

Stress Management and Wellbeing Toolkit

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1. Introduction

The health and wellbeing of the staff is a key factor that underpins performance at work, engagement within the workplace, and sickness levels.

This toolkit has been developed to support the Health Board Stress Management and Wellbeing in the Workplace Policy.

NHS Wales is committed to encouraging the health and wellbeing of all its staff and recognises that staff act as role models to the community they serve in promoting and preventing ill health. It believes that it is the joint responsibility of managers and individual employees to work together to encourage healthier lifestyles and life choices, support each other in the workplace, and promote the effective management of sickness when staff are prevented from attending work through ill health or are at risk of having to take sick leave.

All NHS Wales employers will achieve this by:

- Promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff;
- Creating a working environment and culture that produces happy, motivated and high performing staff;
- Planning services and staffing levels in a way that takes account of the health and wellbeing of staff;
- Dealing fairly, consistently and reasonably with staff who have frequent or extended periods of sickness absence;
- Dealing positively and sympathetically with staff who have a disability, medical condition or injury which affects their ability to work normally and where possible supporting this through reasonable adjustments and work based interventions;
- Promoting mental health wellbeing with the same emphasis as that of physical health and wellbeing and supporting and educating staff to increase confidence and competence when dealing with issues relating to mental ill-health;
- Monitoring levels of sickness absence for individuals, teams and the organisation as a whole with a view to maintaining effective and safe staffing levels;
- Ensuring staff are treated with dignity and respect at all times.

Outcomes

- A workforce that takes action to improve its health and wellbeing and therefore becomes a role model for the population of Wales;
- Employment and workplaces which both protect and promote mental and physical wellbeing supporting a culture of high attendance;
- Culture, attitudes and behaviour that creates a supportive work environment for all staff;
- People with disabilities and long-term conditions are supported to stay within employment
- Rehabilitation back to the workplace is actively encouraged and supported for those on long term sickness absence;
- Occupational Health Services and Well Being Services are made available to staff through management and self-referral and there are targeted interventions available to help NHS staff remain healthy and in work;
- Health and Well Being Initiatives (health promotion and prevention) encouraged and supported by NHS Organisations and widely communicated to staff; and
- All NHS Organisations will achieve and maintain recognition at Gold Level of the Corporate Health Standard.

Each NHS Organisation will promote Health and wellbeing by:

- Promoting and supporting work/life balance through a range of flexible working arrangements and initiatives;
- Ensuring staff have access to relevant forms of support (e.g. Occupational Health, Wellbeing etc.);
- Ensuring managers understand the importance of sympathetic support to staff both in work and for those who are absent due to ill health;
- Making available to staff promotional and preventative events and information on a wide range of healthy lifestyle topics;
- Encouraging healthy lifestyles and supporting those who wish to change their lifestyle;
- Actively supporting employees who have health problems in a variety of ways, including where appropriate, reasonable adjustments, phased return to work, access to staff counselling, access to Occupational Health / Wellbeing or redeployment in order to facilitate their return to work or where a return to work is not possible, dealing sensitively with the process to bring their employment to an end; and
- Encouraging staff to create new health promotion and prevention initiatives and ideas.

2. NHS Wales Health & Wellbeing Products

New Health and Wellbeing guidance has been developed for the first time by NHS Wales staff working in collaboration with Trade Unions. The guidance signposts staff to information and resources to enable them to make better choices with regards to their own health and wellbeing and that of others.

These guides have been developed to support staff and managers to access guidance on how to make better decisions with regards to their health and wellbeing, using recognised sources of information and guidance such as the 'Mind' and '5 Ways to Wellbeing'. The two products, Our Wellbeing Matters and Manager Wellbeing Matters can be found on the following link:-

<http://www.nwssp.wales.nhs.uk/i-need-to-ensure-health-and-wellbeing-of>

3. Five Ways to Wellbeing

What are the 5 ways to wellbeing?

- Connect
- Keep Learning
- Be active
- Take Notice
- Give

The ideas that follow are simple evidence-based actions that are applicable to people from all walks of life.

Connect

There is strong evidence that feeling close to, and valued by, other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to wellbeing and effectiveness.

Healthy relationships, both at home and at work, are critical for promoting wellbeing and are a protective factor against mental ill health for people of all ages.

With this in mind, 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;
- Give a colleague a lift to work or share the journey home with them.

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.

Exercise doesn't need to be intense for you to feel good - slower-paced activities such as walking can have the benefit of encouraging social interactions as well as providing a level of exercise.

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

- Take the stairs instead of the lift;
- Go for a walk at lunchtime;
- Walk into work - perhaps with a colleague – so you can 'connect' as well;
- Get off the bus one stop earlier and walk the final part of your journey;
- Organise a work sporting activity;
- Have a kick-about in a local park;
- Do some 'easy exercise', stretching for example, in the morning;
- Walk to someone's desk instead of calling or emailing.
- Take your 15 minute wellbeing at work break.

Take notice

Reminding yourself to 'take notice' can strengthen and broaden awareness, which enhances your self-understanding and allows you to make positive choices based on your own values and motivations.

