Blackmores

ISO 45003:2021 WHITEPAPER

PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

GUIDELINES FOR MANAGEMENT PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS

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WHAT IS ISO 45003?

ISO 45003 has been published to provide guidance on the management of psychosocial risks and promoting well-being at work. Intended to be used together with ISO 45001 as part of an occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system, the guidelines are suitable for all sectors and types of organisations.

It defines Psychosocial risk as 'combination of the likelihood of occurrence of exposure to work-related hazard(s) of a psychosocial nature and the severity of injury that can be caused by these hazard(s)'.

ISO 45003 is a guidance standard only. It is intended to complement the requirements in ISO 45001 and guide organisations on how to address OH&S issues relating to psychological health within their general OH&S management system.

THE AIM AND INTENDED OUTCOMES OF AN OH&S MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IS TO PREVENT WORK-RELATED INJURY AND ILL HEALTH TO WORKERS, AND TO PROVIDE SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKPLACES.

Therefore, it is critically important for the organisation to eliminate hazards and minimise OH&S risks by taking effective preventive and protective measures, which include measures to manage psychosocial risks. Psychosocial hazards are increasingly recognized as major challenges to health, safety, and well-being at work.

Psychosocial hazards

Psychosocial hazards relate to how work is organized, social factors at work and aspects of the work environment, equipment, and hazardous tasks. Psychosocial hazards can be present in all organisations and sectors, and from all kinds of work tasks, equipment, and employment arrangements. They can occur in combination with one another and can influence and be influenced by other hazards. Psychosocial risk relates to the potential of these types of hazards to cause several types of outcomes on individual health and safety and well-being and on organisational performance and sustainability. It is important that psychosocial risks are managed in a manner consistent with other OH&S risks, through an OH&S management system, and integrated into the organisation's broader business processes.

Psychosocial risks affect both psychological health and safety, health and safety and well-being at work more broadly. Psychosocial risks are also associated with economic costs to organisations and society.

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

Psychosocial risks can have a negative or, where managed, a positive impact;

Negative outcomes for workers can include:

- Poor health and associated conditions
- Cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, diabetes, anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, and associated health behaviours
- Substance abuse, unhealthy eating
- Reduction in job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity

Negative outcomes (impact) for the organisation:

- Includes increased costs due to absence from work
- Turnover
- Reduced turnover or service quality
- Increased recruitment and retraining costs
- Workplace investigations and litigation
- Damage to the organisation's reputation

Positive outcomes for worker and organisation:

- Improved job satisfaction
- Improved worker engagement
- Increased productivity
- Increased innovation
- Organisational sustainability can be achieved

Although there are numerous factors that can determine the nature and severity of psychosocial risks, organisations have a significant role to play in eliminating hazards or minimising risk, with both the organisation and workers sharing the responsibility for maintaining and improving health, safety and well-being at work.

ISO 45003 outlines examples of psychosocial hazards arising from work organisations, social factors and work environment, equipment, and hazardous tasks, as well as a range of control measures that can be used to eliminate hazards or minimise associated risks. As organisations are responsible for identifying hazards and minimising the risks associate with them, successful psychosocial risk management depends on the commitment from all levels and functions within the organisation, from top management and through the participation of workers.

PSYCHOSOCIAL HAZARDS

It is recognised that psychological health, safety and well-being are not always fully addressed within OH&S management. The standard is designed to help organisations better understand and address these aspects of OH&S management so that their system covers all aspects of health and safety, not just those that are more familiar and seen as simpler to address.

As with any risk management system, all workers within an organisation need to play an active part in making it a success. Often a particular 'function' within an organisation will lead implementation, this varies between organisations. As ISO 45003 is designed to support ISO 45001, for many organisations the safety team may lead implementation, for others it may be the HR team, or even the quality team. Whichever function 'leads' it will be essential for health and safety teams and HR in particular, to work closely together, as many of the recommendations in ISO 45003 will need to draw on health and safety AND HR expertise.

KEY ENHANCEMENTS ON CLAUSES TO SUPPORT ISO45001

Clause 4.1 Understanding the organisation and its context

When identifying internal and external issues, the organisation should also consider psychosocial risks.

