Line management behaviour and stress at work
Refined framework for line managers

Management competencies for preventing and reducing stress at work: refined framework following phase 2 of the research

Competency	Sub-competency	Do (✓) Don't (✗)	Examples of manager behaviour
Respectful and responsible: managing emotions and having integrity	Integrity	✓	• is a good role model • treats team members with respect • is honest
		✗	• says one thing, then does something different • speaks about team members behind their backs
	Managing emotions	✓	• acts calmly in pressured situations • takes a consistent approach to managing
		✗	• is unpredictable in mood • passes on stress to employees • panics about deadlines • takes suggestions for improvement as a personal criticism
	Considerate approach	✗	• makes short-term demands rather than allowing planning • creates unrealistic deadlines • gives more negative than positive feedback • relies on others to deal with problems • imposes 'my way is the only way' • shows a lack of consideration for work–life balance
Managing and communicating existing and future work	Proactive work management	✓	• clearly communicates employee job objectives • develops action plans • monitors team workload on an ongoing basis • encourages team to review how they organise work • stops additional work being taken on when necessary • works proactively • sees projects/tasks through to delivery • reviews processes to see if work can be improved • prioritises future workloads
	Problem-solving	✓	• deals rationally with problems • follows up problems on team's behalf • deals with problems as soon as they arise
		✗	• is indecisive at decision-making
	Participative/empowering	✓	• gives employees the right level of responsibility • correctly judges when to consult and when to make a decision • keeps employees informed of what is happening in the organisation • acts as a mentor • delegates work equally • helps team members develop in their role • encourages team participation • provides regular team meetings
		✗	• gives too little direction to employees

Management competencies for preventing and reducing stress at work: refined framework following phase 2 of the research (continued)

Competency	Sub-competency	Do (✓) Don't (✗)	Examples of manager behaviour
Reasoning/managing difficult situations	Managing conflict	✓	• acts as mediator in conflict situations • deals with squabbles before they become arguments • deals objectively with conflicts • deals with conflicts head on
		✗	• acts to keep the peace rather than resolve issues
	Use of organisation resources	✓	• seeks advice from other managers when necessary • uses HR as a resource to help deal with problems • seeks help from occupational health when necessary
	Taking responsibility for resolving issues	✓	• follows up conflicts after resolution • supports employees through incidents of abuse • makes it clear they will take ultimate responsibility if things go wrong
		✗	• doesn't address bullying

Competency	Sub-competency	Do (✓) Don't (✗)	Examples of manager behaviour
Managing the individual within the team	Personally accessible	✓	• speaks personally rather than uses email • provides regular opportunities to speak one to one • returns calls/emails promptly • is available to talk to when needed
	Sociable	✓	• brings in treats • socialises with the team • is willing to have a laugh at work
	Empathetic engagement	✓	• encourages employee input in discussions • listens when employees ask for help • makes an effort to find out what motivates employees at work • tries to see team member's point of view • takes an interest in team's life outside work • regularly asks 'how are you?' • treats all team members with equal importance
		✗	• assumes rather than checks that employees are okay

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This refined management competency framework for preventing and reducing stress at work was developed during the first two phases of a research programme sponsored by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and Investors in People UK (IIP). The programme aimed to identify and develop the management behaviours necessary to manage stress in others. The first phase of the research resulted in an initial competency framework, which was published in 2007 (previous guidance leaflet 4024). The competencies shown here are an updated version of the initial framework, resulting from the second phase of the research, which refined and revised the framework through a quantitative and qualitative study and was first published in 2008 (previous guidance leaflet 4456). To explore how best to help managers show the relevant competencies/behaviours, further research was undertaken during 2008, involving designing and evaluating a learning and development intervention. In addition, online learning and development tools are being developed based on the research, which are available through the HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk/stress

The full scientific research reports relating to this project can be downloaded from:
www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr633.htm
www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr553.htm
www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/health/stress/_preventing_stress

For further details about the research project, please contact Rachel Lewis, Affinity Health at Work, at rachel@affinityhealthatwork.com