

# *Promoting Emotional Wellbeing*

## *A Guide for Managers*



**This short guide is to support the Emotional Wellbeing Handbook. It tells you about your responsibilities as a manager and ways you can help people in your teams to remain resilient. It also gives you some guidelines on what to do when someone isn't in the best place emotionally - when they're saying they feel stressed or anxious, for example, or when their behaviour suggests that something's not right.**

We all have different strengths, experiences and ways of looking at the world. Some managers are more comfortable than others in dealing with emotional issues and people will need varying levels of support according to each circumstance.

Briefly, you should:

- Read the Emotional Wellbeing Handbook and this guide.
- Take responsibility for your own emotional wellbeing. Practice the wellbeing actions suggested in the Handbook yourself.
- Complete this e-learning course: register at <http://www.managingemployee wellbeing.com/bitc/index.html>.
- Be aware of your own behaviour and how this can affect your team.
- Be alert to concerns as they develop involving team members and take appropriate action.
- Use employee survey feedback to encourage discussion about making improvements within your work area.
- Understand and be prepared for how people react in times of change
- Know and use the support available to you and your staff.
- If you manage other managers or supervisors, make sure they understand their responsibilities too and offer them support when they need it.

## *Support for you*

Managing people can be difficult, however skilled you are. Remember that you're not alone and we're not asking you to be an expert in wellbeing and mental health issues. Where appropriate, we'll get advice based on people's individual circumstances and support needs.

- We offer learning opportunities to managers in emotional wellbeing issues and you should discuss any learning needs with your line manager or HR.
- HR officers can support you and talk through difficult situations.
- Occupational Health will give you updates and advice, including making reasonable adjustments and whether someone might be classed as having a disability under the Equality Act 2010. HR will usually liaise with Occupational Health on your behalf.
- The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a resource that you can use as a manager if you have a difficult situation, as well as something you can signpost your staff to.
- A coach can help you explore tricky situations and potential solutions.

## What is your role in your team's wellbeing?

As a line manager, it's really important that you handle situations fairly and sensitively, not least because it's the right thing to do, in line with our corporate values, but also because doing the wrong thing can contribute to workplace conflict, ill health including sickness absence or even legal claims.

Employers have a legal duty under health and safety legislation to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees as far as reasonably practicable. Employers are also under a "common law" duty to have reasonable care for the health and safety of their employees. This includes taking steps to minimise the risk of stress or stress-related illnesses.

You have a vital role to play in supporting the health and wellbeing of your team.

