hseni
CONTROLLING RISK TOGETHER

Mental Well-being
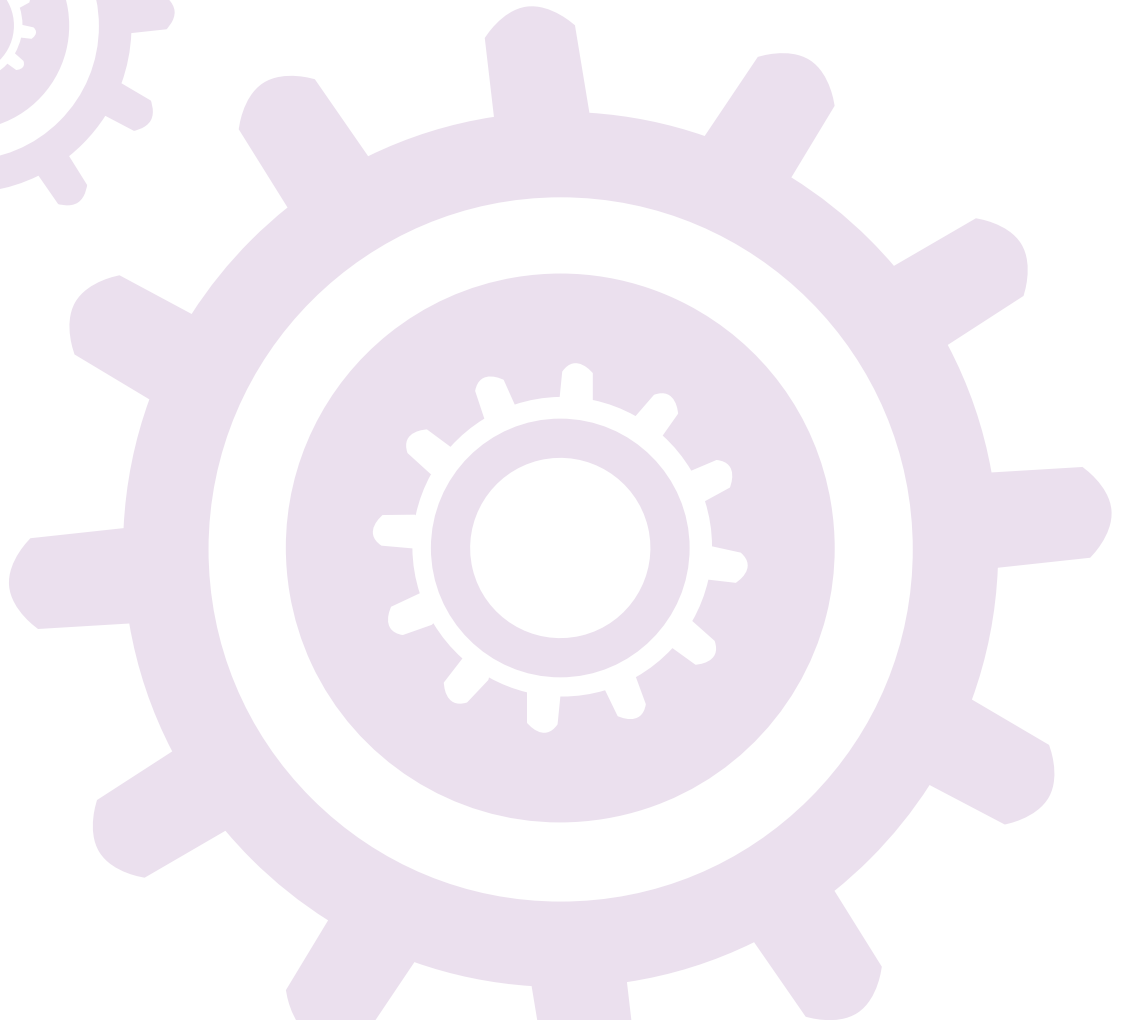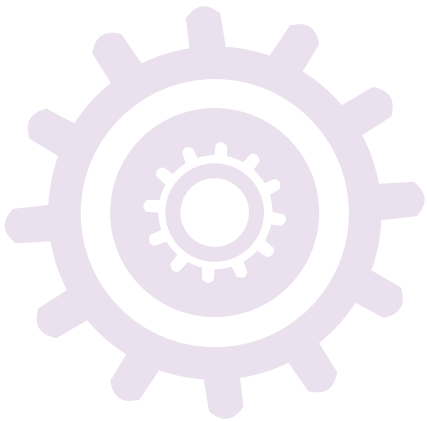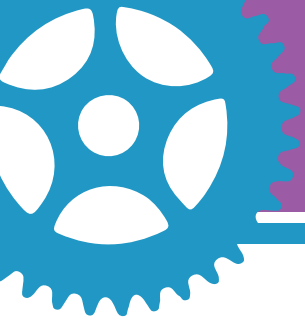
HSE's Management Standards

Addressing mental well-being in the workplace

ourwork
ourhealthourlives

Contents

1. Foreword

Work has an important role to play in mental well-being. Good work gives everyone a purpose, an income, the ability to achieve an outcome, promotes independence and allows people to develop social contacts.

