

2 May 2012

Re: Freedom of Information request – 12/0546

Thank you for your recent correspondence. You have requested the following information:

1. How many full-time equivalent staff were employed by the department in (i) 2008/9 (ii) 2009/10; (iii) 2010/11; and (iv) the latest date for which figures are available?
2. How many staff have been absent from work because of stress or stress-related illnesses in (i) 2008/9 (ii) 2009/10; (iii) 2010/11; and (iv) 2011/12 to date?
3. How much was been spent on producing guidance for staff on dealing with or avoiding stress in (i) 2008/9 (ii) 2009/10; (iii) 2010/11; and (iv) 2011/12 to date?
4. I also request a copy of the most recent publication or online guidance issued to staff on dealing with or avoiding stress.

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the Act'), in which you have the right to:

- know whether we hold the information you have requested and;
- be provided with that information (subject to any exemptions under the Act which may apply).

Staff in post

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) was created in October 2008, to bring together energy policy (previously with BERR, which is now BIS - the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills), and climate change mitigation policy (previously with DEFRA - the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs).

The number of staff employed by DECC is shown in our Annual Resource accounts which are available on our [website](#). For the number of staff in 2008/9 please follow [this link](#) (chapter 6, para 9 on page 25); for 2009/10 please follow [this link](#) (page 147 of 187, Table 6) and for 2010/11 please follow [this link](#) (Chapter 6, Table 5 on page 180). Our current staff in post information is published on a monthly basis and can be viewed by following [this link](#).

Absence due to Stress or Stress related illness

Stress is a symptom that is recorded as part of a wider generic heading. Therefore the totals shown in the table below form part of that larger grouping. If you require data on other stress related illnesses can you please specify these so that we can research further.

Symptom	Generic classification	Reporting period	Number of people absent
Stress	Mental Disorders	1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011	31
		1 Jan 2011 – 31 Dec 2011	27

In the immediate period following the creation of DECC in Oct 2008, the recording and categorisation of absence data was not maintained to the level of detail that you have requested. Therefore we are not able provide data prior to 1 April 2010. The data shown above is the most recent full year information available.

Expenditure on staff guidance on Stress or Stress related illness

The information that you have requested is not held centrally so I regret that we are unable to provide that for you. However an example of a recent initiatives includes a) a presentation by Stress Management Society at a cost of £540 (in year ending March 2012). This presentation gave information on the positive and negative aspects of stress and how it can be managed and b) a stress e-learning package which incorporated a resilience training package and survey for a 1,000 users at a cost of £2.75 per user (in year ending March 2012).

Current guidance on Stress or Stress related illness

All of our guidance is presented on our Intranet and readily available to staff. As this is not available to you a copy of the relevant pages is attached at [Annex A](#) for your information.

If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information, you may request an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this email. If you wish to request an internal review, please contact us.

Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioners Office
 Wycliffe House
 Water Lane
 Wilmslow

Cheshire
SK9 5AF.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely

Stress at Work – Intranet pages

Stress at Work

DECC is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. The Department recognises that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

Definition of stress

The Health and Safety Executive define stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health.

A little bit of pressure can:

- increase productivity
- be motivating
- improve performance.

However, too much pressure, or prolonged pressure can lead to stress, which is unhealthy for the mind and body. It can cause symptoms such as:

- difficulty sleeping
- sweating
- lack of appetite
- difficulty concentrating.

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

The [Employee Assistance Programme](#) is a dedicated information and counselling support service for you and can offer help and assistance for those who may feel they are suffering from adverse levels of stress.

- [Useful information from the NHS](#)

Health and Safety Executive

The [Health and Safety Executive](#) website contains comprehensive information to assist in reducing and tackling work related stress.

DECC has a legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to minimise the risk of stress-related illness or injury to employees.

Page under development - for further information please contact

Managing Personal Stress

A one day course to share change experiences and learn techniques to manage personal stress.

Further details on the [DECC Learning](#) pages.

Link to staff handbook for [information on stress](#)

Stress in the Workplace

See also the [Stress at Work](#) page in the *Health, Safety & Well-being* section.

The Department is committed to developing and maintaining a work environment which promotes the health and well-being for everyone. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

Principles

The following principles underpin the management of stress in the workplace:

- Raising Awareness - line management and individuals are responsible for recognising and dealing with stress.
- Constructive and Supportive approach - everyone is effectively supported in the workplace.
- Fairness - the need to be fair to everyone involved.
- Timely management - problems will be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Scope

This applies to everyone in the Department.

