QPA

Providing Essential Materials
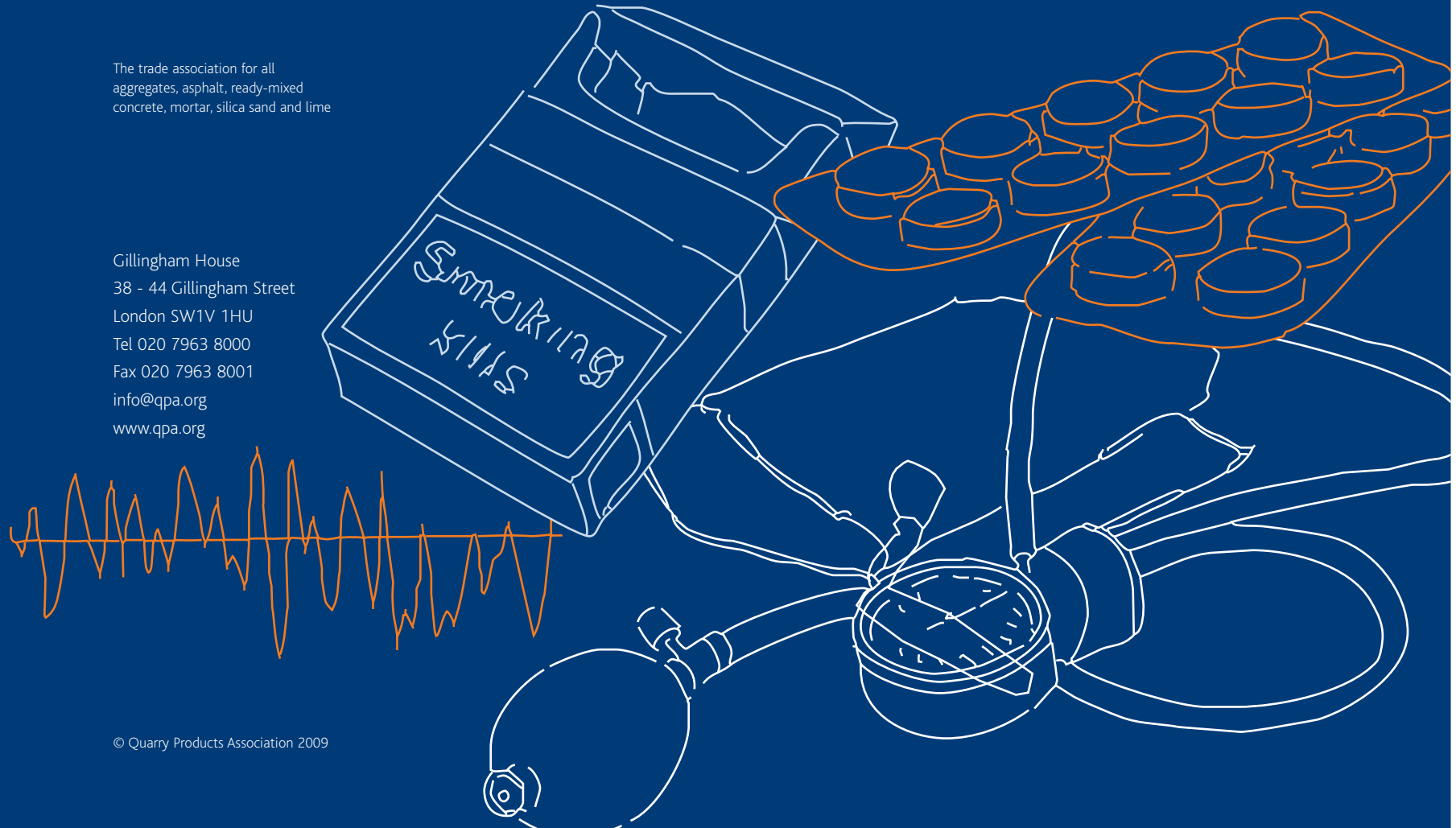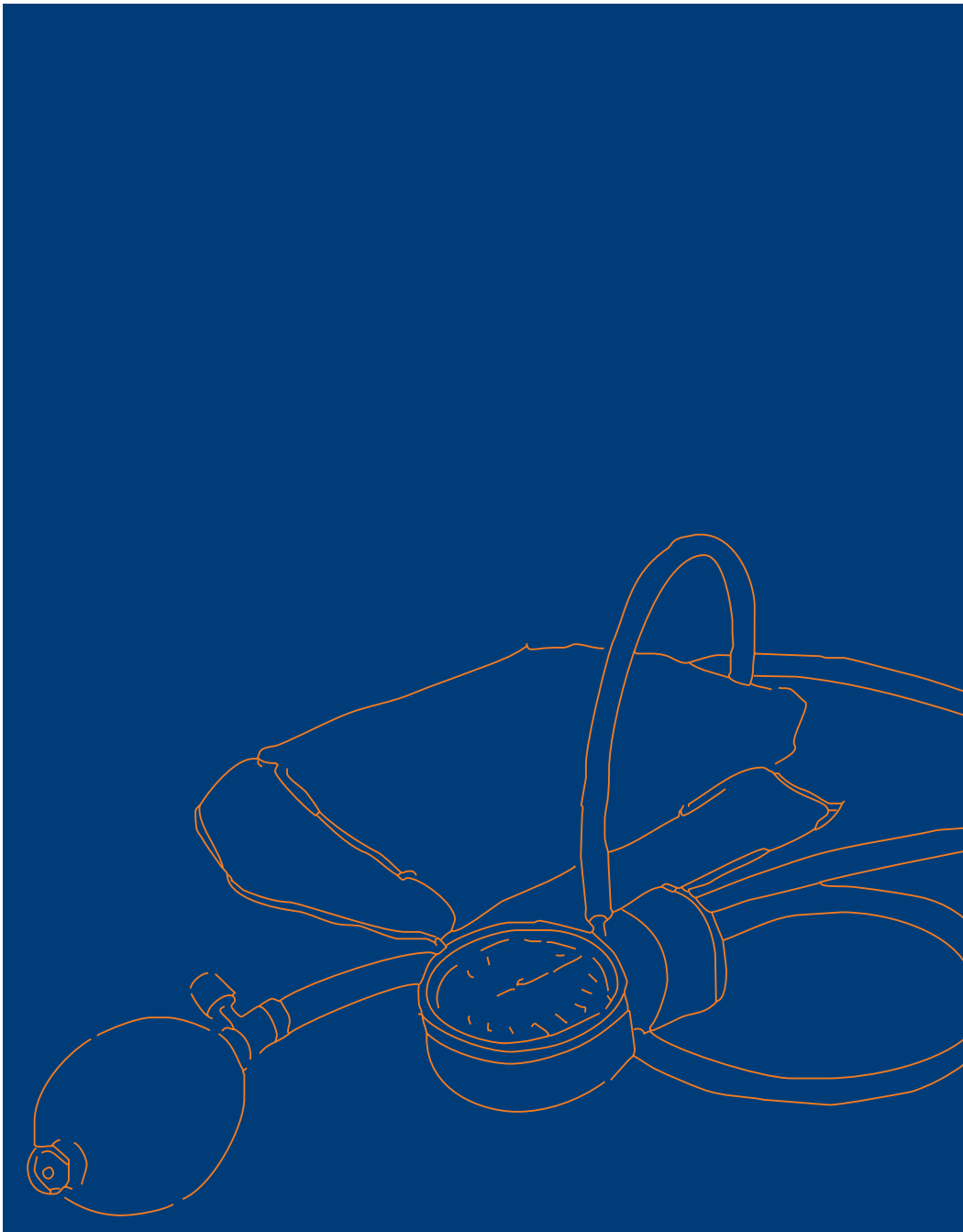
QPA Occupational Health Guidance