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

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

- Get a plant for your workspace;
- 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 throughout the lifetime enhances growth and self-esteem and encourages social interaction, as well as a more active and rewarding life.

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

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

- Find out something about your colleagues;
- Sign up for a class;
- Read the news or a book;
- Set up a book club;
- Do a crossword or Sudoku;
- Research something you've always wondered about;
- Learn a new word.

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 tend to be happier.

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.

What can you do to take some simple but reliable steps towards living well?

Everyone faces challenges in life. How big or difficult these challenges are will be different for each of us but we all know what it's like to feel drained and struggling to cope. This information is about finding ways to build on our strengths and to increase our resilience in order to meet the challenges we all encounter from time to time. It is also about going further than coping and surviving and realising that there is good evidence that a range of simple actions are strongly linked to people feeling happier and more satisfied with their lives.

It's all about choice and we make choices all the time.

However most of the time we are not even aware of the choices we are making - perhaps because we don't feel we have a choice or we don't know what we could do differently.

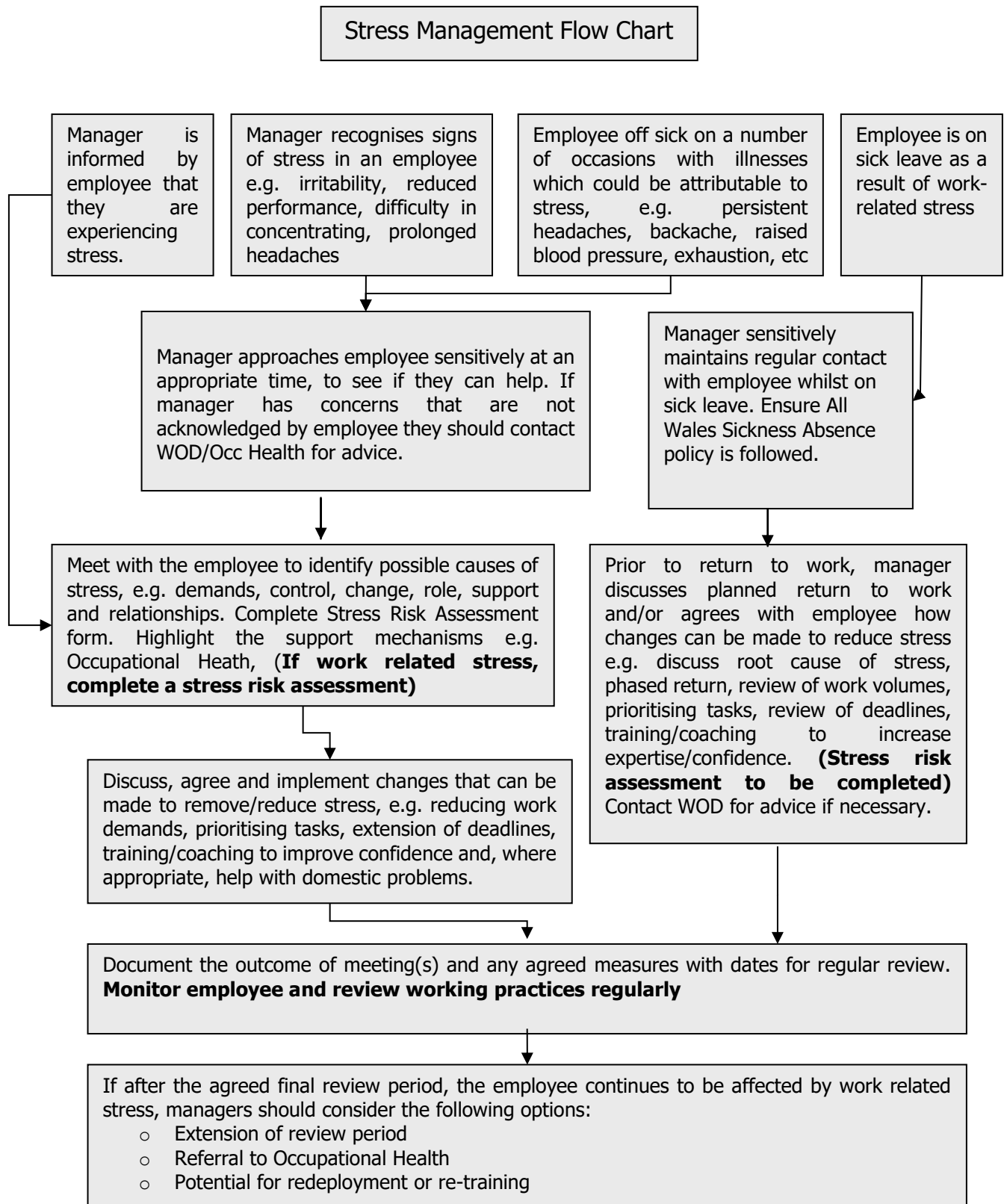
Consider this for a moment – what happens when someone gives us a compliment. We can choose to feel good about it or choose to feel annoyed or not even notice. Similarly, when someone shouts

at us, we can make a choice to shout back and feel very angry or we can choose to remain calm and forgive the person. The event does not have to determine our experience – we can choose what to make of it and how to respond.

