



# EUROPEAN SAFETY WEEK

NATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY FUNCTION (NHSF) • 2023

## "SAFE & HEALTHY WORK IN THE DIGITAL AGE" CAMPAIGN 2023 - 2025

### BLENDING WORKING-THE HAZARDS

Blended working has many benefits for you, but it may also expose you to certain hazards. In this Information Sheet we explore what those hazards are and provide you with information on supports designed to manage these.



The main hazards associated with blended working may include:

#### Lone Working

Lone working is described as “any situation, or location, in which someone works without close or direct supervision; without a colleague nearby, or is out of sight or earshot of another colleague”. [The HSE's Policy and Guidance on Lone Working](#) details both the manager's and employee's responsibilities in relation to lone working and includes guidance on the completion of the lone working risk assessment. The NHSF also has a useful [Fast Fact](#) available online for reference.

#### Work Environment

The designated space you have identified as part of a blended working policy must be risk assessed as part of the [Remote Working risk assessment](#). This assessment will be carried out by your Manager to identify if the workspace is suitable. Some of the considerations within this assessment include that the work environment must:

- have adequate light
- have heat and ventilation to be able to work comfortably
- be tidy and free from clutter
- be free from loud noise, interruptions and distractions
- have floor surfaces that are clean, dry and free from slip, trip and fall hazards
- have safe access to and from the workspace



#### Work Equipment

Work equipment is any machinery, appliance or tool used at work. In the context of homeworking this would include display screen equipment. All work equipment must have a CE mark and be used and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Before use, all electrical work equipment and sockets must be checked for signs of wear and tear. Any faulty electrical work equipment provided by the HSE must be taken out of use immediately, reported to your manager, labeled as faulty and not to be used until repaired or replaced. To assist with the completion of the risk assessment please refer to the [Portable Electrical Equipment Prompt Sheet](#).

#### Manual Handling

Manual Handling includes the lifting, putting an item down, pushing, pulling, carrying or moving of a load. A written risk assessment of the manual handling tasks/activities must be undertaken in accordance with the [HSE Manual Handling & People Handling Policy, 2018](#).

#### Display Screen Equipment

Whether you are working from home or from a HSE premises, the correct setup of your Display Screen Equipment is essential to avoid risk factors such as back pain, musculoskeletal disorders, upper limb disorders of the shoulder and neck and repetitive strain injuries. The Information Sheet on DSE Set Up provides information on this topic, from completing a DSE risk assessment, to what type of training is required and how to set up your DSE to achieve optimal ergonomics at your workstation.



## "SAFE & HEALTHY WORK IN THE DIGITAL AGE" CAMPAIGN 2023 - 2025

### BLENDING WORKING - THE HAZARDS

#### Psychosocial Hazards including Work-related Stress (WRS)

The term "psychosocial" relates to the combined influence that psychological factors and the surrounding social environment have on a person's physical and mental wellness and their ability to function, for example, social and cultural norms, the way people interact with each other or the system of work. Psychosocial hazards in the workplace can manifest as stressors for some employees.

Stress is a mental and physical condition. It happens when pressure affects how well we perceive we can cope. The sources of such pressure or demand are called stressors. Work-related stress (WRS) is caused or made worse by work. The hazards that can result in work-related stress can exist in isolation or as a combination of one or more.

Typical psychosocial hazards in all workplaces include:

- Bullying
- Conflicting demands and lack of role clarity
- Lack of control over the way work is done and/or the work rate
- Poor communication or lack of communication
- Lack of support from colleagues and/or management

Psychosocial hazards in the workplace can manifest as stressors for some employees

It is important to understand how to identify, assess and control psychosocial hazards which can lead to conflict, distress, poor physical health or occupational illness, and long term absence from work. The [HSE's Policy for the Management of Stress in the Workplace](#) requires that managers engage with their staff in proactively identifying work related hazards that may give rise to negative stress and reduce their employees exposure to such hazards.

#### Manager's Responsibilities

- Identify psychosocial hazards through risk assessment, put in place control measures for all identified hazards
- Ensure policies and procedures are brought to the attention of employees
- Ensure managers and supervisors are competent and trained to deal with psychosocial hazards and maintain records of issues. See HSeLanD/Course Catalogues/Human Resources for online training programmes
- Identify trends from records of issues e.g. NIMS
- Review the results of risk assessments of psychosocial hazards so that appropriate action can be taken in a timely manner e.g. [HSE's Work PositiveCI](#)
- Provide information on supports such as Occupational Health or Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). In some instances, a management referral may be appropriate
- Deal with issues and complaints fairly, consistently, and transparently ensuring that records are maintained in line with GDPR requirements

#### Employee Responsibilities

- Work with your team and management to identify and address psychosocial hazards in your workplace as described in the [HSE Policy on the Prevention and Management of Work Related Stress](#)
- Bring to your Manager's attention work related psychosocial issues that are affecting you at work
- Attend training programmes as requested by your manager
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect while at work as described in the [Dignity at Work Policy for the Public Health Service](#)
- Co-operate with any assessment or investigation in your workplace
- Report unacceptable and/or dangerous behaviours