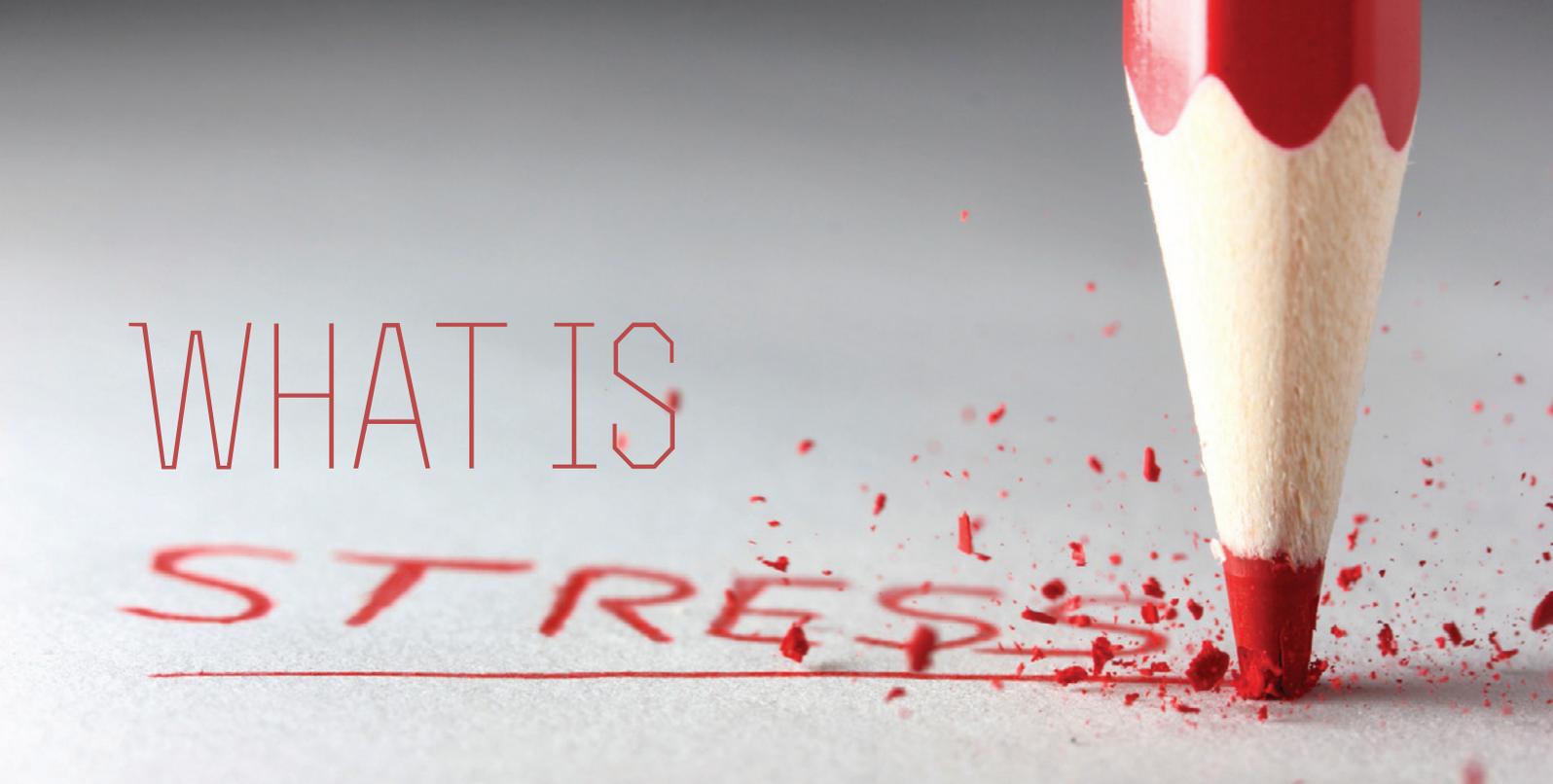
**Direct impact** – your behaviour has a direct influence on how your team members feel, for example whether they feel valued or taken for granted, whether they are clear about what is expected of them or confused about what they are supposed to do. You can prevent (or cause) stress by the way that you behave towards your team and the degree of openness in your communications with your team.

**Gatekeeper role** – you are often the interface between other managers, services, or customers and the employees you manage. You can influence whether your team members are protected from, or exposed to, difficult working conditions. For instance, it would be your role to negotiate an extension to a deadline on a new piece of work when your team is working to full capacity.

"Good line management can lead to good health, well-being and improved performance. Line managers also have a role in identifying and supporting people with health conditions to help them to carry on with their responsibilities, or adjust responsibilities where necessary."

Dame Carol Black, National Director for Health and Work

**Taking action** - you are likely to be involved in finding solutions to problems at, or affecting, work. You are responsible for applying HR policies and procedures (for example Attendance Management, Grievance, Drugs and Alcohol).



# WHAT IS

# STRESS

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related stress as “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work”. According to the HSE, stress is not an illness but a “state”. Stress may become an illness if it is excessive and prolonged and a mental and/or physical illness develops as a result.

A certain amount of pressure is a normal part of most jobs and it can help to keep an individual motivated and thriving. However, there is a point at which too much pressure can result in stress symptoms. The tipping point will differ from person to person. Some employees are better able to cope with pressure than others, depending on their own level of resilience at that time, and the kind of issue they’re dealing with.

Signs that an employee isn’t thriving include:

- withdrawal from others;
- increased accidents, incidents and errors;
- difficulty completing tasks on time and to the required standard, when they have previously performed well;
- increased absenteeism or lateness;
- high blood pressure, insomnia, more frequent illness and visits to the doctor
- emotional outbursts;
- easily upset or angered; and
- increased use of alcohol or other drugs.

# *Creating a healthy work environment where people can thrive*

If you understand how resilient and happy people behave, and communicate regularly with the people you manage, you will probably recognise when someone is struggling. Your role then is to support them to restore a balance of healthy pressure, opportunity and encouragement.