External issues can include:

- Supply chain in which organisation operates, psychosocial hazards and risks can be through time pressure, schedules, or production pressure
- Relationships with contractors, subcontractors, suppliers, providers and other interested parties
- Shared workplaces, resources and equipment
- Customer and/or client requirements for service, delivery, production
- Economic conditions that can affect availability, duration and location of work
- Work contracts, remuneration, employment conditions and industrial relations
- Demographic of workers e.g. young or aging, increasing retirement ages, gender
- Rapid technological changes
- Labour force mobility creating greater diversity among workers with different backgrounds and cultures
- Geographical regions, including social, economic and public health issues e.g. pandemics, natural disasters, financial crises

CLAUSE 4.1 UNDERSTANDING THE ORGANISATION AND ITS CONTEXT

Internal issues can include:

- The organisational structure and management, roles and responsibilities, the effectiveness and efficiency of formal / informal decision-making processes, organisational culture, management style, communication style, respect for privacy
- Organisational commitment and direction with respect to psychosocial health, safety and well-being, set out in policy statements, guidelines, objectives and strategies
- Size and nature of the workforce
- Characteristics of workers and the workforce, e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, language, literacy and numeracy
- Competence of workers to recognise psychosocial hazards and manage risks
- Locations of work, e.g. itinerant workforce without a fixed workplace, remote working, working at home, working in isolation or in remote locations
- Workers' terms and conditions e.g. flexible working, compensation and benefits, part-time, casual or temporary workforce
- Adequacy and availability of resources

Clause 4.2 Understanding the needs and expectations of workers and other interested parties

Psychosocial risk(s) and their influence should be understood by the organisation in relation to the needs and expectations of workers and other interested parties. These could include:

- Financial security
- Social interaction and support
- Inclusion, recognition, reward and accomplishment
- Personal development and growth
- Equal opportunity and fair treatment at work.
- Further consideration related to needs and expectations can be through legal requirements e.g. OH&S and human rights legislation.

Clause 6.1.2 Hazard identification and assessment of risks and opportunities

ISO 45001 requires organisations to establish, implement and maintain process(es) for hazard identification that is ongoing and proactive. ISO45003 expands this and recommends that organisations should;

Understand underlying sources of harm before control measures are considered to improve the effectiveness of activities to manage psychosocial risk.

Without identifying and understanding these sources, psychosocial risks may not be adequately managed.

CLAUSE 6.1.2 HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The following list of hazards relating to psychosocial risks can provide guidance when undertaking mental health and wellbeing risk assessments. The guidance is based around three subject areas:

- Aspects of how work is organised
- Social Factors at Work
- Work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks

HOW WORK IS ORGANISED

Roles and expectations
- Role ambiguity
- Role conflict
- Duty of care for other people
- Scenarios where workers do not have clear guidelines on the tasks they are expected to do (and not do)
- Expectations within a role that undermine one another (e.g. being expected to provide good customer service, but also to not spend a long time with customers)
- Uncertainty about, or frequent changes to, tasks and work standards
- Performing work of little value or purpose

Job control or autonomy
- Limited opportunity to participate in decision-making
- Lack of control over workload
- Low levels of influence and independence (e.g. not being able to influence the speed, order or schedule of work tasks and workload)

Job demands
- Underuse of skills
- Continual work exposure to interaction with people (e.g. the public, customers, students, patients)
- Having too much to do within a certain time or with a set number of workers
- Conflicting demands and deadlines
- Unrealistic expectations of a worker's competence or responsibilities
- Lack of task variety or performing highly repetitive tasks
- Fragmented or meaningless work
- Requirements for excessive periods of alertness and concentration
- Working with aggressive or distressed people
- Exposure to events or situations that can cause trauma

Organisational Change Management
- Lack of practical support provided to assist workers during transition periods
- Prolonged or recurring restructuring
- Lack of consultation and communication about workplace changes, or consultation and communication which is of poor quality, untimely or not meaningful

HOW WORK IS ORGANISED

Remote and isolated work
- Working in locations that are far from home, family, friends and usual support networks (e.g. isolated working or "fly-in-fly-out" work arrangements)
- Working alone in non-remote locations without social/human interaction at work (e.g. working at home,)
- Working in private homes (e.g. providing care or domestic roles in other people's homes)

Workload and work pace
- Work overload or underload
- High levels of time pressure
- Continually subject to deadlines
- Machine pacing
- High level of repetitive work

Working hours and schedule
- Lack of variety of work
- Shift work
- Inflexible work schedules
- Unpredictable hours
- Long or unsociable hours
- Fragmented work or work that is not meaningful
- Continual requirements to complete work at short notice

Job security and precarious work
- Uncertainty regarding work availability, including work without set hours
- Possibility of redundancy or temporary loss of work with reduced pay
- Low-paid or insecure employment, including non-standard employment
- Working in situations that are not properly covered or protected by labour law or social protection

