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Greater resilience, better care

A guide for adult social care managers to help them to reduce work-related stress and build the resilience of staff

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/GreaterResilience

Introduction

> **Working in care can be hugely rewarding, but it's also well recognised that it has the potential to be emotionally demanding. We know that supporting the wellbeing and resilience of our staff is vitally important to ensuring we offer a great service.**
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> Catherine Robertson, Registered Manager

This guide is for managers in adult social care services, and individual employers, to support them to reduce work-related stress and build the resilience of their staff.

Stress is a signi cant cause of mental and physical ill-health, and can contribute to errors and misjudgements, low morale, sickness absence, burnout and high staff turnover – which all undermine quality care and support.

Being resilient will help staff to manage stressful situations, protect them from mental ill-health and improve their health and wellbeing. At work, this ensures that they continue to do their job well and deliver high-quality care and support.

It's not possible to take all of the stress out of care work, which is why it's important that everyone in adult social care is supported to develop their resilience, and that employers take steps to reduce work-related stress.

This guide explains what resilience is and why it matters, states your responsibilities as an employer, and shares how you can reduce work-related stress and develop the resilience of your staff.

It gives practical ideas and examples about how to ensure that your management systems reduce stress at work and support resilient behaviours, how to develop resilience through learning and development, and how to build a positive workplace culture that fosters and embeds resilience.

The guide will help you to think about what you currently do to reduce work-related stress and build resilience, and what you could improve.

Contents

What is resilience?

What do we mean by resilience?

Simply put, resilience is the ability to cope under pressure and recover from difculties.

A person who has good resilience copes well under pressure and can bounce back more quickly than someone whose resilience is less developed.

What does resilience look like?

There are some behaviours that are associated with resilience, for example:

- understanding and valuing the meaning of what you do
- greeting new situations, people and demands with a positive attitude
- doing what you can to get on with other people
- taking a problem-solving approach to difculty
- keeping a sense of perspective when things go wrong
- being exible and willing to adapt to change
- drawing on a range of strategies to cope with pressure
- recognising your thoughts and emotions, and managing them
- taking responsibility for your own behaviour, including mistakes
- asking for help when you need it
- being willing to persevere when the going gets tough
- recognising and respecting your own limits, including what you can control and what you can't.

The way that we behave is shaped by a range of factors, including personality and past experience, as well as current circumstances and the people around us. All of these things inuence a person's resilience.

Everybody has resilience, but some people may have qualities that make them more resilient than others.

Here are some of the things that make a person resilient:

- condence and self-belief
- feeling that what you do has meaning and value
- empathy and the ability to form positive relationships with others
- effective strategies to cope with pressure
- access to support.

These things can be developed and supported, therefore there's lots that you, as an employer, can do to build staff resilience.

Why does resilience matter?

Stress is a signi cant cause of mental and physical ill-health, and work-related stress is an issue in social care. Yes, care work is rewarding – we make a positive difference to people's lives – but it's also inherently stressful.

Stress can contribute to errors and misjudgements, low morale, sickness absence, burnout and high staff turnover – which all undermine quality care and support.

It's not possible to take all of the stress out of care work, which is why it's important that everyone in adult social care is supported to develop their resilience, and that employers take steps to reduce work-related stress.

Who's responsible for resilience?

Everyone has a responsibility for resilience.

Health and safety law requires employers and employees to take action on stress at work, which includes building resilience.

Employer responsibilities

Employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare of all of their employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide Act 2007.

This means making sure that employees and others are protected from anything that may cause harm, and that measures are taken to minimise any risks to injury or health.

Employers must assess the risk of stress-related ill health from work activities and take action to control that risk.

This includes:

- keeping up to date with good practice related to workplace stress
- monitoring indicators of stress-related illness, such as absenteeism, turnover, poor performance and con ict
- addressing workplace stress in health and safety policy
- carrying out regular risk assessments and acting on their ndings
- addressing workplace stress, for example by building resilience.

Line managers play an important role in meeting these responsibilities, including:

- identifying, addressing and monitoring potential sources of workplace stress, for example through supervision with employees
- investigating whether performance issues are stress-related
- ensuring that resilient behaviours are put into practice.