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Guidance for **Stress**

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Legal Requirements

"Fatigue" is common in jobs that require either relentless concentration or a high degree of stress. Widespread tiredness among the educated middle classes can be attributed to the pace of modern life.

Myths About Stress

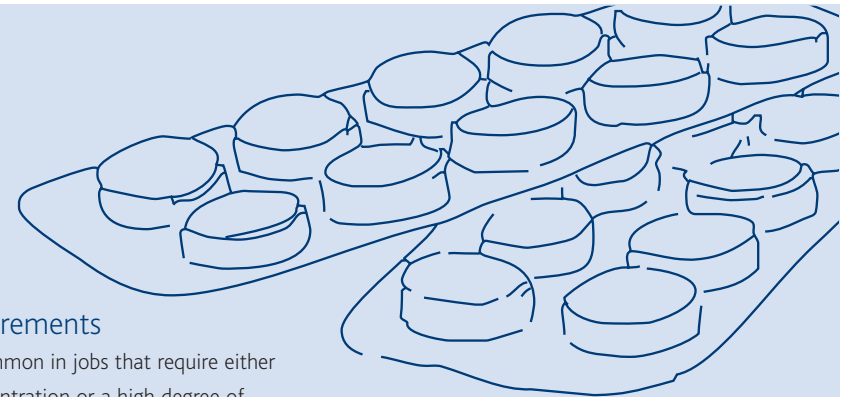Many people think it is a problem only experienced by "High Fliers".