SOCIAL FACTORS

Interpersonal relationships
- Poor communication, including poor information sharing
- Poor relationships between managers, supervisors, co-workers, and clients or others that workers interact with
- Interpersonal conflict
- Harassment, bullying, victimization (including using electronic tools such as email and social media), third-party violence
- Lack of social support
- Unequal power relationships between dominant and non-dominant groups of workers
- Social or physical isolation

SOCIAL FACTORS

Leadership

- Lack of clear vision and objectives
- Management style unsuited to the nature of the work and its demand
- Failing to listen or only casually listening to complaints and suggestions
- Withholding information
- Providing inadequate communication and support
- Lack of accountability
- Lack of fairness
- Inconsistent and poor decision-making practices
- Abuse or misuse of power

Organizational/workgroup culture

- Poor communication
- Low levels of support for problem-solving and personal development
- Lack of definition of, or agreement on, organisational objectives
- Inconsistent and untimely application of policies and procedures, unfair decision-making
- Recognition and reward
- Imbalance between workers' effort and formal and informal recognition and reward
- Lack of appropriate acknowledgement and appreciation of workers' efforts in a fair and timely manner

Career development

- Career stagnation and uncertainty, under-promotion or over-promotion, lack of opportunity for skill development

Support

- Lack of support from supervisors and co-workers
- Lack of access to support services
- Lack of information/training to support work performance

Supervision

- Lack of constructive performance feedback and evaluation processes
- Lack of encouragement/acknowledgement
- Lack of communication
- Lack of shared organisational vision and clear objectives
- Lack of support and/or resources to facilitate improvements in performance
- Lack of fairness
- Misuse of digital surveillance

Civility and respect

- Lack of trust, honesty, respect, civility and fairness
- Lack of respect and consideration in interactions among workers, as well as with customers, clients and the public

SOCIAL FACTORS

Work/life balance
- Work tasks, roles, schedules or expectations that cause workers to continue working in their own time
- Conflicting demands of work and home
- Work that impacts the workers' ability to recover

Violence at work
- Incidents involving an explicit or implicit challenge to health, safety or well-being at work; violence can be internal, external or client initiated, e.g.:
- Abuse
- Threats
- Assault (physical, verbal or sexual)
- Gender-based violence

Harassment
Unwanted, offensive, intimidating behaviours (sexual or non-sexual in nature) which relate to one or more specific characteristic of the targeted individual, e.g.

- Race
- Gender identity
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Age

Bullying and victimization
Repeated (more than once) unreasonable behaviours which can present a risk to health, safety and well-being at work; behaviours can be overt or covert, e.g.

- Social or physical isolation
- Assigning meaningless or unfavourable tasks
- Name-calling, insults and intimidation
- Undermining behaviour
- Undue public criticism
- Withholding information or resources critical for one's job
- Malicious rumours or gossiping
- Assigning impossible deadlines

WORK ENVIRONMENT, EQUIPMENT AND HAZARDOUS TASKS

Work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks

- Inadequate equipment availability, suitability, reliability, maintenance or repair
- Poor workplace conditions such as lack of space, poor lighting and excessive noise
- Lack of the necessary tools, equipment or other resources to complete work tasks
- Working in extreme conditions or situations, such as very high or low temperatures, or at height
- Working in unstable environments such as conflict zones

How can we identify psychological hazards in our workplaces?

There are several ways that the organization can identify psychosocial hazards, this can include (but not limited to):

- Through reviews of job descriptions
- Analysing tasks, schedules and locations
- Consulting with workers, clients and other interested parties
- Analysing performance evaluations, worker surveys, standardized questionnaires, audits, etc.

CLAUSE 8.3 REHABILITATION AND RETURN TO WORK

Rehabilitation and return-to-work programmes aim to provide appropriate support to workers experiencing negative impact of exposure to psychosocial hazards, including where this has resulted in absence from work.

These programmes should take into account the workers that can be at increased potential for exposure to psychosocial risks as part of the return-to-work process, e.g. work adjustments to facilitate return to work can result in changes to work tasks, relationships and social interactions, supervision, work culture, and perceptions of achievement and value at work.

No matter the reason for absence, returning to work can result in an increase of psychosocial risk. A system that maintains confidentiality, support and respect, can encourage early reporting of issues that negatively affect workers.

