**Guidance for the Completion of the Workplace Risk Assessment**

 **The Aim of the Workplace Risk Assessment**

This guideline has been produced for University of Exeter managers with the aim of giving guidance to successfully support employees with the Workplace Risk Assessment.

The overall aim of the Workplace Risk Assessment is to:

1. Provide a quiet, supportive forum for employees to feel able to speak openly and in confidence about their situation and feelings
2. To provide a structure to the conversation to ensure that all aspects of the 6 essentials are assessed in full
3. To identify causes / triggers for how the employee is feeling to ensure that managers, with the support of HR (where required) can focus on finding suitable solutions
4. To ensure employees are well and healthy and able to work to their full potential

**Identifying employees who would benefit from this assessment**

The stress reaction can present itself in any employee. To identify employees who would benefit from this assessment, managers and HR professionals should consider:

1. When a member of staff reports to HR / Manager / Union Representative that they are struggling to cope
2. Return to work. When a member of staff has reported that they are absent from work and have sited work related stress as the reason for their absence. This process should support a healthy and well planned return to work

**Preparing for the Assessment**

To prepare for an assessment, managers and HR professionals should consider the following:

1. Agree a suitable venue and time with the employee
2. Agree who will be there. It is not appropriate to have multiple people in the room for this. The employee can be supported by a friend or colleague, but this must not be entered into like a tribunal or employment dispute. The employee should be able to feel comfortable to be open about issues they are facing
3. Be prepared; ensure you have understood the employees concerns (if raised before the session)
4. Prepare the environment. Switch off phones and emails and ensure you are not going to be disturbed by anyone else. Try to arrange furniture to ensure it is a supportive space and not feeling like an interview room
5. Prepare yourself. You need to feel calm and ready to support this employee. Having things on your mind or worrying about your next meeting is not going to yield the best outcome. It may be a good idea to try and keep your diary free for a couple of hours- it may take longer than you expect and it wouldn’t be appropriate to have to leave mid-way through the assessment
6. You could consider having a conversation with Care first prior to the session to help you prepare – the Care first team are available to help managers prepare for this type of conversation. Other good resources include the Mindful Employer Line Managers’ Resource and the ACAS online resource

<http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/j/i/Promoting_positive_mental_health_at_work_JAN_2012.pdf>

**Completing the Assessment**

You will need a blank assessment recording sheet and will complete the assessment by hand as the conversation unfolds. At the beginning of the meeting you should:

1. Set out the process that you are going to be taking the employee through (i.e. show them the tool and explain how it is used)
2. Explain the aims of the process and that you would like to try and identify the triggers to enable you and the employee to work out solutions to take forwards
3. Ask the employee to be as open as they feel able. Suggest that you can stop at any time if things become too difficult
4. Explain that you anticipate it will take an hour, but you have plenty of time so no need to watch the clock

You should listen carefully and let the employee have time to explain how they feel. During the assessment, you need to ask the employee to try and quantify how each trigger is affecting them (e.g. enabling wellbeing to reducing wellbeing, Red, Amber, Blue or Green).

Things to avoid in the assessment process:

* Talking about yourself. This is about how your employee feels about particular issues. Try and listen and understand why they feel as they do
* Dismissing issues. These are real for your employee so make attempts to understand why they feel as they do
* Making promises you cannot keep. You must ensure that all actions agreed are realistic and achievable. If you do not know if something is possible, suggest that you will go and find out

**Review and next steps**

At the end of the assessment summarise the steps that you will now take and the steps that the employee will be taking to resolve the issues. It is acceptable to ask the employee to agree to take personal steps to address issues.

If you are not sure how something can / should be taken forward, commit to finding out and add this to the action plan. For any areas that you need assistance with, you need to be clear with the employee that you will need to seek advice/support from your manager/HR etc to find a suitable solution. This includes advice on reasonable adjustments.

 Agree the action plan. Where the employee has indicated a Red or Amber score these areas should be the focus for action. It may be appropriate to include actions around blue or green outcomes if there is a link between the issues.

Agree a date for testing / implementing the reasonable adjustments. These can be short, medium or long term adjustments.

Set a date for reviewing progress. Review dates can be agreed between you. Ideally the first review is no longer than one month after the initial assessment. It may be more appropriate to have a review within the week / next two weeks depending on the nature of the trigger.

During the next review, focus on the actions and identify if they have been carried out and discuss how effective the actions are being. Agree the date of the next review. You should review your employee’s progress at least three times.

If you are concerned that the actions are not making a difference and the employee is still stressed / anxious you should consider a referral to Occupational Health.