Many factors come into play when looking specifically at well-being in the workplace. However the critical thing is that an employee should not develop mental ill-health as a result of their job choice and the conditions they work in.

Yet in 2018/19 over 16,000 people in Northern Ireland were reported as suffering from work-related stress, anxiety and depression. There is sometimes an air of mystery and fear when it comes to dealing with work-related stress. Employers and employees may find it difficult to talk about for many different reasons.

Sadly these statistics indicate the reality of this workplace issue and the impact it has on peoples' health and the quality of their lives. So what can we do about it?
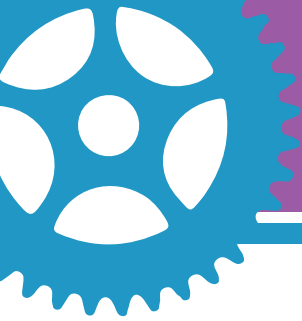
This booklet demystifies the fear of work-related stress and provides practical guidance on how an employer should approach it. Employers have a duty to assess the risks from work to mental health as well as physical health and put in place measures to mitigate this risk. This booklet provides a pathway of how this can be effectively achieved.

Indeed, it is of benefit for employers to consider how the prevention of ill-health due to work-related stress can also sit alongside the promotion of good mental health in the workplace. Developing such a positive culture encourages productive working, clear communication and effective working relationships.

This guide has been produced to provide employers with a valuable source of information and signpost them to further guidance on the management of work-related stress and mental well-being.

Embracing prevention and promotion is therefore in everyone's interest. I encourage everyone to take on board the information provided in this booklet, to protect and improve the health of your business and those who work for you. Good mental well-being at work is good for everyone.

Nicola Monson
Deputy Chief Executive, HSENI

2. Introduction

Mental health
"A state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community."
World Health Organisation (WHO)

Not only is it important to eat the right things and exercise regularly to feel well physically, we also need to look after our mental health. When we are feeling good about ourselves it can be easy to take mental health for granted. But the statistics show that we shouldn't, as approximately one in six British adults[1] experience at least one diagnosable mental health problem at any given time affecting how they think, feel and behave.

The legal implications
Mental well-being must be considered with the same duty of care as physical well-being under health and safety legislation. There is a requirement to assess the risk of stress related ill-health arising from work activities and to take measures to control that risk. The Health and Safety Executive have published Management Standards to provide supporting guidance regarding this. Employers also have duties under equality and other legislation which has a potential to impact on employment practices with respect to mental well-being. A failure to protect the mental health of an employee can result in a civil claim for negligence.

The workplace setting
The way staff are managed can have a significant impact on their resilience and mental health. Good workplaces are also linked to broader positive mental health outcomes such as increased morale, higher performance and all round job satisfaction. In addition employees' mental well-being is a significant factor in building a healthy, inclusive and productive society and improving the mental health of our economy.

"Building resilience to cope with change and periods of adversity is essential in the challenging times that lay ahead for all businesses. Employers can go a long way to creating a healthy and resilient workplace by ensuring jobs are designed well and that work is well managed and organised. Creating the right environment for health and well-being to thrive, depends upon the knowledge and skills of managers and the backing of the senior management team and board."

**Peter Brown,
Head of Health and Work Division,
Health and Safety Executive (HSE).**

1 The Office for National Statistics (2020)

Our levels of mental well-being can vary

There is a spectrum of mental health conditions in the population. These range from common mental health conditions such as anxiety, through to more severe and enduring mental health challenges such as schizophrenia.

Many people experience symptoms of distress, such as sleeplessness, irritability or change in appetite without having a diagnosable mental health condition. Occasionally these symptoms can lead to, or be part of, a mental health condition such as anxiety or depression. For most people such a shift from a high level of mental well-being is temporary. Whereas for others this can be a long-term condition in which they may experience acute phases.

There is a relationship between work-related stress and mental ill-health – excessive and persistent stress can trigger or escalate mental illness. A certain amount of pressure within the workplace can be good for employees but the amount of pressure should be closely monitored so that the employee is not over-stretched to the point that pressure then becomes work-related stress, which can then lead to more serious conditions such as anxiety or depression.

