Stress:
Helpful Resources from HSE

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Current statistics

- In 2024/25, work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounted for 52% of all work-related ill health and 62% of all working days lost.

- The rate of self-reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety continues to show signs of increasing each year.

- Human health/social work have significantly higher rates of reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety than the average for all industries.

Headlines

5 Jan 2026 — Union body calls for urgent action from employers, with 22 million working days lost to stress in past two years. *(People Management)*

29 Jan 2026 — Work-related stress is causing over four million lost working days per year in the public sector. *(Government & Public Sector Journal)*
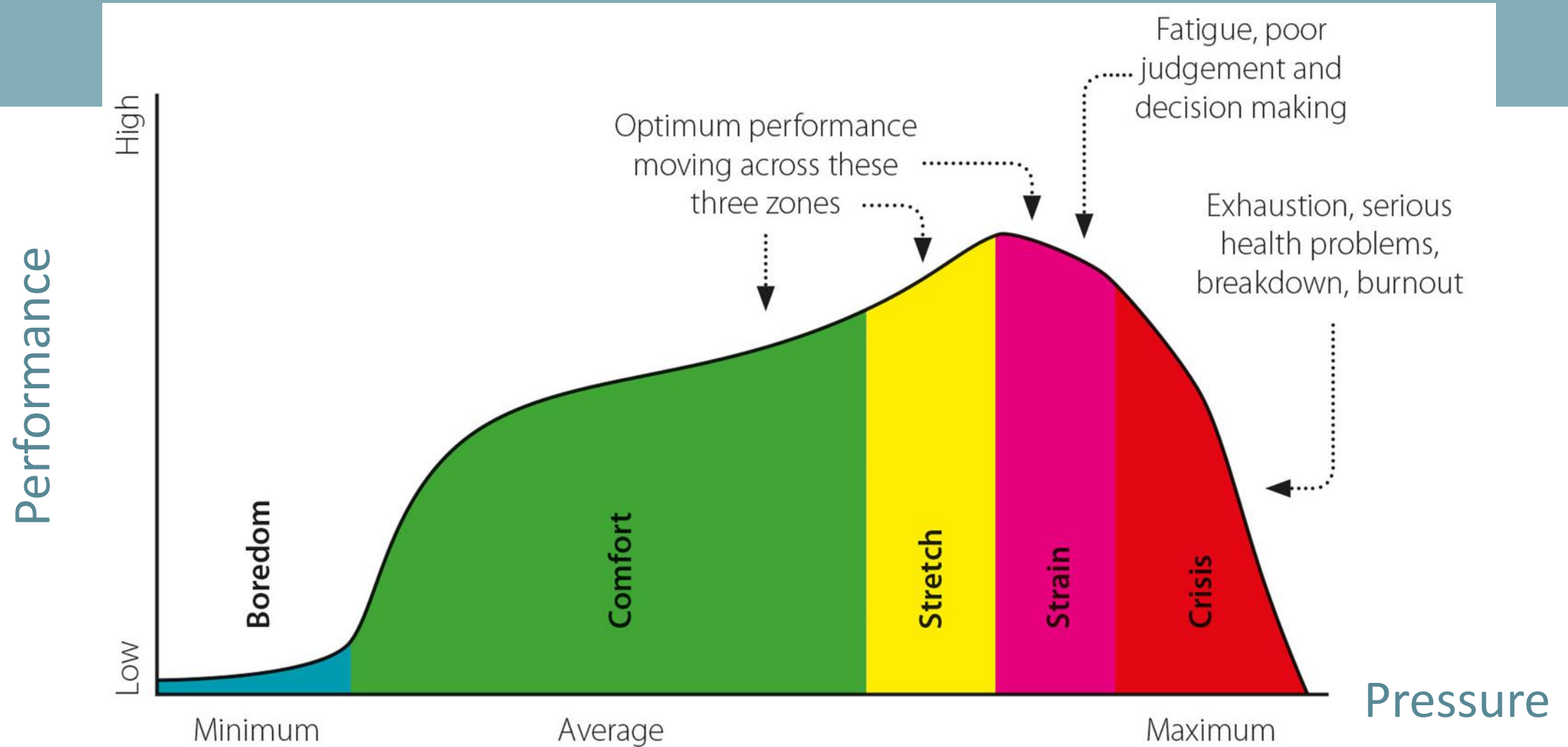
University of Birmingham: In December 2025, the HSE served a Notice of Contravention (NOC) on the university, concluding it did not have effective arrangements in place to manage the risk of work-related stress.

Health and Safety Executive

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10 year plan
May 2022 – May 2032

Reduce work-related illhealth with a specific focus on mental health and stress

Pressure Performance Curve

What causes you to feel stressed at work?