Taking action

The '5 ways to wellbeing' have been identified through extensive reviews of research and expert opinion as simple actions that we can all take that will have a positive impact on our day to day sense of wellbeing. There is nothing new or surprising in these messages other than knowing that there is substantial evidence to support their value in living well and that small changes can make a big difference.

4. Stress Management Flow chart



5. The Management Standards and Risk Assessment

The Management Standards Approach

The aim of the Management Standards is to reduce the levels of work-related stress reported by British workers.

The Management Standards cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. In other words, the six Management Standards cover the primary sources of stress at work.

These are:

Demands	such as workload, work patterns and the work environment, lone working, lack of training, exposure to violence and aggression, lack of challenge etc.
Control	such as how much say the person has in the way they do their work, participation in decision making etc.
Support	such as the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.
Relationships	such as promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour, bullying and harassment, communication, violence etc.
Role	such as whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.
Change	such as how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation, new technology, restructuring etc.

Employers have a duty to ensure that risks arising from work activity are properly controlled. The Management Standards approach helps employers work with their employees and representatives to undertake risk assessments for work related stress.

Gathering Data

There are several different types of information or data that can be used to help identify whether work related stress is a potential problem or not. This data will help to form part of a risk assessment for work related stress.

Sickness Absence figures

High levels of sickness absence may indicate a potential problem area. Managers should investigate the reason for the absence to check whether working conditions are causing increased levels of work related stress. Return to work interviews should help to identify whether there is a problem with work related stress (refer to Sickness Absence Policy).

Turnover

If there is a higher rate of staff turnover than a manager would expect, this may again point to a hidden problem with work related stress. Exit interviews can help identify common reasons why people have decided to leave and if work related stress was a factor. If work related stress is an issue it is important to try and find the exact cause of the problem and how as a manager one can intervene to protect staff and prevent further loss.

Performance Appraisal

This can offer an opportunity to have a one-to-one discussion about work and to explore whether people in a manager's team are experiencing excessive pressure.

Team Meetings

These can provide useful opportunities for team members to identify and share views on current issues that may be potential sources of undue pressure. Identifying and exploring these issues during routine team meetings can help to emphasise the point that dealing with work related stress should be an everyday part of good management practice.

Informal talks with staff

The use of 'walk rounds' through the department or sections within the department can be useful in observing work processes to assess whether there are any obvious aspects of the job which may be causing excessive pressure.

Individual work related stress risk assessments

Sources of work related stress vary but occupational stressors can generally be divided into several different categories:

- Physical stressors – for example noise, vibrations, temperatures, access to breaks, welfare facilities;
- Psychosocial stressors – for example, bullying and harassment, personal life, lack of control over work life or work conditions, lack of support;
- Organisational stressors – for example, working conditions, working relationships, management systems.

Should you require any advice in conducting a work related stress risk assessment, you should contact the WOD Department.

6. Taking the stress out of work - Guidance for Employees

Introduction

This guidance has been produced to explain what stress is, how it can affect us as individuals and some of the ways in which we can take the stress out of some everyday situations.

What is stress?

There are many definitions of stress and this is one example: “Stress is a mental and physical response by an individual to an inappropriate level of pressure whether real or perceived”, (Raymond & Wilson 1999).

Everyone can in principle experience stress, as no one is immune. Stress is something that can happen when we are in a position where we perceive we cannot cope with the demands facing us. Work-related stress exists when people perceive they cannot cope with what is asked of them, at work.

Stress is very individual. What might be stressful for one person may not be for another. This does not mean that one person is stronger or weaker than the other, but that we are all different. We are all conditioned differently from birth, we have different life experiences, personalities, states of health and we are all unique individuals.

The individual nature of stress

Factors to take account of when considering an individual's stress response include:

- Personality
- Where they live
- Where they work
- Family
- Lifestyle
- Beliefs
- Education
- Attitude to life etc.

Often, stress occurs due to an individual's expectation of both themselves and others.

The warning signs

The body gives us early warning signs that we may be suffering from stress. These can be likened to the lights showing in a car when there is a problem like low fuel or oil, lights left on etc. In the car we tend not to ignore the warning but, when we are busy, we will ignore our own early warning signs, often to our cost. These signs might include becoming anxious, tearful or withdrawn. Learn to recognise your own warnings and try to adopt some of the coping strategies described here.

Locating the cause of stress

Relax, sit down and list all the issues that are currently causing you concern. It is easy to blame one thing alone when things are going wrong but if you are honest with yourself, there are likely to be many things that are contributing to making you feel as you are.

Try to group these into similar types as there are often links between issues. What originally seemed to be totally unrelated problems may have the same underlying cause. You will not be able to tackle everything on your list at once, but you should be able to work out a plan for dealing with each of them in turn.

Consider the questions '**how do I spend my time**' and '**how would I like to spend my time**'. It is quite easy when we have too much to do and feeling short of time, to lose sight of the goals we are trying to achieve and end up just muddling through. To prioritise the items on your list, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this something I **must** do?
- Is it something I **should** do? Or
- Is it something I **would like** to do?