Many people with mental health conditions are working in all levels of employment and can be highly effective. The significant factors for employers and employees are the severity and duration of the symptoms and the impact they have on everyday activities. During this time it may be helpful to consider and develop a person's strengths and capabilities.
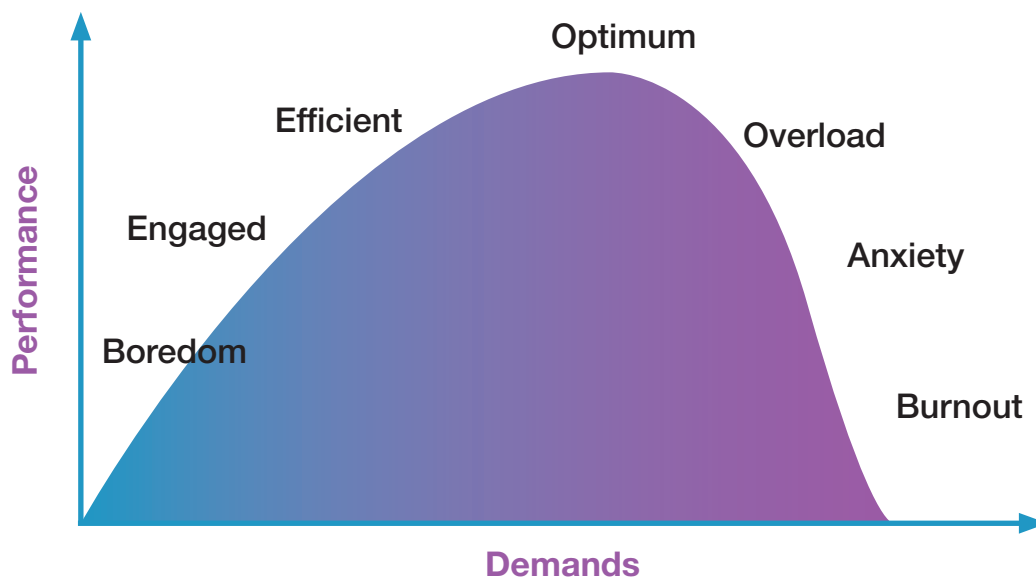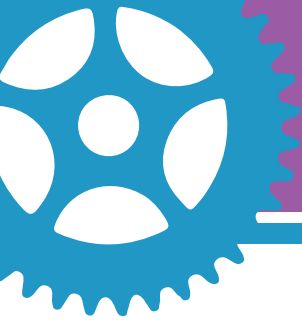
3. Board and Senior Managers' Guidance

In a workplace climate which has to focus on corporate risks and their prevention, strategies which address both the causes and consequences of mental health are increasingly in demand.

Adopting and adhering to formal policies on mental health and stress will clarify the responsibilities of both the individual and the organisation. Assessing the risk and potential causes of stress within your organisation, for example using the Management Standards, provides a means of assessing how your workplace is performing.

Why should the top take notice?

- **To demonstrate leadership towards staff**
  Board members and senior managers are highly influential in defining organisational culture and in setting priorities for employee well-being. They also influence structures to enable employee involvement and engagement at all levels.

- **Accountability**
  Chief Executives are regularly being held to account on issues of public cost such as sickness absence. Directors are similarly answerable to shareholders and business owners are continually seeking efficiencies.

- **Financial reasons**
  Whilst mental health problems are common and can be costly, many are relatively easily managed. Sickness absence, early retirement, increased staff turnover, recruitment and training all impact on resources. Evidence also shows that productivity can be reduced through the lower level of performance of employees who are at work but experiencing stress or mental health issues. This is known as 'presenteeism' and is generally not costed.

- **Legal requirements**
  Addressing work-related stress is a legal requirement under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000. Employment and equality legislation such as Disability Discrimination Act 1995 are also relevant.

- **Corporate responsibility**
  The workplace is a setting in which mental health can be promoted. The need to address mental

well-being within the workplace setting has also been highlighted through for example NI mental health promotion campaigns and more recently in "Promoting mental well-being through productive and healthy working conditions", NICE.

What could my organisation be doing?

Ensure your organisation supports effective actions to enhance mental well-being. For mental health to flourish in an organisation risk factors must be reduced and protective measures enhanced, including:

- Visible commitment to good management practices.
- Adopt and adhere to formal policies on stress and mental health.
- Encourage a culture of openness in relation to mental health issues and thus address stigma.
- Assess the risk and potential causes of stress within your organisation e.g. with the help of HSE's Management Standards.
- Draw up action plans to promote mental well-being and reduce stress.
- Offer interventions to promote mental well-being or rehabilitate staff which may include employee assistance programmes or cognitive behaviour therapy.
- Provide information, instruction and training.
- The above actions will help promote a motivated and productive workforce with a positive sense of well-being.

> "Everyone of us should have the opportunity to benefit from the positive impact that good work has on physical and mental health."
> **Dame Carol Black**

4. Line Managers' Guidance

There is a tendency for people to underestimate the prevalence of mental health conditions and underrate the benefits of optimal well-being[2]. In addition mental well-being must be considered with the same duty of care as physical well-being.

Why address mental well-being in my workplace?

A negative work environment can lead to a range of problems such as sickness absence, poor interpersonal relations, high employee turnover and presenteeism (the lower level of performance of employees who are at work but experiencing stress or mental health problems).

What early warning signs should I look for?

At an individual level harmful levels of stress or lack of mental well-being is often associated with distressing symptoms. These can include - feeling anxious, changes in sleeping or eating patterns, finding it hard to concentrate and loss of confidence. Some of the key things a line manager may observe include changes in an employee's behaviour e.g. poor performance, declining punctuality or conversely increased time at work, reduced social contact, or changes in behaviour.

Why involve the line manager?

Mental well-being is not just a medical or personal issue. The role of the line manager is also key.

• **Good management creates good health**
 Facilitating an environment that generates positive attitudes to mental well-being can help reduce stigma for those experiencing challenges. Stress or mental health awareness training can give staff confidence to respond appropriately to colleagues/employees who are showing signs of distress.

