

Managing work demands



Most jobs have elements that are demanding, and a degree of challenge is essential to keep people motivated and fulfilled. However, unrealistic demands – where employees feel they don't have adequate time, resources or skills to complete tasks – are often a major contributor to work-related stress.

By regularly reviewing and managing workloads, deadlines and working schedules, employers can provide additional resources or solutions to avoid work pressures becoming overwhelming. Given that some roles are inherently demanding, managers should be aware of requirements for additional support.

Managing mental demands

Consider the following when employees are undertaking work that requires lengthy periods of

concentration or complex decision-making:

- Give employees the opportunity to determine the pace and order of tasks, and rotate tasks that require prolonged concentration.
- Ensure people have sufficient time to complete challenging tasks.
- Provide sufficient information to enable employees to perform tasks competently, including support for decision-making.
- Monitor progress and take on feedback, considering whether any changes are required.

Managing physical demands

- Manage environmental factors such as noise, vibration, lighting and equipment design
- Ensure initial training is adequate and regular retraining occurs
- Manage breaks and consider job rotation.

Managing emotional demands

If employees regularly deal with emotionally disturbing issues or are required to mask their emotions as part of their job, they may need extra support. Actions you can take include:

- Offer support to discuss concerns, workload and challenges.
- Provide training on managing difficult situations.
- Offer debriefing or regular supervision.
- Ensure clear processes and procedures around managing stressful situations.

Time pressures

- Where possible, work with employees to set achievable targets and timeframes, and review these regularly.
- Encourage employees to speak up at an early stage and raise any concerns over meeting deadlines.
- Plan for periods of peak demand such as holidays and increase staff resources.
- Avoid unplanned overtime. If extra hours are required to meet a deadline, give employees as much notice as possible.
- Encourage everyone to take regular breaks and promote a healthy work-life balance.

Enabling a level of control

Having a sense of autonomy and control at work contributes to job satisfaction and fulfilment. Consider what opportunities exist for employees to influence their work.