ISO 45003 identifies some examples of measures to improve rehabilitation and return to work;

- Providing access to, or information about general occupation health services (internal or external to the organisation)
- Providing access to, or information about confidential debriefing, counselling services, conflict mediation services, access to relevant assessments, etc.
- Talking with affected worker to understand and plan for reasonable work adjustments to support return to work

CLAUSE 8.3 REHABILITATION AND RETURN TO WORK

- Ensuring workers with management roles are competent to manage the impact of exposure to psychosocial hazards and understand applicable legal requirements and other requirements as workers return to work
- Regularly monitor rehabilitation and return to work programmes for new or previously unidentified risks
- Consult with other interested parties, including occupational health professionals, in managing the return-to-work process

Psychosocial risks of returning to the office / workplace normality

Following the global impact of Covid-19 organisations should consider the psychosocial risks associated with returning to the office, or permanent places of work. This can include any changes to layouts to the office and working arrangements.

It is important to be clear with communications on what to expect and how it will all work. Induction training and management communication with individuals to identify and understand any concerns whilst also working together to address them will be important.

A clear process should be set up to ensure individuals can talk to their line manager, or other appropriate person, to discuss specific concerns and work together to address them.

PSYCHOSOCIAL (MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING) HAZARDS FOR CONSIDERATION IN RISK ASSESSMENTS

At work, many situations (basic through to complex) are risk assessed, however, many assessments fail in relation to causes of psychological problems.

Is the work the issue, or is it perceived that the work is causing or making a situation worse? The actual cause may be different or a combination of factors. The understanding of whether work is the cause or a contributary factor, and/or if the cause is outside of work, is important to determine support and controls required.
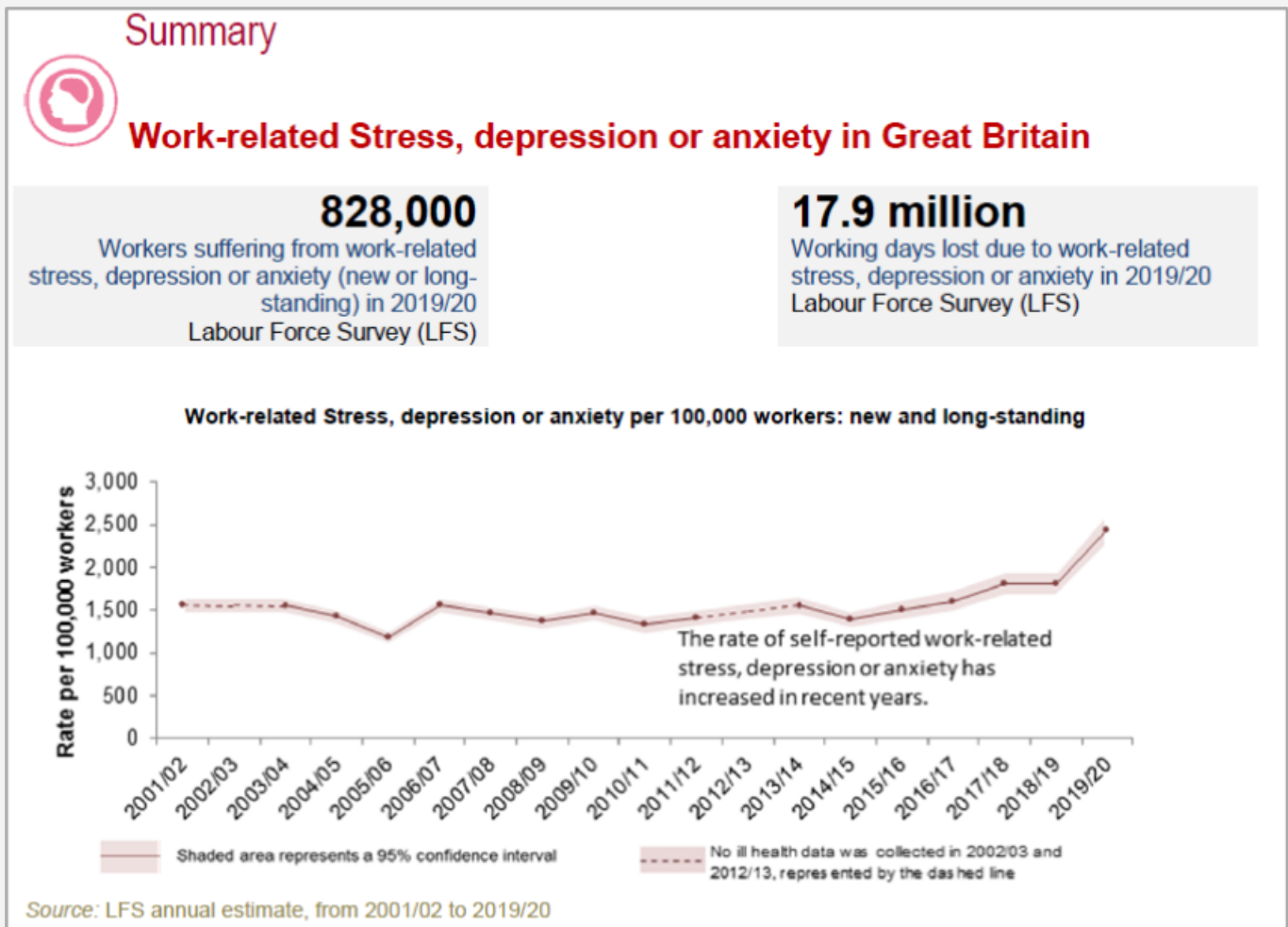
As work-related stress continues to be a significant issue within the workplace. The HSE defines stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them', and states:

Every employer has a legal duty to assess and protect employees from work-related stress under the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999.

Stress is a major cause of sickness absence in the workplace and costs over £5 billion a year in Great Britain. It affects individuals, their families and colleagues by impacting on their health, but it also has tremendous financial and operational impacts for employers

PSYCHOSOCIAL (MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING) HAZARDS FOR CONSIDERATION IN RISK ASSESSMENTS

The HSE has published statistics for work-related stress:

Summary

Work-related Stress, depression or anxiety in Great Britain

828,000
Workers suffering from work-related stress, depression or anxiety (new or long-standing) in 2019/20
Labour Force Survey (LFS)

17.9 million
Working days lost due to work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2019/20
Labour Force Survey (LFS)

Work-related Stress, depression or anxiety per 100,000 workers: new and long-standing

The rate of self-reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety has increased in recent years.

Shaded area represents a 95% confidence interval

No ill health data was collected in 2002/03 and 2012/13, represented by the dashed line

Source: LFS annual estimate, from 2001/02 to 2019/20

Source: https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress.pdf

Identification of who could be harmed or at risk of harm psychologically can be complex, with varying factors, including (but not limited to):

- Age
- Personality and psychosocial factors
- Sleep
- Medical condition of oneself or other(s) close to the individual
- The activity – type, frequency and duration
- Relationships (work and non-work)
- Financial
- Lifestyle

There is no single way to manage and reduce stress, every business has their own challenges that requires understanding of the issues to support any reduction in psychosocial risk, i.e 'what works for one person, may not work for another'.

PSYCHOSOCIAL (MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING) HAZARDS FOR CONSIDERATION IN RISK ASSESSMENTS

- Mental health can influence how we think and feel about ourselves and others as well as we interpret events
- Affects our capacity to learn, communicate and to form, sustain and end relationships, influencing our ability to cope with change, transition and life events
- Good mental health is as important as good physical health to our life and wellbeing
- Work plays an important part in our health (both physical and mental). People who are in work are, overall, healthier and happier. But sometimes work can have a negative impact on our health
- At work we should aim to create an environment which fosters good mental health and eliminates or minimises a work environment which can have a negative impact on mental health.

SIGNS OF EXPOSURE TO PSYCHOSOCIAL RISK

- Changes in behaviour
- Social isolation or withdrawal, refusing offers of help or neglecting personal well-being needs
- Increased absence from work or coming to work when ill
- Lack of engagement
- Reduced energy
- High staff turnover
- Low quality performance or failure to complete tasks/assignments on time (presenteeism)
- Reduced desire to work with others
- Conflicts, lack of willingness to co-operate, and bullying
- Increased frequency of incidents or errors

ISO 45003 SUMMARY

Complements ISO 45001.

Can be used with or without ISO 45001 (but OH&S MS approach needed)

ISO 45003 recognises that psychological health and safety are not always fully addressed within OH&S management.

It includes:

- Information on how to recognize the psychosocial hazards that can affect workers (with 3 tables of examples)
- Offers examples of effective, often simple, actions that can be taken to manage these
- Actions based on a hierarchy of prevention

RESOURCES:

ISO45003:2021 Occupational health and safety management – Psychological health and safety at work – Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks

HSE – HSE Stress Indicator Tool

Mental Health UK – https://mentalhealth-uk.org/

Mind – https://www.mind.org.uk/

Samaritans - https://www.samaritans.org/