

Health and Wellbeing Management – Mental Wellbeing and Resilience Policy

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1. Introduction

NHS East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) as an organisation values all of its employees and the contribution each of them makes to its overall success. It strives to create and maintain a working environment in which open and effective communication, support for each employee and mutual respect between individuals are the expectations and the reality. The CCG is committed to ensuring the health, safety, wellbeing and resilience of **its entire** staff.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide direction and guidance to all CCG employees and managers on the management of work related stress, promotion of mental wellbeing and resilience and the processes for risk assessment based on the HSE's Stress Management Standards.

The anticipated benefits from implementing the Mental Wellbeing and Resilience Procedure include:

- Improved working climate and culture;
- Greater openness about sources of pressure at work at all levels;
- Better awareness about stress and mental wellbeing in all employees;
- The continuing importance of trying to ensure a good work-life balance for all employees;
- Greater consistency of approach from managers in dealing with mental wellbeing;
- Early identification of stress supporting prompt resolution;
- Greater awareness of support available to employees;
- Improved stress and resilience management skills in managers;
- Work to reduce the number of work days lost to stress related sickness absence.

3. Scope

This procedure applies to all employees within the CCG. Managers are responsible for implementation and the CCG is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

4. Definitions of Stress, Pressure and Presenteeism

Understanding the difference between pressure and stress is essential to enable employees and managers to determine the severity of particular hazards, situations or events, to decide if a person or team is under more pressure than usual.

The Health and Safety Executive's definition of stress is: "*The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them*"

Stress in itself is not an illness, but prolonged exposure to excessive pressures can lead to psychological conditions such as anxiety or depression. There are also physical ill-health conditions such as stomach ulcers and skin conditions that can be aggravated or caused by stress.

Pressure however, is the positive, motivating or driving factor that inspires people to perform to their full potential. A reasonable amount of pressure is necessary to ensure staff perform to their capabilities and achieve their goals. However, sustained and prolonged pressure is unhealthy and can be termed as negative pressure. These consistently high levels of pressure can lead to staff developing stress related symptoms that can impact negatively on workplace performance and personal wellbeing.

4.1. Stressors

Stressors are the causes of stress and can be defined as:

- Factors that cause stress;
- An event or context that elevates adrenaline and triggers the stress response because it throws the body out of balance and forces it to respond.

It is accepted that any job can cause stress and also that it is not just about overwork. Boredom and monotony can also be stressful.

4.2. Presenteeism

Presenteeism is when staff attend work when they are either unwell or have work or non – work related issues on their mind which prevents them from working effectively. Presenteeism has a similar impact on the work place as sickness absence, as it affects productivity and morale. Presenteeism can also lead to longer recovery periods.

This policy will also assist in reducing the effects of Presenteeism through addressing and supporting staff through work and non – work related issues.

5. Legal Obligations

The CCG has a duty of care to the mental health and well-being of its employees. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 employers must take all reasonably practicable measures to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees at work. Additionally, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers to assess health and safety risks, and to introduce prevention and control measures based on those risk assessments.

6. Responsibilities

Everyone within in the CCG has a role to play in ensuring that the right working environment is created. So no matter where you find yourself in the organisation you can, and should make a contribution to creating such an environment.

6.1. Governing Body and Senior Management team will:

- ensure that this procedure is implemented;
- oversee the monitoring of the effectiveness of the procedure and of the other measures put in place to eliminate or reduce stress and to generally promote workplace health and safety;
- promote health related programmes for employees;
- ensure that employees are consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress and;
- ensure employees are involved in the risk assessment process.

6.2. Managers

Managers have a critical role in the prevention of work related stress but also to minimise and manage stress risks. Using regular supervision and appraisal meetings is an opportunity for managers to discuss an individual's wellbeing and to identify any stress.

Managers should offer support to employees or facilitate support from elsewhere as necessary. Managers are not expected to take on the role of counsellors however; managers will be expected to use effective communication, warmth, genuineness and empathy in their management of stress-related issues.

Line Managers will:

- Encourage employees to be open and honest about workloads and working patterns;
- Be vigilant for early signs of stress.
- Conduct and implement recommendations from risk assessments within their jurisdiction;
- Ensure good communication between management and employees , particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes;
- Ensure employees are fully trained to discharge their duties;
- Ensure employees are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities;
- Monitor workloads to ensure that employees are not overloaded for extended periods of time;
- Monitor working hours to ensure that staff are not overworking and, monitor holiday arrangements to ensure that employees are taking their full entitlement;
- Attend training as requested in good management practice and health and safety;
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated and seek support from HR to identify and resolve early issues.
- Be vigilant and offer additional support to any employee who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or a change in personal relationships etc.