What is stress?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) define stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress which can be detrimental to health. Example situations in which you may become stressed include rushing to catch a train, speaking in public, increased tension between colleagues at work, if you are new to a job or affected by restructuring.

The most common causes of stress – see below - involve work, relationships with partners or other family members and money matters. Stress may be caused by major life events such as bereavement, divorce, moving house, change of job, or by a series of minor setbacks. Sometimes there are no obvious causes. The pressures of day-to-day life can lead to stress if they are excessive or long-term.

Some moderate stress can be positive and makes us perform better. It also makes us more alert and can help us in challenging situations such as job interviews or public speaking. Stressful situations can also be invigorating for those who thrive on the excitement that comes with dangerous sports or other 'high-risk' activities.

The HSE have published National Management Standards for work-related stress, which provide guidance on best practice - see Health and Safety Executive Management [Standards for Work-Related Stress](#)

Who is affected by stress?

We all may have felt stressed or anxious at some time or other. Some people seem to be more affected by stress than others. For some people, just getting out of the door on time each morning can be a very stressful experience. It can depend on your personality type and on how you have learned to respond to pressure.

Some people can become so used to the symptoms of excessive stress that it goes unnoticed to their detriment.

Work related stress

Most work-related stress is related to management of work, relationships at work, organisational set-up and whether you feel you have any control in your work.

How to recognise someone under stress in the work place

If recognised early many personal problems can be resolved effectively with least disruption to the individual's work and private life.

Here are some early warning signs that might suggest that a member of staff is under excess stress.

- High level of absenteeism, lateness or sickness.
- High level of mistakes or errors, loss of performance.
- Obvious anxiety or tension.
- Uncooperative behaviour.
- Excessive anger at minor irritations.
- Clashes with colleagues.
- A fatigued, weary or despondent air.
- Inability to focus on the job at hand.
- Hyperactivity, inability to relax or slow down.
- Lack of care for personal appearance.

Triggers or causes of stress at work

- Perceived Work overload.
- Concerns about job security (fear of redundancy etc.).
- Lack of expected career progress.
- Long or unsocial hours, being "on call", working to tight deadlines.

- Conflict between work and home demands.
- Workplace bullying or tension/conflict between colleagues.
- Uncertainty of work requirements/lack of communication

Personal or family stresses may spill over into work e.g.

- Death of a partner, family member or close friend.
- Divorce or separation.
- Serious illness of self, a family member or friend.
- Financial difficulties.
- Relationship problems or lack of support outside work.
- Moving home.

Managing stress at work: Line managers

As an integral part of management responsibility, managers will be able to identify and assess the potential risk arising from stressful situations within the workplace. Stress can lead to deterioration in performance so it is in everyone's interest that you take action promptly. Ignoring the issue in the hope that it will go away is likely to make matters worse.

Your role as line manager

Managers are not expected to be experts on stress. Best management practice includes being approachable, supportive and leading by example, and will assist with identifying and dealing with stress problems. Take time to support staff at an early stage and maintain a sense of balance and proportion.

There will inevitably be occasions where managers need to handle stress issues alongside other issues, for example poor performance.

Taking time to identify and monitor the Signs of stress may help point to an early indication of a stress problem; recognising and dealing with these difficulties at an early stage will benefit everyone.

What to do if a member of your staff feels they are suffering from stress

- Encourage them to talk.
- Listen to what they have to say; they may simply need to share their problems.
- Discuss the best course of action.
- Reassure them that what they say will be treated in confidence.
- Show an on-going interest by checking regularly how they are.

If it is a workplace problem there could be a number of causes for example, high or low workloads, lack of training, poor relationships, frustration or boredom - the list goes on. Consider what you might reasonably do to improve the situation and then do it.

For example, think about:

- whether the workload could be reduced or changed
- whether the individual would benefit from additional training or from having a mentor
- a risk assessment or a referral to the Department's Medical Adviser
- whether you could help improve relationships at work.

Some of the suggestions offered above may have an impact on others and you need to consider how you would manage the consequences of any action. Once you have agreed on a plan of action, set out a realistic timescale, with regular reviews to monitor and assess progress.

Seek help and advice from the sources available to you through HR and/or the Employee Assistance Programme.

Remember that you are not expected to resolve personal problems, only to support your member of staff. The important thing is that staff feel that their problem has been taken seriously and that you care.

Keeping the record straight

It is important to keep a record of any action agreed or changes you make in the workplace to help the individual cope with or overcome a problem - without recorded sensitive personal details.