• **Increase job satisfaction**
 Management styles which are fair and encourage staff involvement impact positively and increase job satisfaction and performance[2].

• **Continuity at work**
 Line managers have a pivotal role in identifying and supporting people with health conditions to help them carry on with normal work or adjust responsibilities where necessary.

• **Reduced sickness absence**
 Improving communications and taking time to listen to an employee who is experiencing work-related stress.

• **Challenges helps to support employees**
 While a line manager may often believe that they are not qualified to help an employee who is experiencing mental health challenges, employees find that the open communication and support from their line manager can be one of the most important factors in their recovery or in protecting them from potentially damaging long term sickness.

• **Compliance with legislation**
 Line managers are often tasked with implementing corporate health and safety, employment or equality legislation and may be involved in grievances or claims.

• **Improved organisational efficiencies**
 High levels of individual mental well-being is linked to broader positive outcomes for example better customer service, skills retention and improved resilience for tough times[3].

"It is incumbent upon all of us, whether human resources or occupational health professionals, company directors, employees or indeed line managers to work together to improve workplace health."
Dame Carol Black

2. British Occupational Health Research Foundation (2005) Workplace interventions for people with common mental health problems: Evidence review and recommendations.
3. David Coats, Catherine Max, (2005) Healthy work, productive workplaces: why the UK needs more good jobs.
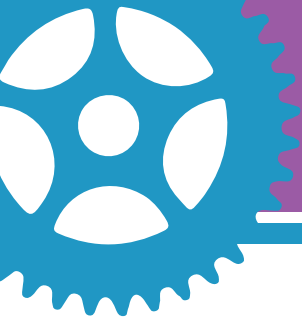
What should I do?

- Ensure that mental well-being is being addressed at an organisational level and participate in this process – for further information see page 12.

- Ensure that you are familiar with legal requirements and associated guidance – for further information see page 14.

- Ensure that you support your own and your colleagues' mental well-being – for further information see page 9.

- Ensure you continue to develop your management competencies. The management competency toolkit below may provide guidance.

A line manager competency indicator tool has been designed which allows managers to identify their strengths and weaknesses with respect to behaviours identified as effective for preventing and reducing stress at work. To download this document please see the following link
www.hseni.gov.uk/stress-management-competency-indicator-tool

Further sources of information

- **www.cipd.co.uk**
  provide information and guidance on managing stress in the workplace.

- **www.equalityni.org**
  The Equality Commission gives advice to reduce inequality e.g. through downloadable publications such as DDA Code of Practice for Employers.

- **www.lgsc.org.uk**
  The Local Government Staff Commission assists councils to address specific workplace health issues and encourages the participation of people with disabilities at all levels.

- **www.lra.org.uk**
  The Labour Relations Agency provides information on stress, and employer and employee rights in the workplace.
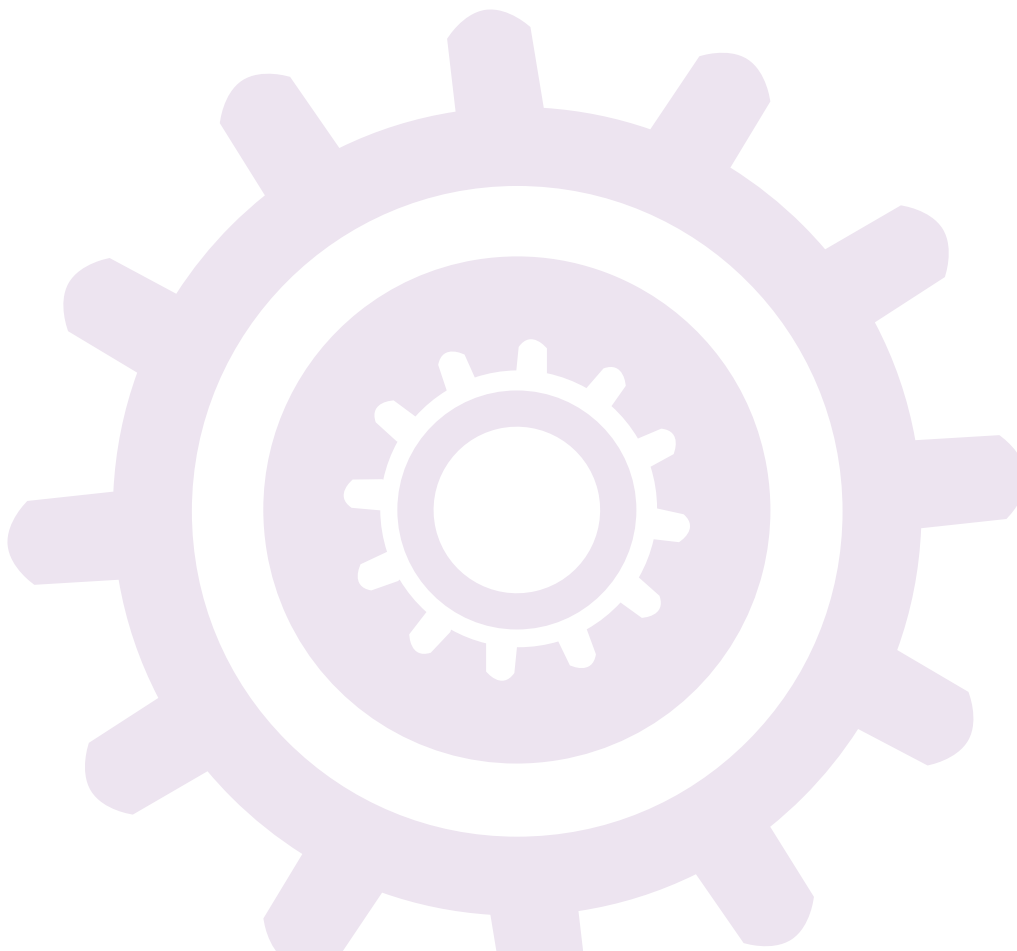
5. Positive well-being for all