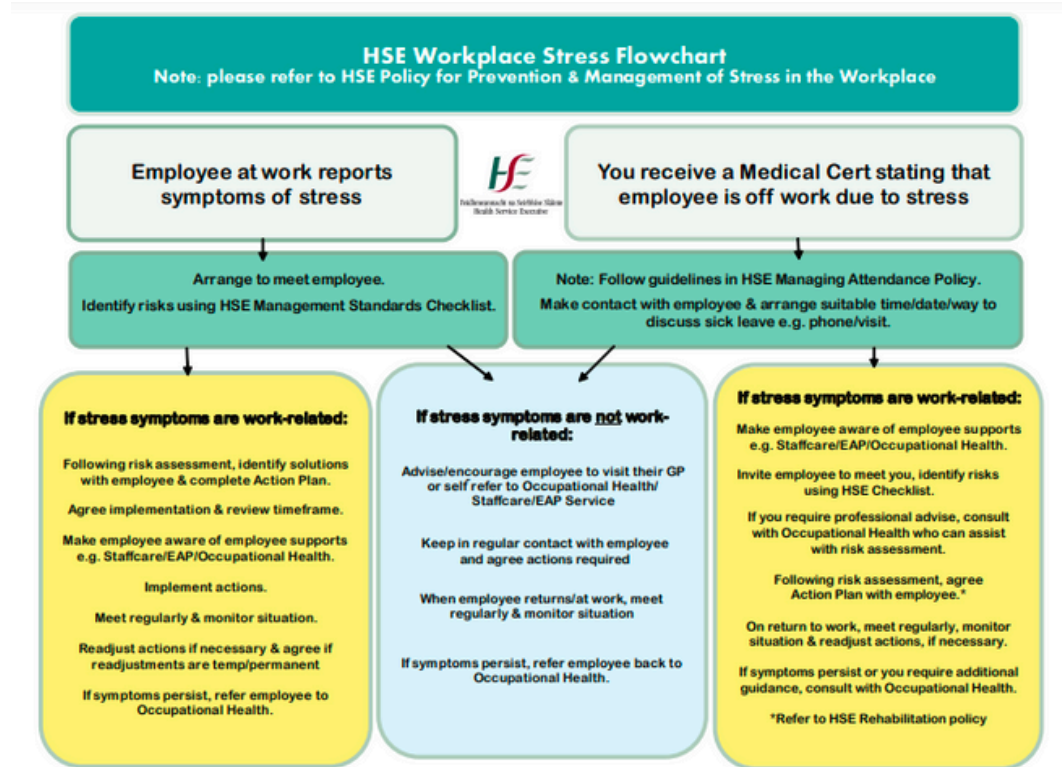




"SAFE & HEALTHY WORK IN THE DIGITAL AGE"  
CAMPAIGN 2023 - 2025

MANAGING WORKPLACE STRESS EFFECTIVELY

It is important to support our colleagues who may be suffering from work-related stress. Follow the steps below to ensure that you are working in line with the [HSE Policy on the Prevention and Management of Work Related Stress](#).

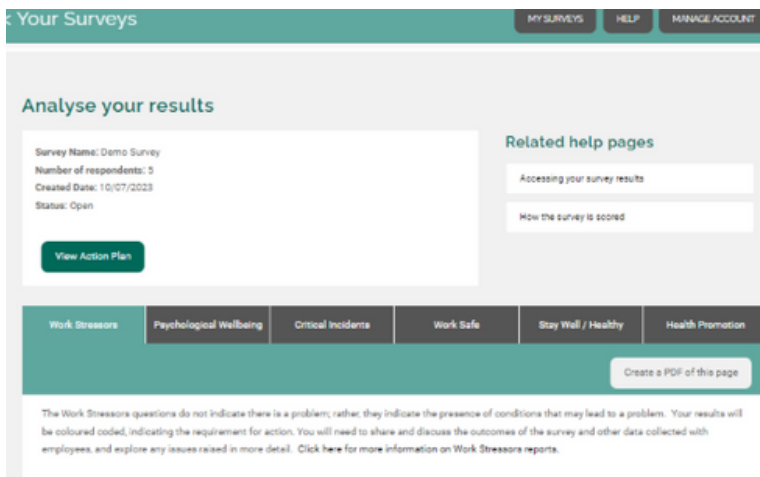


THE ROLE OF THE HSE'S WORKPOSITIVE (CRITICAL INCIDENT) FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING WORK-RELATED STRESS

HSE Work PositiveCI simplifies the process of risk assessing work-related stress for teams and provides a clear indication of where potential risks occur within a team.



You can be confident when using the [HSE's Work PositiveCI](#) as it uses a validated method of risk identification comparing a team's responses to Irish norms (responses from other public bodies). The [HSE's Work PositiveCI](#) will provide a comprehensive report with an overview of the safety culture, psychological health and well-being status of your team and an action plan for implementation.



The process is confidential and results are collated by an external provider. Based on HSE Work PositiveCI data, you as the Manager, can then begin a process of proactively engaging with your employees on work-related stress.

As [HSE Work PositiveCI](#) is available online it can be easily completed by your employees regardless of their location. This is a good example of how digitalisation can assist you in managing occupational safety & health.

For more information click [here](#).