If there has been a fall in performance, keeping records is even more crucial. Share the record with the individual.

Good practice checklist for managers

The following are just some examples of good practice in reducing or managing stress. It is a comprehensive but not exhaustive list.

If you are a manager you should:

- know your staff and spot changes in their personality or behaviour
- treat people fairly and with respect
- be supportive and approachable, listen to concerns
- be honest and open in explaining decisions
- keep work loads under control and fairly distributed
- equip staff with skills, training and resources for the jobs they do

- encourage staff to take breaks and use their annual leave allowance
- look out for symptoms of stress in your staff - physical, emotional or behavioural

If you identify problems associated with stress

- Take prompt action to remove or reduce the cause of stress, if possible.
- Be sensitive and sympathetic and encourage staff to discuss symptoms and causes constructively.
- If appropriate encourage staff to seek medical advice from their GP and remind them of the services available from the Employee Assistance Programme and the Occupational Health Service.
- Check regularly on how they are doing.
- Remember your own well being and consider resources such as your own line manager and the Employee Assistance Programme who can provide help and guidance on a wide variety of management issues.

People returning from sick leave, especially from a stress-related illness, may be vulnerable. Make sure that you follow best practice in handling their rehabilitation into work.

People who are being bullied or harassed may suffer from stress. See the harassment and bullying section and make sure you know what to do.

Management Competencies for preventing and reducing stress at work

Research suggests that managers' behaviour can have a major impact on employees' stress levels affecting the well-being of employees and organisational performance. HSE's guidance on [Work related stress for line managers](#) sets out the behaviours you need to show to manage stress effectively in your staff.

Employee Assistance Programme

From time to time all of us encounter significant life events, or milestones, when some extra help and guidance can make all the difference. These Milestones can range from buying a home, to having children to dealing with bereavement or relationship difficulties. It may be that you would like to improve some aspect of your life, or achieve a better work-life balance. Most of us know when this additional support would be welcome, but knowing where to find it can be difficult. This is where the EAP can help.

What is the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)?

The EAP is a dedicated information and counselling support service for you, your family and those close to you.

Who provides the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)?

The EAP programme is available through an independent organisation, PPC Worldwide (PPC) who are external to DECC. With more than 30 years of experience, PPC Worldwide (PPC) provides information and practical help, as well as financial, legal and emotional support to help you resolve life's issues before they become problems—whether in relation to your work or personal life.

There is a confidential telephone service available 24 hours / 7 days a week that provides telephone and face-to-face counselling, legal/consumer advice, information on government benefits, debt management, eldercare, childcare and much more. These services are for both work-related and domestic issues.

PPC has a comprehensive team of trained and qualified professionals who are experienced in helping people with a wide range of issues. Specialist information, advice and support can be given over the telephone or via the web.

How confidential is the service?

Because your privacy is important, contact with the service is confidential (in accordance with all relevant professional and legal standards). The information you share with the provider is at your discretion, and it will not be disclosed by them without your permission. Unless you choose to tell your colleagues at work, no-one will be aware that you have used the service.

What services are provided by the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)?

Professionals are on hand to provide you with information and practical support relating to a vast range of issues, enabling you to tackle an issue before it becomes a problem. The range of services available includes:

- General citizens advice bureaux style advice and information
- Debt counselling
- Child and dependent care advice
- Specialist legal advice
- Specialist financial advice
- Telephone counselling
- Face-to-face counselling

If you're reluctant to call, you can visit their website where you'll have access to fact-sheets, links and self-help exercises on a wealth of subject areas, from dealing with money concerns such as debt, to health and well-being topics such as diet or giving up smoking, to dealing with personal issues such as the end of a relationship or bereavement. You'll need to log in using the dedicated username and password.

[Leaflets with further information for employees](#)

[Leaflets with further information for Managers](#)

Health, Safety & Well-being

See also the [Health, Safety & Well-being](#) pages

Level	Title	Intervention	Availability
1 Basic	Planning for a positive retirement	1 day course	Available now
	Internal Mentoring Scheme	Mentoring	Available now
	Corporate Induction	Half-day workshop	Available now
2 Proficient	Managing Personal Stress	1 day workshop	Available now
	The Mindful Employer - information and support in the recruitment and retention of staff	Information pack	Available now
	Supporting staff with a mental health condition - for line managers	Practical Guide	Available now

*These are part of the Civil Service Learning offering and should be available in 2012

Questions?

For further information contact DECC's Learning & Development consultant.