Five a day!
Five healthy behaviours have been identified which promote mental health and well-being[4]. It is suggested that we should do these daily.

1. **Connect**
   Building connections with people at work, home or through your interests or community can enrich and bring you support.

2. **Be active**
   Exercising through sports or hobbies makes you feel good and is associated with positive mental health, as well as maintaining fitness.

3. **Take notice**
   Be aware of the world around you, savour the moment and be mindful of your feelings.

4. **Learn new skills**
   The challenge of learning new things increases confidence and can be fun.

5. **Give**
   Helping friends and strangers, smiling, thanking someone or volunteering can be incredibly rewarding.

Recognise a decline in your well-being
It is important to recognise when you are not feeling good. Distressing symptoms which can sometimes arise from harmful levels of stress or may indicate a potential mental health problem include: –

- feeling anxious, worried or overwhelmed by problems
- feeling angry for no reason
- difficulties in communicating
- changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- finding it hard to concentrate or make decisions
- loss of confidence, withdrawing
- impairment in work functioning or
- deteriorating relationships with colleagues, feeling tired or emotional

Take action!
There are a number of active steps we can take to address a decline in well-being:

- **Recognise the symptoms**
  Recognising warning signs when you are becoming stressed or unwell, can allow you to take action so that the effects can be minimised.

- **Develop an awareness of the causes**
  You can then try to put in place some strategies to tackle the issues which cause you difficulties.

- **Ask for help**
  Openly discuss stress with a trusted friend, colleague or support service – this may generate some problem solving strategies.

- **Professional help**
  If you are experiencing growing distress then you may need to seek professional help.

- **Re-examine your lifestyle**
  Try to achieve a good work-life balance.

- **Have pleasure**
  Take time to have pleasure in your day e.g. through hobbies.

- **Unwind**
  Take a break, relax, consider yoga or complementary therapies.

- **Eat healthily**
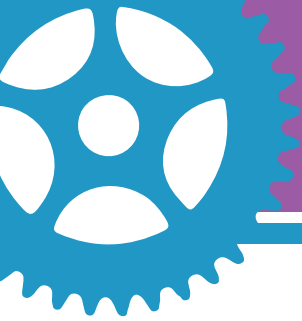 What you eat may have an affect on your mood.

- **Exercise regularly**
  Exercise benefits both mental and physical health.

- **Drink only in moderation**

- **Consider stopping smoking**
  If you smoke consider quitting (get smoking cessation support if necessary).

4. www.mindingyourhead.info

Sources of help and support

Mental Health

www.aware-ni.org.uk
Aware.
Tel Belfast (028 9035 7820)
Tel Derry/L'Derry (028 7126 0602)

www.bullyonline.org
Bully Online offers advice on workplace bullying.

www.lifelinehelpline.info/
Lifeline provides support for those in distress or despair in Northern Ireland.
Tel (0808 808 8000)

www.mentalhealth.org.uk
The Mental Health Foundation provides information to anyone affected by mental health problems.

www.mindingyourhead.info
Provides information for those who are worried about poor mental health or interested in good mental health.

www.mindwisenv.org
Challenging stigma and providing support to those affected by mental health difficulties.
Tel (028 9040 2323)

www.inspirewellbeing.org
Inspire Well-being is a charity and social enterprise whose aim is well-being for all.
Tel (028 9032 8474)

www.pipscharity.com
Prevention of suicide and self harm.
Tel (028 9075 5070)

www.samaritans.org
Confidential emotional support helpline.
Tel (116123)

www.worklifebalancecentre.org
The Work Life Balance Centre.