Must means must, **should** contains options and **want** is a free choice. Consider situations that waste your time make changes where possible, learn to avoid unnecessary activities, delegate where applicable, schedule time for specific activities.

Rank the problems and deal with some of the smaller ones first, to quickly reduce the list and at the same time reduce your stress.

Try to tackle only one thing at once, consider all possible alternative solutions, including doing nothing and for each solution consider all the pros and cons. Once you decide on a course of action, set yourself realistic targets, or you may only add to your stress.

Doing a small amount of a large task on a regular basis, can make it easier to deal with. Be totally honest with yourself – are your expectations of both yourself and others too high? Do you actually cause yourself stress by demanding too much of yourself? Make your course of action sensible and reasonable and once devised try to stick to it.

Many of the situations that we have to deal with both at work and in our personal lives cannot be changed, but it is possible to change the way in which we deal with them or think about them.

Learn to accept the things you cannot change and only spend energy on what would be beneficial to change. We often worry unnecessarily about things we cannot influence, causing ourselves stress and wasting energy that could have been focused elsewhere.

A balanced diet

Change to diet can have beneficial results and can also reduce the effects of stress. Try to eat a balanced diet, always have breakfast, and eat regularly. Research has shown that those people who skip breakfast are often far more tired at the end of the day.

Eat complex carbohydrates such as pasta, wholemeal bread, jacket potatoes etc., rather than refined carbohydrates, (e.g. Sweet biscuits, crisps, cake). Complex carbohydrates really can help prevent mood swings.

Avoid too many saturated fats and eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, as increased vitamin C will boost your immune system. Reduce caffeine consumption, avoid drinking alcohol for the wrong reasons and most importantly, drink water to ensure you are not dehydrated. These measures provide very positive steps you can take to help yourself, by replacing bad habits with good habits.

Take time to relax

Ensure you relax when you are not working. When you are suffering from stress, relaxation may be the last item on your priority list, even if it is the top of your wish list.

There are many ways you can help yourself and the simplest, is to separate work from leisure – remember, most of us are not paid to work at home. Having a period of relaxation every day is vital to give yourself time to switch off and recharge. Relaxation is different things to different people but this should be something you enjoy and that fits into your life. This could be reading, watching TV, listening to music, meditation, having a soak in the bath etc. The act of relaxation is a very necessary part of life.

Deep breathing is an excellent way of calming down and can be done anywhere and at any time. Draw in a deep breath whilst thinking '**RE**' and exhale long and deep whilst thinking '**LAX**'. Even just stop what you are doing and take one DEEP breath. Close your eyes and for a minute or two think of somewhere pleasant.

Control your worries

Keep your worries into perspective. Can you remember what you were worrying about this time last year? Probably not! Many of us waste a lot of time and create a lot of stress for ourselves, worrying about unimportant things in the 'what if' cycle.

Instead of worrying about the 'what if', ask yourself what the probability of that thing actually happening and consider if you are wasting energy on something that may not happen. We all have an inner voice that directs our thoughts or actions and it may be necessary to question what the inner voice tells us. For example if a work colleague snaps at you, your inner voice tells you to snap back whereas if you think about the situation, your colleague may be having a bad day and you will only add to it by snapping back. Is it worth getting worked up about it? And do not forget that one of the best stress busters is – laughter.

Using and soothing your muscles

Often at the end of the working day, exercise is the last thing on your mind. Research has however shown that twenty minutes of exercise, three or four times a week can be very beneficial in

managing stress. Individuals report feeling recharged, sleep better and feeling fitter which in turn can build up self-esteem.

Holidays away from work are vital, even if you do not travel further than your home. Make the most of your days off by relaxing and get as far away from your work routine as possible.

A good night's sleep is vital to stay healthy, particularly so in times of stress. Unfortunately, many people experience insomnia when suffering from stress. If this happens to you consider aromatherapy oils, a hot milky drink, or a warm bath before going to bed. Caffeinated drinks can also disturb sleep patterns. Deep breathing and relaxation exercises can also be beneficial, as may gentle exercise such as a short walk. If you can't sleep reading or listening to music can help make you feel sleepy.

Using your time well

Do you miss deadlines or arrive late at meetings? This may be due to the fact that you have too many things to do but it could also be a result of how you manage your time.

Time can be wasted in a variety of ways i.e., do you:

- Get side-tracked by unimportant things?
- Stay chatting on the phone after all the important issues have been fully discussed?
- Have trouble delegating?
- Take on just too much?
- Try to do too many tasks at once?
- Go to meetings where there are no formal agendas, let alone positive outcomes?

If any of the above applies to you, here are some suggestions as to what you might do:

- Think of situations where you waste time and how you could alter them;
- Learn to drop unimportant activities; learn to say "no" or delegate;
- Schedule some time daily when you will not be interrupted;
- Have a "to do list" of goals that are really achievable.

Learn to say no

Many of us say 'yes' when we really want to say 'no'. It is not always easy to say what we really mean and poor communication is frequently a cause of stress at work.