Always remember that people need time to recuperate and recharge their batteries. Keep in mind that what motivates one worker may overwhelm another. Things that can prove a challenge include:

- An uncontrollable or unpredictable event, including things that happen outside work. This might include a serious accident, bereavement, relationship breakdown, or a sudden job change.
- Being overwhelmed. Too many things can be on someone's plate at once.
- People working beyond their capabilities, skill level or coping resources. Common examples are taking on new responsibilities without enough training, or caring for an elderly parent.

## **How to open up a conversation about emotional wellbeing**

A guide produced by Mind / CIPD includes some questions that you can use to start a conversation with a team member who appears to be showing signs of being emotionally unwell. These should help to shape the conversation rather than being used as checklist.

- How are you doing at the moment?
- You seem a bit down / upset / under pressure / frustrated / angry. Is everything OK?
- I've noticed you've been arriving late recently and I wondered if you're OK.
- I've noticed the reports are late when they're usually on time. Is everything OK?
- Is there anything I can do to help?
- What would you like to happen? How?
- What support do you think might help?
- Have you spoken to your GP or looked for help anywhere else?

## *Risk assessment – when people are experiencing stress*

- Use the back page of the Handbook (a risk assessment tool) to explore with your team member(s) what's causing problems.
- From that discussion agree an action plan.
- Make sure you follow through on things you've agreed to do and tell your team member(s) what you've done and if applicable, what the outcome is.
- Check back regularly to see if people are OK or if there's any further action required.

### **Top Tips – helping people thrive**

- Listen. You can't help if you don't understand. You can only understand if you accept that we all have different ways of reacting to what happens.
- Be quick to praise good work and initiative.
- Greet people with a genuine smile and acknowledgement – say “good morning / afternoon” or “hello”.
- Encourage a healthy work-life balance.
- Signpost employees to the employee assistance programme for support in dealing with practical or emotional problems.
- Encourage skill development so that team members are prepared for new challenges.
- Talk with your employees about the Council's goals and successes and how they contribute to this.
- If a difficult conversation is necessary, do it in private and make your sure your feedback is constructive.
- Don't blame others for failure; encourage others to learn from failure and apply that learning when a similar situation crops up in the future.
- Consider using mediation when there is conflict, before matters become entrenched.

## YOUR AROUND-THE-CLOCK MANAGER ASSIST™ SERVICE

*Sometimes managers need some help managing it all.*

As a manager, supervisor or team leader your employer expects you to handle a lot of responsibility at work, whilst also balancing personal and family obligations. To support you with these challenges your ManagerAssist service is available to provide free, confidential information, referrals and counselling. Support is available on topics including work-life balance, recognising troubled employees, discussing difficult subjects, workplace transition, handling grievances, stress management, referring employees to counselling, and more.

Your ManagerAssist service is a free, confidential and independent resource to help you balance your work, family and personal life. Available any time, any day, by phone, e-mail or online, the service provides information, resources and counselling on any of the challenges that life may bring.



AROUND-THE-CLOCK, FREE, CONFIDENTIAL ASSISTANCE

**FREEPHONE:** 0800 298 2021

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**OUTSIDE THE UK:** +44 (0)20 8987 6550

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### Dealing with change

- Able to ask questions and express views
- Able to influence decisions

### Getting the right support

- Given relevant information
- Encouragement from colleagues and managers
- Receive regular feedback
- Understand the policies and procedures being used

### Issues outside work

- Friends and family difficulties
- Relationships
- Bereavement
- Debt
- Health problems
- Caring responsibilities
- Life changes
- Moving house
- Other commitments and responsibilities
- Other employment
- Work-life balance

### Your Job

- Workload
- Deadlines
- Working hours
- Skills needed to do the job
- Working environment
- Safety

### Your role

- Understand how role contributes to "bigger picture"
- Clear about responsibilities and boundaries
- Feel empowered

### Your sense of control

- Able to develop new skills
- Having a say in what you do
- Using your skills and initiative

### Anything else?

### Relationships at work

- Sense of fairness
- Able to deal with conflict
- Tensions within the team
- Clear standards of acceptable behaviour
- Able to tackle unacceptable behaviour
- Feel valued