General health

www.actioncancer.org
Supporting people affected by cancer.
Tel (028 9080 3344)

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
Tel (0800 9177 650)

www.diabetes.org.uk
Diabetes UK.
Tel (028 9066 6646)

www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk
Miscarriage Association.
Tel (01924 200 799)

www.nhs.uk
National Health Service advice on health.

www.nichs.org.uk/
Advice on chest, heart and stroke problems.
Tel (028 9032 0184)

www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health
This website provides readable, user friendly and accurate information about mental health problems.

www.nicva.org/organisation/the-stroke-association-northern-ireland
Stroke Association Northern Ireland.
Tel (028 9050 8020)

www.cancerfocusni.org
Cancer Focus Northern Ireland.
Tel (028 9066 3281)
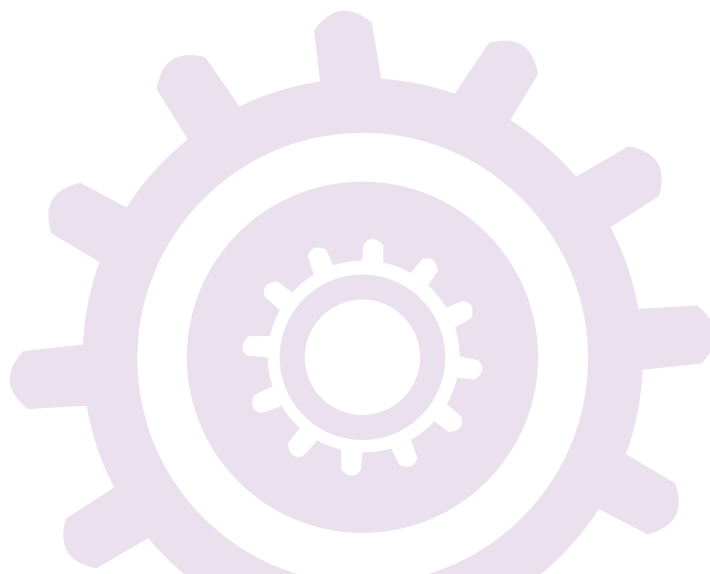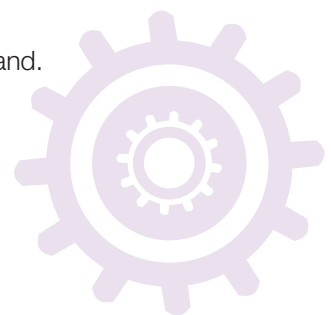
Other

www.ageni.org
Age NI.
Tel (028 9024 5729)

www.cara-friend.org.uk
Supporting and empowering the LGBTQ+
community in Northern Ireland.
Tel (028 9089 0202)

www.carersuk.org
Making life better for carers.

www.citizensadvice.co.uk
Citizens Advice Bureau offers free impartial advice
regarding legal and money problems.

www.cruse.org.uk
Cruise Bereavement Care.
Tel (0808 808 1677)

www.gamcare.org.uk
Confidential advice for those affected by gambling.
Tel (0808 8020 133)

www.mencap.org.uk
Support for those with learning disabilities.
Tel (0808 808 1111)

www.adviceni.net
Help for anyone regarding debt.
Tel (0800 915 4604)

www.niwaf.org
Women's Aid for domestic violence/abuse.
Tel (0800 917 1414)

www.parentingni.org
Guidance on family problems.
Tel (0808 801 0722)

www.relate.org.uk
Relationship support for everyone.
Tel (0300 0030 396)

www.victimsupportni.com
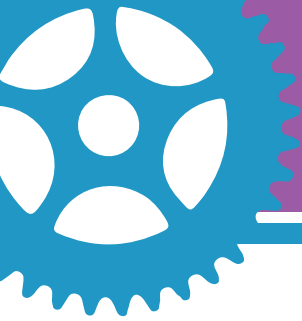Supporting people affected by crime.
Tel Belfast Hub (028 9024 3133)
Tel Foyle Hub (028 7137 0086)

**For a directory of services to help improve
mental health and emotional well-being please
visit the Public Health Agency (PHA) website at
the following link:**

**www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/
directory-services-help-improve-mental-
health-and-emotional-wellbeing**
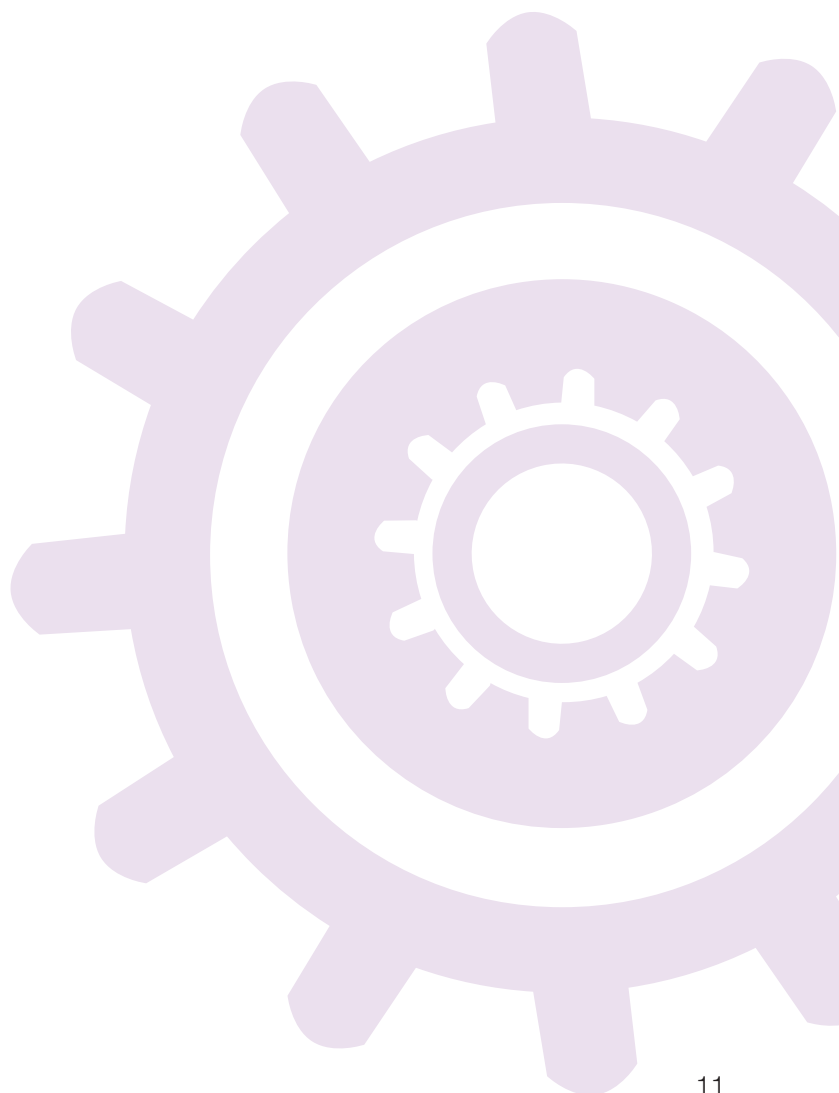
6. Corporate approach to addressing mental well-being

