

Stress Management policy user guide

Contents

Stress Management policy user guide.....	1
1. What is wellbeing?	2
2. Signs and symptoms of stress	4
3. Management Standards (HSE).....	5
4. If you think your struggling with your wellbeing	8
5. Stress Risk Assessments	9

Supporting Documents

Risk assessments and guidance can be downloaded at **Orb>HR Information>Employee Wellbeing>Stress**

Support available

When it comes to emotions, it can sometimes be hard to recognise or admit that we're not feeling 100%. The short NHS questionnaire will help you better understand how you've been feeling over the last fortnight, and points you in the right direction for helpful advice and information.

Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>

EAP provider PAM assist

1. What is wellbeing?

Wellbeing covers several aspects of the way people feel about their lives, including their employment and the relationships individuals have with the people around them. Employee wellbeing is a key employment issue that organisations are actively trying to address to ensure employees remain happy and motivated at work. Promoting wellbeing can help prevent stress and create positive working environments where individuals in the organisation can thrive.

We (the Council) are committed to providing support to employees on recognising the signs of stress and providing them with the tools, either to take a preventative approach where possible, or to manage situations where employees experience stress. There is a need for employees to actively engage in managing their wellbeing and take ownership of this. The following steps have been researched and developed by the [New Economics Foundation](#), which has identified five ways to wellbeing.

Connect

There is strong evidence that relationships, and the feeling of being valued by others is a fundamental human need and one that contributes significantly to Wellbeing.

With this in mind, try to do something different today and make a connection.

- Talk to someone instead of sending an email
- Speak to someone new
- Ask how someone's weekend was and really listen when they tell you
- Put five minutes aside to find out how someone really is

Be active

Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups.

Exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting well-being.

Slower-paced activities, such as walking, can have the benefit of encouraging social interactions as well providing some level of exercise.

Here are a few ideas:

- Take the stairs not the lift
- Go for a walk at lunchtime
- Check out the premium benefits book for discounts on activities and gym memberships
- Suggest a 'walking meeting' as opposed to booking a meeting room
- Walk to someone's desk instead of calling or emailing.

Take notice

Taking measures to ensure you take time to reflect can strengthen and broaden awareness.

Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your well-being and reflecting on events can help to reaffirm your life priorities.

Heightened awareness also enhances your self-understanding and allows you to make positive choices based on your own values and motivations.

Take some time to enjoy the moment and the environment around you. Here are a few ideas:

- Make time in your diary to reflect on the week's activities
- Have a 'clear the clutter' day
- Take notice of how your colleagues are feeling or acting
- Take a different route on your journey to or from work
- Visit a new place for lunch.

Learn

Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life.

Evidence suggests that the opportunity to engage in work or educational activities particularly helps combat depression.

The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning, has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing.

Why not learn something new today? Here are a few more ideas:

- Find out something about your colleagues
- Sign up for a class or learning activity on MyHR
- Read the news or a book
- attend a 'lunch and learn' session
- Research something you've always wondered about

Give

Participation in social and community life has attracted a lot of attention in the field of wellbeing research.

Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to describe themselves as happy.

Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

Commit an act of kindness today, here are a few ideas:

- Bring your co-worker a cup of coffee
- Praise your co-worker for a job well done
- Ask a new colleague to join you for lunch

2. Signs and symptoms of stress

Indicators of Stress

You can't always prevent stress, but there are lots of things you can do to manage it better. We should all be aware of the effects of mental health and be conscious of our own and our colleagues' levels of stress. A change in the way someone acts or in work performance can be a sign of stress. The table shows the common indicators of stress developed by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, October 2018)

Work performance

- declining/inconsistent performance
- uncharacteristic errors
- loss of control over work
- loss of motivation/commitment
- indecision
- lapses in memory
- increased time at work
- lack of holiday planning/usage

Regression

- crying
- arguments
- undue sensitivity
- irritability/moodiness
- over-reaction to problems
- personality clashes
- sulking
- immature behaviour