If you are under a great deal of pressure, you may find yourself being aggressive towards others and similarly, you may find yourself agreeing to do something because it seems the easy, or only, solution. This in turn will make your to do list even longer and increase stress levels as you feel frustrated and annoyed with yourself for making things worse.

Learning to be assertive (not aggressive) can assist with this problem. Assertion is based on a philosophy of personal responsibility and an awareness of the rights of other people. It is all about the ability to negotiate, having the confidence to say what you really want or do not want, but remembering this must not be at the expense of others.

In many work roles we try to oblige and accept tasks without question. It is only when a burden gets unmanageable; we either complain or try to achieve the impossible. When given a task, ask yourself 'is this really mine?' If the task is yours but you already have more than you can cope with, talk to your manager before it becomes a problem.

Dealing with Bullying, Harassment and Fear at Work

Bullying and/or harassment can both be possible sources of stress and this type of inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated by the Trust.

If you believe that you are being harassed or bullied:

- Make a record of what has been happening and when;
- If you feel comfortable, explain to the person that their behaviour is not welcome;
- Look on the intranet for the All Wales Respect and Resolution Policy.

If you do nothing, the stress you are experiencing may get worse. Some occupations have the potential for both physical and verbal violence and it is important that you share any fears you may have with your manager. Although there will be risk assessments in place covering violence in the workplace, you should ensure that any new risks identified are discussed with your manager and included in the next risk assessment review.

Work versus home life

With the long hours many employees work plus the demands of home, they have less and less time to enjoy being with friends and family, let alone having time for themselves.

Individuals should communicate with those at home and at work to discuss any problems they have and how things might be changed. Often, when an individual is under excessive pressure, they do not tell anyone how they are feeling, leading to them becoming even more frustrated when others add to their problem without being aware.

If you have problems with work-life balance, seek support from your manager or your family and consider any possible alternatives such as job sharing, unpaid leave, flexible working hours etc.

Support

There may be a point in all our lives when we need the help and support of other people. If you ever feel that you just cannot cope any more or are unsure of which way to turn, consider talking your problem over with someone. Your choice of a person to confide in is very important.

If the problem is being caused within the workplace, you could discuss this with your manager, Workforce & OD, Occupational Health department or your union representative. Close friends and family can be very helpful but do consider they may have problems of their own.

If you feel that your problem is so intimate that you cannot discuss this with any of the above people, you should consider seeking professional help. Your GP could help with this, or you could contact one of the many external agencies who deal with both general and specific issues.

7. Managing Stress: Guidance for Managers

How to deal with a member of staff who is displaying signs of stress

- Approach the member of staff and ask them if they would like to have a break from work and a chat with you. Remember at all times that you are acting in a professional capacity and be aware that emotions can run high;
- If they would like to, take the individual somewhere quiet and approach the subject delicately by saying something like 'I have noticed you haven't been yourself lately, are you OK?'

- If the individual does not wish to talk, that is OK. Offer them the opportunity to have a chat another time or speak to someone else. Discuss whether they would like you to refer them to Occupational Health. Take a file note that you have offered to talk and been declined, making sure you specify the date and time. This will be your reference going forward;
- In the event that the individual wants a chat and it materialises that it is external factors that are causing them stress, listen, understand and ask whether there is anything you could do to support their circumstance at the moment.;
- In the event that the employee cites stress at work. Again listen, understand and take notes. Discuss whether there are any reasonable adjustments that can be made and what you can do to help the employee. Offer continued support. You may wish to use the Individual Risk Assessment form;
- Take a file note that you have had the conversation and what you have agreed. Again this will be your reference going forward. This should be placed on the individual's personal file.

How to deal with a member of staff who approaches you with a work related stress issue

- Invite the individual to have a chat. Take the individual somewhere quiet and approach the subject delicately. Allow the individual to speak freely;
- Listen, understand and take notes;
- You may wish to use the Individual Risk Assessment (see toolkit);
- Discuss whether there are any reasonable adjustments that can be made and what you can do to help the employee. Offer continued support;
- At the informal chat/discussion stage, the manager should make a diary note of the discussion and outcome/or note on 1:1 file. At the formal discussion stage a file note of the conversation and what you have agreed should be taken. Both sign and date this. This should be placed on the individual's personal file.

What should I do if a member of my team is absent due to stress?

Refer to the All Wales Sickness Absence Policy and follow relevant guidance and procedures.

Preparing for the individuals return to work following stress related absence

When a member of your team returns to work following a stress related illness, you will need to complete a Return to Work interview and programme in accordance with the All Wales Sickness Absence Policy.

- Prepare initial thoughts around a return to work programme;
- Familiarise yourself with the relevant policies such as Mental Health, Wellbeing and Stress Management policy, flexible working policy, annual leave policy and dignity at work process

(you never know which one may be helpful and support the individual circumstance which led to stress);

- Take a blank occupational health referral form with you;
- Read guidance around what causes stress, which is contained in this policy, and how you can deal with it, in order to make some sensible suggestions whilst in the meeting.
- Ask the individual to complete the Individual Risk Assessment form; and
- If you feel nervous about holding the meeting, set up a meeting with your WOD representative to talk through how you will approach the meeting. It may help to structure your own thoughts.