In a workplace climate which has to focus on corporate risks and their prevention, strategies which address both the causes and consequences of mental health are increasingly in demand.

- **Visible commitment to good management practices**
  Mental well-being is not just a medical or personal issue. Good line management can lead to good health, well-being and improved performance.

- **Adopt and adhere to formal policies on stress and mental health**
  Have a strong, comprehensive policy outlining the responsibilities of both the individual and the organisation.

- **Encourage a culture of openness in relation to mental health issues**
  Facilitating an environment that generates positive attitudes to mental well-being can help reduce stigma for those experiencing complications. This should be reinforced by a clear commitment from everyone in the organisation from the Chief Executive down.

- **Assess the risk and potential causes of stress within your organisation**
  The Management Standards process provides a means of assessing how your workplace is performing. Sickness absence records or attitude surveys may also give an indication of well-being.

- **Draw up action plans to promote mental well-being**
  Engage staff and their representatives in drawing up action plans to promote mental well-being and reduce stress.

- **Offer resources and interventions e.g.**
  - **Time**
    A basic resource is to offer time to listen to an employee who is experiencing difficulties. Staff who are experiencing difficulties find that open communication and support from their line manager can be one of the most important factors in their recovery.
  - **Support systems**
    Systems to support employees should be established such as counselling and, where possible, information from this should be analysed to feedback an anonymous overview of organisational issues.
  - **Occupational Health**
    Occupational health professionals can provide advice on the management of individuals, interventions and rehabilitation.
  - **Reasonable adjustments**
    Allow reasonable adjustments, for example, flexi-time, working from home or quiet rooms to help staff manage mental health conditions and work-related stress issues.
  - **Skilled assistance**
    Some charitable mental health organisations provide support to organisations in their approach to mental well-being and stress at work, including provision of psychological therapies.

- **Provide information, instruction and training**
  This can support staff in managing stress and improving mental well-being for themselves and others. Appropriate training may include training in stress awareness, mental health first aid, time management, team building, communication, managing sickness absence and rehabilitation etc.

"A culture of well-being, driven by great people management, is good for employees and good for business. It makes the workplace a more productive, attractive and socially responsible place to work."
HEALTH AND WELL-BEING AT WORK Survey Report March 2020 conducted by CIPD in partnership with Simply Health.

Further resources

Useful information can be gained from routinely mapping progress against key indicators. Resources which support relevant measurements at an organisational level are listed below.

The Absence Management section of the CIPD website provides a wealth of information on absence management practices and procedures including identifying an absence problem, developing an absence strategy and dealing with short and long-term absence.
www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/ relations/absence

The Costing tool for promoting mental well-being at work helps organisations to assess the costs of mental ill-health for their workforce and estimate potential savings.
www.nice.org.uk/PH22

Further sources of information

www.bitcni.org.uk
Business in the Community works with companies to inspire better business in the workplace and other settings.

www.cipd.co.uk
Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

www.eapa.org.uk
Employee Assistance Professionals Association provide information on Employee Assistance Programmes.

www.makeuk.org
The Manufacturers' Organisation.
Make UK is focused on creating the most supportive environment for UK manufacturers to thrive, innovate and compete.

www.equalityni.org
The Equality Commission for NI is working to eliminate discrimination, reduce inequality, protect human rights and to build good relations, ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to participate in society.

www.iod.com
The Institute of Directors is a business network offering advice.

www.isma.org.uk
The International Stress Management Association UK provides guidance for managers and organisations on stress management.

www.lgsc.org.uk
The Local Government Staff Commission provides guidance for all councils on stress prevention and management.

www.mindfulemployer.net
Information on managing stress and mental health in the workplace.

www.mindwisenv.org
A leading membership charity which supports those affected by severe mental illness, other mental health difficulties and promotes early intervention.
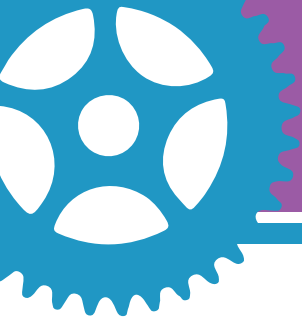
www.inspirewellbeing.org
Inspire work with people living with mental ill health, intellectual disability, autism and addictions to ensure they live with dignity and realise their full potential.

www.tuc.org.uk
The Trade Union Congress.