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Drivers of work-related stress*

- Degree of **control** over the way we do our work

- Level of **demands** placed on us

- Low/ no **support** from colleagues or managers

- Ill-defined or unclear **role**

- Difficulties with **relationships** at work

- How we are consulted about **changes** at work

*Formally launched in November 2004

Stress Risk Assessments

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Employers have a legal duty to protect workers from stress at work by completing a risk assessment and acting on it!

https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm

Example risk assessments for 3 types of organisations:

Small Bakery – 9 employees

Financial services – 40 employees

College – 150 employees

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	Accountants, particularly around tight deadlines and end of financial year
	
	Support staff, at the same time of year
	
	Sales staff, at the end of each quarter and at the end of the financial year
	
	All staff, at times of new legislation
	
	All staff, dealing with difficult clients
		■ Understanding what work-related stress is and what can cause it
		■ Responding to a pattern of increased absence due to work-related stress
		■ Checking fit notes, and talking to employees
		■ Looking for signs of stress in employees
		■ Talking to employees
			■ Meeting with staff and clients to agree timings etc for projects
			■ Monitoring workloads
			■ Planning work to minimise excessive demands
			■ Taking on extra resource to support end of year work
			■ Talking to employees regularly to gather information, directly or via line managers
			■ Employees being encouraged to talk to line managers about upcoming leave etc and potential difficulties with workload
			■ People may not identify time off sick as stress so thinking about whether:
			  - there is an area/job that has high amounts of absence
			  - employees complain about working in a particular area or doing a particular job			

Control	All staff, in economic downturns Junior grades, who have less control	■ Talking to staff about how they feel about their work ■ Giving staff own areas of responsibility	■ Staff survey ■ Anonymous 'vox box' for comments ■ Using the results of surveys and your risk assessment with employees – asking what they think can be done and feeding back on these issues and ideas			
Support	All staff	■ Training managers in spotting early signs of stress ■ Providing details of counselling services for staff ■ Staff can talk to supervisors or managers if they are feeling stressed at work	■ Training managers in how to support staff suffering from work-related stress ■ Having a clear commitment to employee wellbeing and a culture of openness			

Line Manager Competency Tool

Stress management competency indicator tool

How effective are you at preventing and reducing stress in your staff?

Use the following questionnaire to assess your behaviour

AREA 1 -   Respectful and Responsible: Managing Emotions and having Integrity

AREA 2 -   Managing and Communicating existing and future work

AREA 3 -   Managing the Individual within the Team

AREA 4 -   Reasoning/Managing difficult situations

Line Manager Competency Tool

AREA 1
RESPECTFUL AND RESPONSIBLE: MANAGING EMOTIONS AND HAVING INTEGRITY

Behaviour/Competency	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Integrity					
I am a good role model					
I treat my team members with respect					
I am honest					
I do what I say I will do					
I never speak about team members behind their backs					
Managing Emotions					
I act calmly in pressured situations					
I take a consistent approach to managing					
My moods are predictable					
I don't pass on my stress to my team					

Line Manager Competency Tool

You have now calculated a percentage score for each of the four behavioural areas (or three behavioural areas if you are not measuring your ability to manage difficult situations) that have been identified as important for preventing and reducing stress at work. In order to interpret what these scores mean, use the following guidelines:

75% or below = Development Need: This is an area in which you would benefit from some development. Please refer to back to the questionnaire to explore which of the behaviours you could consider using more often in the future in order to be more effective at preventing and reducing stress in your team.

76% to 89% = Reasonable: You show a good awareness of the behaviours needed for effectively preventing and reducing stress in others. It may be helpful to refer back to the questionnaire to see if there are any behaviours you could add to your repertoire in this area to increase your effectiveness in managing stress in others.

90% and above = Effective: You demonstrate the behaviours that have been shown to be effective in preventing and reducing stress in your team.

Your 'Stress management competence' profile:
Fill in each of the right hand columns. In the effectiveness column, add 'Development Need', 'Reasonable' or 'Effective' using the guidance above.

Talking Toolkit

Tool for Line Managers

- Conversation One: Demands
- Conversation Two: Control
- Conversation Three: Support
- Conversation Four: Relationships
- Conversation Five: Role
- Conversation Six: Change

Talking Toolkit

Series of questions to explore the issues across each of the six drivers.

Series of suggestions of actions that might help.

Specific Toolkits:

Construction   Education

NHS England   Welsh Language

Talking Toolkit

Conversation One: **Demands**

How your employee should feel	• They are able to cope with the demands of their job. • They are provided with achievable demands in relation to the hours they work. • Their skills and abilities are matched to the demands of their job. • Concerns about their work environment are addressed.

Go through the following questions with your employee or team.

Does your workload feel achievable? Think about which tasks take up the most time and how your organisation, team or department copes at busy times.

Do you feel the priorities/deadlines you are given are realistic? Do you often have conflicting priorities?

Have you got the necessary skills, experience and training to carry out the core functions of your job?

Working patterns

● Allow regular breaks, especially when the work is complex or emotionally demanding.

● Consider changes to start and end times to help employees cope with pressures outside work, like childcare or commuting.