What should I do following the Return to Work meeting?

You will be responsible for following up any action identified and confirm in writing to the employee the proposed programme of return (if any).

If the employee has any concerns with the programme, they should raise these immediately with you. If the employee disagrees with the proposed programme of return due to a medical reason (the employee is entitled to produce medical evidence to support their reason) this may be reviewed by Occupational Health if the manager feels this is necessary.

What should I do if I am not convinced the individual is ready to return to work?

If the individual displays signs of distress at being back at work, in the return to work interview or shortly afterwards, you will be responsible for judging whether they are fit to continue working or not.

In these circumstances you may have to suspend the employee from work on health grounds – please refer to the All Wales Sickness Absence Policy and your WOD team for guidance.

How should I offer ongoing support?

Set up regular review dates with the individual. In the first month you may like to offer them weekly/daily meetings to discuss the situation and gauge how they are feeling and whether things are getting better. This will allow you to adapt what is necessary.

Offer the individual the opportunity to chat with you about anything they need to. Do be aware of your own limits and if the situation requires it recommend counselling or Occupational Health or GP for some further medical advice and support.

8. Work Related Stress Risk Assessment Guidance Notes

Important information:

Stress risk assessment is an ongoing process and must be used appropriately, as often as is necessary in determining levels of stress, i.e. whenever a situation arises to warrant its use, for example reactively, following a sickness absence, when presenting signs of, or having perceived increase in stress level, and proactively, at supervision/appraisal sessions, etc.

It is the responsibility of the Health Board to carry out a risk assessment on stress. Individual employees also have a responsibility to report any perceived stress they are experiencing in the workplace.

Many people confuse pressure with stress. Whereas stress can be bad for us pressure is not necessarily so. Many individuals respond positively to pressure.

This questionnaire is designed to be completed by every member of staff where there is an incidence of stress whether it is suspected or actual. In situations where an employee has difficulty in completing the form the line manager or other person may assist the employee in the form's completion.

If for any reason you do not wish your line manager to assess your questionnaire the questionnaire may be given to the next tier manager for assessment.

It is the policy of the Health Board to:

- Ensure that as far as is reasonably practicable that no employee is subject to an unreasonable level of work related stress which could be detrimental to their health;
- Create an environment where the risk of workplace stress is minimised and preventative action is taken to reduce the likelihood of ill-health.

This short questionnaire has been devised to assist managers to effectively assess your work-place stress levels and to enable your manager to take supportive action in order to meet policy requirements. It is important to note that the Health Board does NOT view stress as a sign of weakness.

The questionnaire examines six potential areas of stress in the workplace:

DEMANDS, CONTROL, SUPPORT, RELATIONSHIPS, ROLE, and CHANGE.

Some questions ask if you have sufficient “resources” to deal with situations. We mean “resources” to include:

- Personal attributes unique to the individual (we all react to situations in a unique way dependant on individual personality and characteristics)
- Support from the organisation
- Support from friends and colleagues
- Support from family
- Other coping strategies.

Some questions ask if you have experienced any adverse effects and some examples of adverse effects are given. These examples are not exhaustive. If you are experiencing any adverse effects in addition to those given as examples, still answer the question as Yes

Undertaking the Assessment.

Who should complete an assessment?

The immediate manager should be the responsible person to undertake a stress risk assessment where appropriate.

An assessment should be completed as soon as is practicable, avoiding any delays to ensure that the issues are addressed early to allow for early intervention.

There are several different ways of identifying whether there is a potential work related stress issue. It has also been identified that following the roll out of training, staff are becoming more proactive in raising issues either at the training or following the training with the tutor. The tutor should direct the individual to their manager to ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken however, if it is the immediate manager that is the perceived cause of the stress, then direct the individual to their line manager’s manager or the WOD department, where appropriate.

Recording of Assessment Details:

When undertaking the work related stress risk assessment, it should be noted that the assessment is in two parts, part A and part B. Part A is to be completed by the employee, and part B by the manager. It is useful for the manager to complete their part with the employee present.

- Record all the findings of your risk assessment in full compliance with the guidance at part 3 of this document.
- Ensure immediate support is offered i.e. Managerial/Colleague, Employee Assistance, Occupational Health etc.
- Agree a review date to meet and revisit the areas.

Identifying the Risks:

Sources of work related stress vary but occupational stressors can generally be divided into 3 categories:

Physical stressors e.g. noise, vibrations, temperatures, access to breaks, welfare facilities

Psychosocial stressors e.g. bullying and harassment, personal life, lack of control over work life or work conditions, lack of support

Organisational stressors e.g., working conditions, working relationships, management systems

Manager/assessors need to evaluate the **likely impact** of the identified causes on staff and remember that specific times within the year may result in different risks.