7. Legislation, guidance and management standards

Health and Safety legislation

Mental well-being must be considered with the same duty of care as physical well-being. Under the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978, employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees at work. This duty of care applies to both mental and physical well-being. Additionally, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (NI) 2000 place a duty on employers to assess risks to health. In 2004 the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) published Management Standards to provide supporting guidance to the legislation and these are described overleaf. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action but if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law.

Equality legislation

Some people might be considered to be disabled for the purposes of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) as a result of their mental health conditions. These people will be protected by DDA. Not all people with mental health conditions will be deemed to be disabled – much depends on the nature of the condition. The DDA makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a disabled person with respect to various aspects of employment and imposes a duty to make reasonable adjustments for particular disabled employees. Changes to the DDA by the Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006 mean that mental illness no longer has to be a clinically well-recognised condition to be covered. It is good practice for employers to take reasonably practicable steps to prevent disability discrimination from occurring, for example, by implementing the good practices in section 6 of this document - A Corporate approach to Addressing Mental Well-being.

The Disability Discrimination Act Code of Practice for Employers is designed to assist employers as part of their overall Employment Equality Plan. The code, which is available to download from the Equality Commissions website www.equalityni.org, aims to provide employers with practical guidance on how to comply with their responsibilities regarding disability.

Other legislation

Other legislation which has a potential to impact on mental well-being at work includes the Protection from Harassment (NI) Order 1997 and the Working Time Regulations (NI) 1998.

The Civil Implications

A failure to protect the mental health of an employee by an employer can result in a civil claim for negligence by the employee. The courts have produced points which clarify their expectations of a reasonable employer. Recent cases in the civil courts have reinforced the need for well-developed management systems for preventing and dealing with stress. This is an evolving area of litigation and judgements continue to be refined.

A comprehensive review covering the most informative landmark cases and other relevant case law, can be accessed through attending the Labour Relations Agency's free half day seminar on the subject.

The details can be obtained on the LRA website www.lra.org.uk. The LRA helpline 03300 552 220 is available to deal with specific queries that employers or employees may have about the management of workplace stress.

> "There is a need for consistent, open, honest and compassionate discussions around mental health and well-being in the workplace and this requires a cultural shift that is modelled from executive level down."
> **Jane Muston**
> **Clinical Director at Vita Health Group - Benenden Health - Mental Well-being Report - September 2020**

The Management Standards

HSE has developed management standards, risk assessment tools and case studies to help employers and employees work together to prevent excessive pressures in the workplace.

These can be viewed in full at HSE's website www.hse.gov.uk. The process of implementing and embedding the good practices of the management standards into the organisation involves several stages.

These stages are based on the familiar "Five Steps to Risk Assessment".

They are:

Step 1: Identifying the stress risk factors

The standards outline six key aspects of work which can adversely affect employee health if not properly managed. These risk factors are demands, control, support, relationships, role and change.

Step 2: Decide who might be harmed and how

Deciding who might be harmed involves gathering data so that areas of good and poor practice can be identified. The HSE Management Standards Indicator Tool (a questionnaire) and the associated Analysis Tool rates employees' perceptions of the six stress factors. A variety of data sources (e.g. sickness absence, staff turnover, etc.) should be consulted to get a more rounded view of the organisation's performance.

Step 3: Evaluate the risks

The previous data should be reviewed in conjunction with the management standards. Employees should be consulted regarding achieving a positive working environment. This is best done using focus groups to produce potential solutions.

Step 4: Record your findings

Develop and implement action plans. Steering groups have proven useful for prioritising potential solutions and planning on-the-ground implementation. Actions need to be agreed with senior management and union representatives. The action plan should be made known to staff.
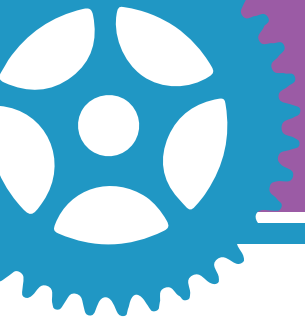
Step 5: Monitor and review

To complete the process progress should be monitored against action plans to ensure they have been completed and to evaluate their effectiveness.

Further Resources:

HSENI has a number of case studies from local organisations who have used the HSE management standards approach.

The case studies are available at www.hseni.gov.uk/stress

The HSENI website also includes resources which will help employers follow the best practice outlined in HSE's management standards for work-related stress.

Notes

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CONTROLLING RISK TOGETHER

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