Workload

● Hold regular meetings, both with individuals and as a team, to discuss anticipated workloads (and to deal with any predicted busy times).

● Provide training to help employees prioritise.

● Develop a system to notify employees of unplanned tight deadlines and any exceptional need to work long hours.

● Identify blocks of time to allow for genuine collaborative planning.

● If you're a team leader or supervisor, learn to say no to work if your team is already at full capacity.

● Consider the introduction of a work/life balance policy.

Environment

● Assess the risk and impact of other potential hazards and take steps to deal with them by consulting with employees and others. For example, to deal with the potential hazard of violence and aggression, you could seek advice from the police or a specialist charity.

● Provide training to help employees deal with and defuse difficult situations.

● Take steps to reduce unwanted distraction, disturbance and noise levels.

What causes you to feel stressed at work?

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What are the signs that you're stressed?

Stress Container

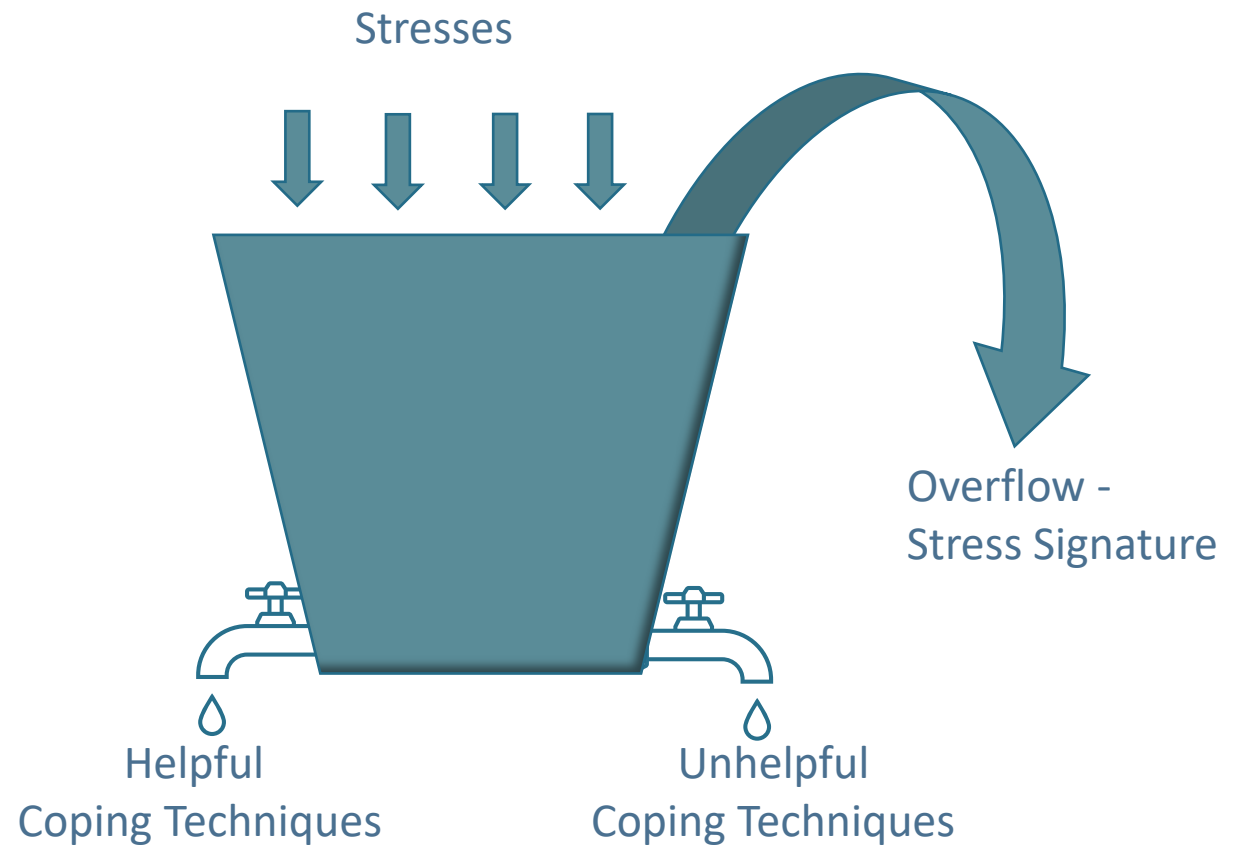Consider what your work-related stressors are?

Control
Demands
Support
Role
Relationships
Change

Stresses

Overflow - Stress Signature

Helpful Coping Techniques

Unhelpful Coping Techniques

So, what can we do as VR professionals?

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- Policies
- Lead by example – self-care
- Be proactive in discussions
- Understand causes of stress
- Help organisations understand tools and Risk Assessments
- Know where to signpost for information

HSE Resources

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- 6 Drivers of Work-related Stress
- Stress Risk Assessments
- Line Manage Competency Indicator Tool
- Talking Toolkit
- Stress Container – not HSE specific

Thank you for listening and participating

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