The Health Board promotes the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) 'Management Standards' as a framework to assess any work-related issues. The Health Board work related stress risk assessment supports the HSE Management Standards, and assessors must consider the following stress areas when undertaking assessments:

Demands	Are there heavy or challenging targets and workloads, insufficient resources, conflicting priorities, is the working environment acceptable, allocation of breaks (if possible), long working hours, absences from work
Controls	Is there autonomy within the role, ability to plan own workload, lack of involvement with how their work is carried out, is work regularly monitored & workloads monitored
Support	Poor delegation, is support available if needed (peers or manager), is feedback received on performance, is there staff involvement, are staff able to share concerns, is adequate training and information provided

Relationships	Management style and conflict; bullying and harassment, Human Resources policies not made available, working relationships with colleagues, communication channels
Role	Is their role clearly defined and understood, do they understand their role and responsibilities, able to talk to ensure they are clear about their current job and the expectations of them, staff or re-deployed staff receive adequate induction
Change	Are changes communicated to individuals; appropriate timetables in place, actions to be taken are clearly communicated, opportunity to comment and ask questions before/during and after change, involvement in discussions, effected of uncertainty or insecurity

Part 2 – Identifying Control Measures

It is important that the assessor is able to identify control measures to be able to resolve or improve upon any issues identified by the work related risk assessment. The following suggestions will support the identification of appropriate controls/remedies.

Demands

- Assist in the scheduling of work to ensure adequate and appropriate resources; Encourage delegation if possible;
- Provide adequate staff training and ensure skills and abilities match the demands of the job
- Support staff by assisting with prioritisation of work and the establishment of realistic deadlines and provide support when undertaking new and unfamiliar tasks
- Encourage staff to utilise the flexible working practices available i.e. work life balance
- Ensure regular work related reviews are undertaken and feedback provided

Control

- Where practicable, enable staff to exert autonomy within their role
- Encourage delegation and provide a supportive environment.
- Provide freedom to executive workload and pace of work as appropriate
- Have an effective work load monitoring system in place

Support

- Ensure that adequate training and information have been provided
- Hold regular team meetings and be approachable and receptive to feedback
- Encourage achievement of effective work-life balance.
- Provide support and encouragement, encouraging staff to discuss their problems
- Ensure staff are aware of the support mechanisms and initiatives that are available to them

Relationships

- Encourage team working and provide open and honest feedback
- Ensure that all HR policies and procedures are properly communicated and implemented and have full management support.
- Demonstrate and encourage appreciation of others and difference; promote and atmosphere of mutual respect
- Ensure managers have received the necessary people management training.

Role

- Ensure roles are defined and understood to ensure unreasonable demands are not made.
- Ensure that all members of staff receive adequate training in the appropriate skills and competencies required for their role.
- Clarify goals and objectives for the individual and department ensuring no ambiguity.

Change

- Ensure clear and appropriate communication on proposed changes.
- Ensure individual understand the reasons for change and the likely timescales.
- Ensure adequate consultation wherever possible and provide opportunities for comment and input.
- Give support to individual during the change process.

Review of Risk Assessments

It is the responsibility of the assessor to ensure that they review the assessment at least three months following the initial assessment. This should be in mutual agreement with the individual and the assessor.

Data Protection

Due to the Sensitive Personal Information within the work related stress risk assessment it is essential the assessor complies with the following instructions;

- The Assessor should advise the individual staff member as to who will have access to the information contained within the stress risk assessment.
- Access to the information within the stress risk assessment should be restricted to those staff/professionals that;
 - Have a clear role in helping to reduce the current level of risk identified within the assessment. (For example, Workforce Officer, Occupational Health etc.). This should be agreed between the staff member and the assessor
 - Have a role in resolving any issues (current or future) identified from the assessment
- The record should be stored confidentially.
- The record should be kept for 6 years after an employee has left the organisation, and in any case in line with the Records Management Policy. Future access to the risk assessment should be restricted to the original assessor and those staff members/professionals who have been identified as requiring access in order to reduce the level of risk resulting from work related stress.
- The individual staff member has a right to request a copy of the work related stress risk assessment as part of a Subject Access Request.

- Before releasing information within the stress risk assessment it is essential that anything relating to or identifying a third party be considered for removal (if consent from those parties is not able to be sought and there is no overriding factors) from the record as disclosing this information would be considered a breach of the third party's right to privacy - again further advice and guidance should be sought from the relevant information/data protection lead before proceeding.
- Any requests to release the work related stress risk assessment above those communicated and agreed should have a valid justification, and WOD should check that no issues would arise from that information being known by that new recipient - if there are any doubts then contact should be made with the information governance team.

STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE



Service Area:		Job Title:		Name of Line Manager:			
Employee Name:		Date of Assessment:		Date of Review:			
Employee Number:							
Reason for assessment (please ✓ tick)	Initial	Significant Change	Incident/Accident	Periodic Review	Annual Review		

PART A EMPLOYEE TO COMPLETE			PART B MANAGER TO COMPLETE				
(Please tick boxes)	YES	NO	STRESS RATING (Please tick boxes)			ACTIONS REQUIRED TO REDUCE STRESS	DATE FOR COMPLETION
			No stress	Warning	Stress		
This section is about: 1. Demands Includes issues like workload, work patterns, and the work environment.							
Question A. Does the amount of work you have put EXCESSIVE demands on your ability to cope with your work?							
If YES Do you feel you have sufficient resources to cope with these demands?							
If No Have these demands caused you to notice any detrimental effects on you personally, either physically or emotionally, such as lack of sleep, irritability, increase in colds, digestion problems?							
Question B. Does your work environment (including work patterns) put EXCESSIVE demands on your ability to cope with your work?							
If YES Do you feel that you have sufficient resources to cope with these demands?							
If NO Have these demands caused you to notice any detrimental effects on you personally, either physically or emotionally, such as lack of sleep, irritability, increase in colds, digestion problems?							