6.3. Employees

Stress is not a sign of weakness nor is it an illness. Anybody at any time may experience stress for a variety of reasons. Sometimes people have previously coped effectively with challenges however excessive pressure for example, where a number of issues arise at both home and work may result in stress. Employees are encouraged, not to hesitate in seeking support at any time if they are experiencing stress, or feel they are at risk of stress. Employees should approach their Line manager for support in the first instance and are strongly encouraged to do so, but can approach their Human Resources Advisor, the Employee Assistance Programme, their Trade Union representative or Occupational Health directly if, for whatever reason, they feel they cannot approach their manager. Employees are strongly encouraged not to suffer in silence and to accept opportunities for support if offered e.g. Staff Counseling.

Evidence suggests that it can be therapeutic and beneficial for long term wellbeing to avoid absence due to work related stress and remain in work with appropriate organizational support. Avoidance of addressing stressors in the workplace by being absent from work may not aid resolution and may cause further anxiety.

Lack of skills, in a new role for example, can cause stress, and employees should approach their manager to discuss learning and development needs at any time.

Where employees are experiencing stress that is having a significant effect on their health and well-being, the CCG will support and work with the employee to look at reasonable adjustments in order to minimize risk and facilitate a successful and supported return to work.

6.4. Specialist Advice

Specialist advice in managing stress may be obtained from the Occupational Health Service, the Human Resources Directorate or the CSU's Health and Safety Team. These individuals will, within the parameters of their roles will:

- Provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress;
- Support managers in implementing stress risk assessments;
- Support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their management on a planned return to work;
- Refer to workplace counsellors or specialist agencies as required;
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress;
- Inform the Senior Management Team of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

7. Managing Stress - Individuals

It's important to learn how to recognize when your stress levels are out of control. The most dangerous thing about stress is how easily it can creep up on you. You can get used to it. It starts to feel familiar, even normal. You don't notice how much it's affecting you, even as it takes a heavy toll.

The signs and symptoms of excessive stress can and will differ for different individuals. Stress affects the mind, body, and behaviour in many ways, and everyone experiences stress differently. Not only can overwhelming stress lead to serious mental and physical health problems, it can also take a toll on your relationships at home.

Further information on the causes, signs and symptoms of stress can be found in the Employees and Managers Guidance on Managing Mental Wellbeing and Resilience.

7.1. Managing stress within yourself

You may feel like the stress in your life is out of your control, but you can always control the way you respond. Managing stress is all about taking charge: taking charge of your thoughts, your emotions, your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems. Stress management involves changing the stressful situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can't, taking care of yourself, and making time for rest and relaxation.

Further information on *Managing Stress* within yourself can be found in the Employees and Managers Guidance on Managing Mental Wellbeing and Resilience.

7.2. Staff Counselling

All staff have access to the Lancashire Employee Assistance Programme provided by PAM Assist. PAM Assist is a free confidential life management and personal support service that is available to all employees offering practical support on issues including Work Life, Family matters, Debt.

This service can be accessed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by calling **0800 882 4102** by using *Lancashire* as the username and *CSU* as the password.

8. Managing Stress – Organisation / Managers

8.1. Recognising Signs of Stress in Work Colleagues

Symptoms of stress can manifest in many forms below is a table of some of the more common signs that employees may display.

Attitude or Behavioural change	Relationships with others at work
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased irritability, impatience, moodiness;• Forgetfulness and difficulty concentrating;• Increased accident rate, reckless behaviour;• Loss of motivation and commitment;• More emotional than usual – crying, sulking, bad temper	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conflict or tension with colleagues or customers;• More aggressive or passive than usual;• Withdrawal, alienation;• Loss of sense of humour, less friendly or sociable;• Reduced team spirit.
Work Performance	Attendance and Sickness absence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced work performance (quality, quantity, the time it takes them);• More mistakes;• Deterioration in work planning;• Reduced contribution in team meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Erratic or poor time keeping;• Working longer hours (to keep up or staying away from home);• Increased absenteeism (especially frequent short periods of absence);• Presenteeism

8.2. Health and Safety Executive Management Standards

To assist organisations with managing work related stress, the HSE have developed the Stress Management Standards. The Stress Management Standards approach requires managers, employees and their representatives to work together to improve certain areas of work, described in the Standards, which will have a positive effect on employee wellbeing.

These standards are based on research into those aspects of management of work directly linked to mental ill-health, including factors concerned with the design, organisation and management of work, and advice on the 6 main areas identified as having the potential to contribute to workplace stress. These are:

- **Demands** – are employees able to cope with the demands of the job?
- **Control** – do employees have some say in the way they do their work?
- **Support** – do employees have adequate information and support?
- **Relationships** – are employees subject to unacceptable behaviours e.g. bullying?
- **Role** – do employees understand their role and responsibilities?
- **Change** – are employees kept informed during periods of organizational change?

