/SUPPORT PROGRAMME**

The Employee Assistance Support Service provides confidential counselling support for employees experiencing stress as a result of work or personal issues.

All counsellors/therapists are trained and accredited to a relevant body and abide by their code of Ethics.

At the initial session the client’s concerns and expectations are discussed or assessed and a plan is agreed. In this way the client knows what to expect from the service, this is reviewed periodically.

Employee Assistance Support Service provide the following;

- Individual face to face counselling (the number of sessions varies from client to client but is typically 6-8 sessions)
- Provides support and guidance to Managers/Supervisors in responding to employee wellbeing issues
- External agencies also offers short term face to face counselling up to 4-6 sessions
- Group Support/Facilitation and training sessions for staff when needs arise and have been identified by management/staff
- Group/Individual support sessions for staff who are preparing for an emotionally/mentally challenging event

In addition Employee Support Service provides **Critical Incident Stress Management** following a **Critical Incident** (a Critical Incident is a sudden, unexpected and distressing event which may cause an immediate or delayed stress reaction which does not respond to your normal coping methods).

**CONFIDENTIALITY.**

The service will not reveal issues discussed by an employee or their attendance without their written consent. However if a Manager refers an employee they **ONLY** have the right to know if the employee has attended. Confidentiality will be strictly maintained except in the following exceptional circumstances;

- Where an employee discloses the intention to harm self or others
- Where the employee discloses the intention to commit a crime or a crime has been committed
- Where ordered by a court of law
- Where mandatory reporting is required under legislation

All Employee Assistance Support Service records are maintained separate from HR, Medical or OH records and accessed only by the counsellor/therapist whom the employee has attended.

**WHY COUNSELLING/SUPPORT?**

Each of us faces a variety of problems within our lives. Sometimes our problems become too much for us to handle, they may affect our happiness, our relationships, our performance at work and even our health. When this occurs we may need support in resolving them and this is where counselling/support can help.

Counselling/Support is about helping people gain new awareness and to make positive change which helps them grow in their personal development.

Below are just some of the issues that people present when they come to counselling. This is not an exhaustive list and you may have other issues that are of concern to you.

**Stress/work/personal**  
**Anxiety/panic attacks**  
**Health Crisis**  
**Loss of meaning**  
**Bereavement and Loss**  
**Poor Self Esteem**  
**Lack of Confidence**  
**Communication Problems**  
**Addictions**

**Work fatigue**  
**Bullying**  
**Unable to relax**  
**Separation**  
**Worry/low moods/fears**  
**Behavioural problems**  
**Personal Change**  
**Loss of direction in Life**  
**Assault/Violence in the Workplace**



Employee  
 Assistance  
 Support Services  
 here to listen  
 and help

## COACHING — WHAT IS IT?

**Coaching** refers to the activity of a coach in developing the abilities of a coachee. Coaching tends to focus on an existing problem (from which to move away) or a specific outcome that the individual wishes to achieve (move towards). In both cases, the coach aims to stimulate the coachee to uncover innate knowledge so they can achieve a sustainable result. Coaches will normally check that the specific learning can be successfully re-applied by the coachee, to deal with other problems in the future.

The structure and methodologies of coaching are very numerous with one unifying feature, coaching approaches are predominantly facilitating in style, that is to say that the coach is mainly asking questions and challenging the coachee to learn from their own resources. The coaching process is underpinned by established trust in the coachee. Coaching is differentiated from therapeutic and counselling disciplines in that the problems and outcomes have contexts which are important in the present and with aims for the future - in other words, the coachee has the resources they need to make reasoned progress at the time that they seek coaching. Coaching focuses on unlocking a person's potential in order to maximise performance. Through active listening and effective questioning a good coach can help a person to understand the core issues and examine and consider the various options.

The coachee makes their own decisions in terms of the best course of action to take and the coach acts as an objective sounding board, to ensure that each option is considered, potential obstacles are understood and that there is a commitment to the chosen course of action.

### Who is it for?

Coaching is available to any staff member at any level in the HSE.

### Career Management:

One of the triggers for coaching for many employees is uncertainty about their present career direction. Alternatively, the person maybe very clear as to their next career move within the organisation but maybe unsure as to how to achieve this objective. Through effective coaching and a tailored personal development plan it is possible that the person being coached can take a structured and planned approach to their next career move.



### Personal Development - Planning and Implementation:

Many HSE staff members as they progress within their careers can sometimes neglect their own personal development. Given the fast moving environment within which we operate, there is a need for HSE staff members to develop and enhance their own skills set.

The use of a coach can be effective in helping the staff member set a personal development agenda and to ensure that this is acted upon.

### Tailored Assessment - understanding your strengths and development needs:

When a person decides to undertake coaching, there can be uncertainty as to what issues or development needs should be addressed. Undertaking some tailored assessment can be useful in pinpointing specific areas for action and development.

### Referral Pathway to Coaching;

- 1: Self Referral to a Coach in your local HR Coach Network
- 2: Line Manager may refer an employee out of concern when an employee needs coaching in an area of Personal Development, Career Management or other issues identified with their Manager

**Confidentiality:** The content of the meetings will be treated with strictest confidence

**READ INFORMATION SHEET NO.5—MONITOR AND REVIEW**