Others see it as a sign of inability to cope or as a 'weakness'.

In these days of high job insecurity, it is not surprising that many employees avoid admitting the symptoms of Stress at Work.

The law requires employers to tackle work related stress.

Legal requirements are contained in:
• The Employment Rights Act 1996
• The Public Order Act 1986
• The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
• The Working Time Regulations 1998

• The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
• Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
• Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
• Reg 3 Duty to assess
• Reg 4 Duty to apply principle of prevention
• Reg 13 Duty to ensure employees capability and provide training
• Reg 19 Duties towards young people

Why should you read this guidance?

Work related stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them. Everyone experiences work related stress; no one is immune.

Work related stress is not an illness, but can lead to increased problems with ill health.

Physical effects
• Heart disease
• Back pain

- Gastrointestinal disturbances and other minor illnesses
- Psychological effects
- Anxiety
- Skipping meals
- Drinking too much caffeine or alcohol
- Smoking cigarettes
- Other adverse behaviours

Paybacks/Benefits to the business

- Effective risk management of the workforce regarding risks to ill health
- Reduced levels of sickness absence
- Improved staff performance

- Fewer staff seeking alternative employment
- Increase of staff morale
- Quality of life improved for the workforce
- Reduces the risk of injury claims and prosecution
- Less working days lost due to the control of stress in the workforce

Guidance currently available

HSE Information

- HSE website www.hse.gov.uk/stress/information.htm
- HSE Books telephone no 01787 881165
- Real Solutions Real People ISBN: 017176 2767 5
- Management Standards for stress to help employees INDG406
- Tackling work related stress - A guide for employee's free leaflet INDG341
  - Tackling stress: the management standards approach short guide INDG406

Industry and Business Guidance

- Business link (www.businesslink.gov.uk) has a range of advice for SME's
- Confederation of British Industries (CBI)

Trade Union Congress (TUC), European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Interest (CEEP)
- Forum of Private Business (www.fpb.org), in partnership with HSE and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (formerly DTI) have drawn up guidance

Specific Guidance

A Risk Assessment provides an estimation of the likelihood of adverse effects that may result from exposure to specified hazards or from the absence of beneficial influences

Range of Factors

Culture

- Good, open communication is essential between individual workers, as well as between workers and management.

Demands

- Employers should ensure that the demands of the job do not exceed an employee's ability to carry out the work without risk to themselves or others.

Control

- The amount of 'say' the individual has in how their work is carried out.

Relationships
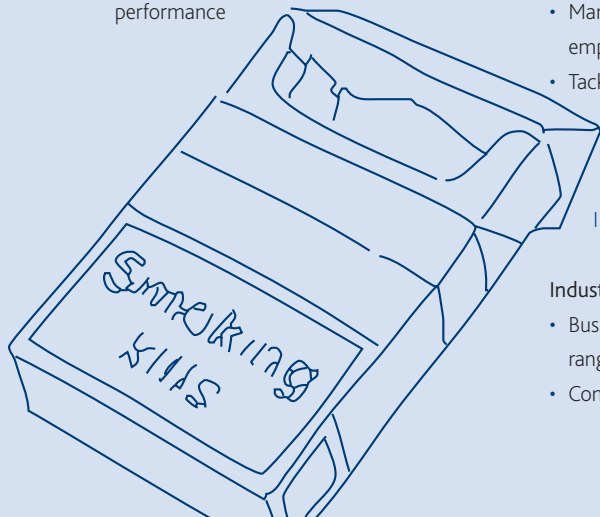
- Interactions with others.

Change

- New technology; Competition; Changing market conditions; Restructuring; Downsizing,
- New ways of working; Poor management.

Role

- Clarity of definition; Clarity of understanding
- Role of conflict; Role of ambiguity.

Support, training and factors unique to the individual

- Training
- Competency
- Induction
- Support
- Individual differences

Best practice currently available

- Health Surveillance
- Training for managers to be able to recognise the signs of stress
- Staff undertake the tasks because they understand what they are trying to achieve and are proud of their achievements for personal and organisational reasons
- Problems are recognized and solved promptly
- Working long hours is not encouraged
- Staff are not encouraged to take work home
- Regular reviews of employee's capabilities
- Staff are supported emotionally and practically

Training/Toolbox talks

Employees and Contractors need to be:

- Informed of the tasks and capabilities
- Consulted and, where possible, able to participate in decisions that may effect them
- Informed of the outcomes of risk assessments

Key Performance Indicators to consider

- Loss of time as a result of stress
- Performance and capability appraisals
- Attendance management
- Informal talks to staff