Further guidance and information regarding the Management Standards can be found on the HSE website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/>.

8.3. Management Standards Indicator Tool

Managers are expected to be consistent in their approach to stress related absence and should utilise the Management Standards Indicator Tool found in the Employees and Managers Guidance on Managing Mental Wellbeing and Resilience.

They should then develop an action plan from the results and refer employees to relevant support services when necessary.

Action plans should be delivered within an agreed timeframe. Managers should be flexible where appropriate, especially where reasonable adjustments are required for employees with mental health problems or where phased returns to work are necessary following stress-related absence.

8.4. Managers Guidance to Possible Solutions for Primary Hazards

The table found in the Employees and Managers Guidance on Managing Mental Wellbeing and Resilience provides some guidance on adjustments or solutions that can be considered to problems and hazards. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

9. Management of Stress-related Absence

Managers should be consistent and follow the agreed absence management procedure as clearly laid out in the CCG's Absence Management Policy. In particular, managers should be aware that increased or more frequent absence may indicate an underlying stress problem. Return-to-work interviews cover all aspect of absence and enable managers to discuss stress related problems where appropriate. Where an absence is identified as stress-related, an early referral to Occupational Health is essential. Managers are encouraged to complete a Management Standards Indicator tool with the employee and provide a copy of the results to Occupational Health. Managers should seek advice from Human Resources or Occupational Health if in any doubt.

10. Risk Assessment

Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to assess risks to health and safety from the hazards of work. This includes the risk of employees developing stress-related illness because of their work. You are required to carry out a 'suitable and sufficient risk assessment'.

A Risk assessment has been described as 'a process of looking forward, to anticipate and prevent harm before it occurs'. The traditional health and safety risk assessment process comprises 5 steps:

1. Identify the hazards;
2. Decide who might be harmed and how;
3. Evaluate the risk by identifying what action is already being taken, deciding whether or not it is enough and, if not, deciding what more needs to be done;
4. Record the significant findings;
5. Review the assessment at appropriate intervals.

The CCG have applied this process to mental well-being via the stress management standards. However, the very unique and individual nature of mental well-being means that it can only be applied to certain workplace aspects, and with limited levels of effectiveness, and it must be acknowledged that there is significant responsibility at individual level for assessing individual risks.

The risks that are associated with violence and lone working can also be contributory factors when considering work-related stress and therefore must be included in the assessments when appropriate.

Risk assessments should be undertaken by the manager in consultation with the individuals involved undertaking the activities, as they will have valuable information to contribute and this process will reassure them that action is being taken.

Where a team/service area is identified as experiencing higher levels of stress an action plan must be developed by the senior manager. Advice from occupational health, the health and safety advisor, and human resources team should be sought as required.

10.1. Generic Risk Assessment (GRA) Format

A generic organisational risk assessment format for mental wellbeing which has been developed and can be found in the Employees and Managers Guidance on Managing Mental Wellbeing and Resilience.

The form identifies the main hazards associated with stress, which managers can use to evaluate issues in their areas, and also common control measures which can be checked off as applicable, whilst the reverse provides for site/activity specific input and due ownership.

This has been produced for the benefit of managers as a user friendly aid, but will only be effective if properly completed and used to identify and implement practical measures.

Further Advice and guidance regarding the risk assessment process can be sought through the Health and Safety Team.

11. Training and Awareness

The CCG will seek to make available regular building resilience training/awareness sessions that will be accessible to all employees. Whilst these sessions will be a regular feature of the CCG's training / organisational development programme, additional sessions will be commissioned at times where particular sources of stress are evident, such as during periods of organisational change.

Additional more focused training will be considered for employees or particular groups of employees to meet any specific needs that may be identified through stress management risk assessments or upon the recommendations of occupational health.

12. Dissemination and Implementation

The policy will be available to all employees via the CCG intranet. The policy will be communicated via team briefs and where appropriate in 1 to 1 meetings.

13. Equality Analysis Assessment

The CCG aims to design and implement procedural documents that meet the diverse needs of our service and workforce, ensuring that no one is placed at a disadvantage over others, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

The results from this initial screening indicate that this policy will not require a full Equality Analysis Assessment.

14. References

- The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999;
- The Working Time Regulations 1998 (as amended);
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005;
- INDG341: Tackling work – related stress: A guide for employees;
- HSG 218: Managing the cause of work related stress;
- HSE Tackling stress: The Management Standards Approach;
- INDG281rev1: Work –related stress: A short guide;
- HSE Five Steps to Risk Assessment revised 2006;
- NHS Employers Stress and Mental Health -
<http://www.nhsemployers.org/HEALTHYWORKPLACES/KEEPING-STAFF-WELL/STRESSANDMENTALHEALTH/Pages/StressMentalHealth.aspx>.