Withdrawal

- arriving late to work
- leaving early
- extended lunches
- absenteeism
- resigned attitude
- reduced social contact
- elusiveness/evasiveness

Aggressive behaviour

- malicious gossip
- criticism of others
- vandalism
- shouting
- bullying or harassment
- poor employee relations
- temper outbursts

Other behaviours

- out-of-character behaviour
- difficulty relaxing
- increased consumption of alcohol
- increased smoking
- lack of interest in appearance/hygiene
- accidents at home or work
- reckless driving
- unnecessary risk-taking

Physical signs

- nervous stumbling speech
- sweating
- tiredness/lethargy
- upset stomach/flatulence
- tension headaches
- hand tremor
- rapid weight gain or loss
- constantly feeling cold

3. Management Standards (HSE)

The management standards have been developed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to help reduce the levels of work-related stress. The standards are: **Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role, and Change**. These standards are used to form and assess our risk assessments.

Demands

Includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment.

The Standard is that:	What this looks like at work:
employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs; and	the organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work;
systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	people's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;
	jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and
	employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

Control

How much say the person has in the way they do their work.

The Standard is that:	What this looks like at work:
employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work; and	where possible, employees have control over their pace of work;
systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work;
	where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work;
	the organisation encourages employees to develop their skills;
	employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and
	employees are consulted over their work patterns.

Support

Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

The Standard is that:	What this looks like at work:
employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors;	the organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees;
and systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff;
	systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;
	employees know what support is available and how and when to access it;
	employees know how to access the required resources to do their job; and
	employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

Relationships

Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

The Standard is that:	What this looks like at work:
employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work; and	the organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	employees share information relevant to their work;
	the organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour;
	systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
	systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour

Role

Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.

The Standard is that:	What this looks like at work:
employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; and	the organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible;
systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	the organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;
	the organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear; and
	systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

Change

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The Standard is that:	What this looks like at work:
employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change; and	the organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes;
systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.	the organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals;
	employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs;
	employees are aware of timetables for changes; and
	employees have access to relevant support during changes.

4. If you think you're struggling with your wellbeing

Employees

Task	Action	Don't forget
Speak to someone at work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Speak to your Line Manager, colleague or if you're a member of a trade union speak to your TU rep. You can also get advice from the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). 	The stress support pages on the NHS website www.nhs.uk
Call the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Call confidentially for immediate advice and support on 0800 882 4102. They will offer one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Direct support, advice, or information. ○ Appointment for telephone or face to face counselling. ○ Signposting for other advice. ○ Referral to other agency if required, for example Occupational Health, GP, or Social Services. 	Advice is also available online www.pamassist.co.uk You will need the following access details: Username: CEC Password: CEC1 You can also access this from the internet.
Have a think about Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Face to face counselling can be arranged through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Occupational Health recommendation ○ Discussion with your Manager ○ The EAP. This can be self-directed by calling 0800 882 4102 and speaking directly to an adviser. 	Your manager can make a referral.
Risk assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Where a stress related problem has been identified a risk assessment must be carried out by your manager, you should contribute to risk assessments and action planning which aims to identify and mitigate against any stressors 	

Managers

Task	Action	Don't forget
Speak to your team member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Let them know that you're concerned about their wellbeing and offer them support 	The Stress management policy.
Recommend the Employee Assistance Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Let them know there's confidential advice and support they can access from the EAP website or by calling 0800 882 4102. 	There's additional guidance on the Orb about our EAP.
Have a think about Counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If this is something that's been recommended through Occupational Health or our EAP, or you feel counselling would be beneficial, our EAP service can arrange this for you 	Username: CEC Password: CEC1

Support for Managers

- ✓ The EAP can also provide support to you on a variety of management issues, such as how to manage difficult conversations.

You can call them on 0800 882 4102.