(Please tick boxes)	YES	NO	STRESS RATING (Please tick boxes)			ACTIONS REQUIRED TO REDUCE STRESS	DATE FOR COMPLETION
			No stress	Warning	Stress		
This section is about: 2. Control Includes how much say/influence that the employee has in the way they do their work.							
Question A Do you have a say in how you carry out your work and on your general work conditions?							
If No Do you feel you have sufficient resources to deal with the situation of having little or no say?							
If NO Has this lack of contributing your opinion on work and/or work conditions caused you any adverse effects such as anxiety, impatience, frustration?							
This section is about: 3. Support Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues							
Question A. Do you believe that your managers and/or the organisation generally provide you with sufficient information for you to perform adequately in your role?							
If No Do you feel that you have sufficient resources to perform your job adequately without having this information?							
If No Has this lack of information caused you any personal adverse effects anxiety, frustration, impatience, sleeplessness etc?							
Question B. Do you feel your managers/colleagues provide sufficient support to you for you to adequately carry out your duties?							
If No Do you feel you have sufficient resources to carry out your duties without this support?							
If No Does this lack of support cause you any emotional or physical adverse effects such as anxiety, frustration, impatience, digestive problems etc?							

(Please tick boxes)	YES	NO	STRESS RATING			ACTIONS REQUIRED TO REDUCE STRESS	DATE FOR COMPLETION
			No stress	Warning	Stress		
This section is about: 4. Relationships Includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour							
Question A Are you being subjected to unacceptable behaviours in the workplace such as bullying, segregation, sexual harassment, unfairness etc?							
If Yes Do you feel that you have sufficient resources to deal with this unacceptable behaviour?							
If No Is this unacceptable behaviour causing you any emotional or physical adverse effects such as anxiety, frustration, anger, chest tightness etc?							
This section is about: 5. Role Whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles							
Question A. Is your role within the organisation clearly defined?							
If No Do you feel you have sufficient resources to carry out your role even though it is not clearly defined?							
If No Does this lack of role definition cause you any adverse physical or emotional effects such as anxiety, frustration, sleep pattern problems etc?							
Question B. Have you been made fully aware of your expected responsibilities?							
If No Do you feel you have sufficient resources to carry out your job even though you have not been made fully aware of your expected responsibilities?							
If No Does this lack of known responsibilities cause you any adverse physical or emotional effects such as anxiety, frustration, sleep pattern problems, excessive sweating etc?							

(Please tick boxes)	YES	NO	STRESS RATING			ACTIONS REQUIRED TO REDUCE STRESS	DATE FOR COMPLETION
			No stress	Warning	Stress		
This section is about: 6. Change How organisational change is managed and communicated within the Authority							
Question A Are you kept adequately informed of changes that will affect you and your position within the organization?							
If No Do you feel that you have sufficient resources to deal with this lack of information about changes and to continue doing your work effectively?							
If No Does this lack of information about change cause you to have any adverse physical or emotional effects such as anxiety, frustration, anger, high blood pressure etc?							
Question B. When change occurs do you feel that there are sufficient systems in place for you to respond with your individual concerns?							
If No Do you feel that you have the resources to deal with this lack of systems to deal with your concerns about change that has taken place?							
If No Does this lack of available systems to respond to change that has taken place cause you to have any adverse physical or emotional effects such as frustration, anger, excessive sweating, lethargy etc?							
This section is about any other issues not covered by the above 6. Are there any other concerns that you wish to discuss?							
On completion of Stress Risk Assessment Questionnaire will the individual need to be referred to the Occupational Health Unit? Yes / No						(Complete Occupational Health Unit referral form)	
Manager's Signature:							
Employee's Signature:							

11. Useful Links

Keeping Stress in Perspective -

<http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/972/Stress%20Booklet.pdf>

The Health and Safety Executive has a comprehensive guide to Stress. This information can be accessed online at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>

The International Stress Management Association exists to promote knowledge and best practice in the prevention and reduction of human stress - www.isma.org.uk

<https://weds.heiw.wales/assets/Uploads/ee50fb3f69/Caring-for-Staff-The-NHS-Wales-Staff-Psychological-Health-and-Wellbeing-Resource.pdf>

<https://weds.heiw.wales/assets/Uploads/2bc92feafa/Guidance-for-Trust-and-LHB-health-wellbeing-web-pages.pdf>

www.mind.org.uk for better mental health.

Mindful Employer - <http://www.mindfulemployer.net/support/links-library/>