Risk assessments

- ✓ Where a stress related problem has been identified, you must carry out the appropriate risk assessment and work with the team or employee on agreeing the action plan to mitigate any further stress.
- ✓ You should review the action plan with your team or individual(s) on a regular basis, by including this in team review meetings or 1;1's

5. Stress Risk Assessments

The Risk assessments we have created are based on the HSE management standards. They are a check to see if we are doing enough to protect employees from work related stress hazards. It is a legal responsibility to carry these out and confidentiality should be maintained. Conditions arising from or exacerbated by stress related ill-health at work may be considered a disability under the Equality Act 2010. Identification and preventive measures should form part of the following risk assessments.

There **are 2 types** of stress risk assessments and action plans which have been developed, which cover different scenarios;

- Team risk assessments
- Individual risk assessments

(a)Team risk assessments

These are preventative risk assessments and are aimed at protecting a team, or group of workers, from stress-related hazards. A team risk assessment should be carried out where stress risk factors are identified. For example where:

- **Your team has told you they are stressed;**
- **You have a high turnover of staff within your team;**
- **You have a high rate of sickness absence within your team;**
- **There is apprehension or worry amongst team members as a result of working procedures or practices**

Manager Responsibilities

It is your responsibility to prepare your team, by talking to them and explaining that a team stress risk assessment is recommended as good practice and everyone will be given a copy of the team stress risk assessment to complete anonymously and individually. It's your responsibility to review the risk assessments collectively, identify any specific causes for concern and create a preventative action plan with your team. based on the following model.



Employee Responsibilities

You are required to contribute to the stress risk assessment to identify and eradicate potential stressors within the workplace where possible. You are encouraged to get involved in preventative Team Stress Risk Assessments for the area that you work in, and create action plans with your team, and manager in relation to the above information. Your manager has a responsibility to arrange this with the team, however, if you feel a team risk assessment would be beneficial you should raise this with your manager. Your manager will then arrange for the assessments to be completed individually and will then work with the team to produce a preventative action plan.

An example of a completed team risk assessment action plan can be found [here](#)

If you feel you're already experiencing work-related stress, you should talk to your manager and they'll help you to complete an individual risk assessment.

(b) Individual risk assessments

This is a specific assessment for an individual who is suffering from a stress related problem. For example where:

- **Stress is highlighted within an occupational health report;**
- **Sickness absence is due to work related stress;**
- **Work related stress is documented as the reason for absence by a GP; or**
- **An employee tells you they are feeling stressed**

Manager and Employee Responsibilities

In relation to stress, managers need to be familiar with the signs of stress and support their team members in relation to this and in the above scenarios.

In these circumstances, you need to ask the employee to complete Part A of the Individual Stress Action Plan. Remember that stress affects people in different ways, and what one person finds stressful can be normal to another. You should not ask the employee to change anything they write in Part A, even if you personally do not agree with it.

Next, you complete Part B in consultation with the employee. The employee may wish to have a colleague or trade union representative with them when they meet with you. Where the employee identifies their relationship with you as a pressure or demand affecting them, another manager completes Part B in consultation with the employee. Actions to be taken to reduce the pressures or demands identified should be documented on the individual stress action plan, and jointly reviewed by you and the employee in the timescales agreed. If it becomes apparent through reviewing the individual risk assessment that another employee is the cause of stress, then you should refer to other relevant policies if this is appropriate, for example, bullying and harassment.

On the agreed review date, consider whether all action points have been met. Where they have not, then a further review date and actions should be agreed. It's your responsibility to ensure that all agreed actions are followed up by the agreed date. If pressures or demands or the actions needed to deal with them are beyond your immediate control or influence, record this on the form and raise the matter with your line manager.

Once all actions have been completed, the employee completes the individual stress action plan again, to see whether the pressures or demands have been effectively reduced. All documents should be retained in the employee's personal file, for as long as is required and complies with GDPR requirements.