Employee's also have a responsibility to take care of themselves, and others who are affected by their work activities, and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

Employee responsibilities

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Employee's must:

- inform their employer if pressure at work is putting them, or anyone else, at risk of ill health
- be involved in assessing risks and suggest ways to reduce workplace stress
- undertake and follow training that their employer provides to support them
- discuss any reasonable adjustments that could be made to support them in the workplace
- tell their employer when safety measures aren't adequate or if something changes.

You can download our 'Building your own resilience, health and wellbeing' guide which is for anyone working in adult social care and explains how you can build your own resilience.

If you're an employee, it explains what resilience is and has practical tips and activities to help you to think about and build your own resilience.

If you're an employer or manager, you can signpost your staff to the guide to help them to build their own resilience.

Download your free copy from: **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/BuildingResilience**

The role of resilience

These health and safety responsibilities can, in part, be met by developing resilience. This guide explains some of the ways that employers can develop the resilience of their employees.

You can also download our 'Developing resilience in practice' guide, which shares examples and templates from adult social care employers about how they build and support the resilience of their staff.

Download your free copy from: **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/ResiliencePractice**

Developing resilience in your organisation

This section of the guide explains some of the ways that you can reduce work-related stress and develop resilience, including:

Management systems

There are lots of ways that you can support resilience through your management systems, which include the policies, processes and procedures that guide how you do things in your workplace.

They should enable and support you to reduce work-related stress and build resilience, for example, by:

organising work in a way that protects the wellbeing of your staff

raising awareness of stress and how to manage it throughout the employment cycle

ensuring that systems are in place to identify, investigate and resolve problems.

Ultimately, it's all about good people management. Here are some tips to help you to support resilience through management systems, including:

values-based recruitment

induction and on-boarding

stress management

learning and development

organisational health and wellbeing initiatives.

Values-based recruitment

Values-based recruitment is an approach to recruitment that involves establishing strong workplace values and ensuring that your workforce matches them.

Recruiting individuals whose values align with those of your organisation makes it more likely that individuals will nd their work meaningful and worthwhile – which supports resilient behaviours.

Induction and on-boarding

A thorough induction ensures that new staff are properly trained and integrated into your workplace. This helps individuals to feel con dent, valued and supported in their new role – which supports resilient behaviours.

You could also include resilience training as part of the induction process.

Stress management

Effective stress management uses dialogue and consultation to address the six primary sources of stress at work - demands, control, support, relationships, role clarity and change.

It helps to ensure that pressures are manageable and that staff feel listened to and supported. The dialogue and consultation involved also offers staff valuable learning about stress and stress management.

Learning and development

Learning and development ensures that staff are confident and competent in their role - which supports resilient behaviours.

Staff can also do learning and development about resilience, to raise their awareness, improve their skills and learn the best ways to deal with the pressures of the role.

Ongoing support

Ongoing support can happen in lots of ways, for example supervision, appraisal, team meetings, on-the-job coaching, mentoring, behaviour modelling, peer learning, staff consultations, quality champions and recognition and reward schemes.

They give staff the opportunity to reflect on what's working and what isn't, discuss any issues, and identify areas for development.

They're a great way to engage staff in the meaning and purpose of what they're doing, which supports resilient behaviours.

Organisational health and wellbeing policies and initiatives

You might have policies that specifically support resilience, health and wellbeing, for example, a policy that explains what support staff can access if they're supporting someone at the end of their life.

HSE Management Standards approach

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has developed a set of Management Standards to help employers tackle work-related stress. They demonstrate good practice through a step-by-step risk assessment approach and support employers to:

- assess their current situation
- identify the main risk factors
- explore the underlying causes of work-related stress
- promote discussions with employees to decide what practical improvements they need to make
- monitor progress, including indicators of stress-related illness such as absenteeism, turnover, con ict and poor performance
- address workplace stress when planning organisational change.

The Standards cover six primary sources of stress at work and help you to put processes in place to manage them.

The primary sources of stress are identi ed as:

- **demands:** this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment
- **control:** how much say the person has in the way that they do their work
- **support:** this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
- **relationships:** this includes promoting positive working to avoid con ict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
- **role:** whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have con icting roles
- **change:** how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

These are the areas that 'if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and wellbeing, lower productivity and increased sickness absence'.

Find out more about the standards, including a free workbook and lea ets, at: **www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm**

If you choose to use a different approach to stress management, use HSE's 'Equivalency Checklist' to map your current approach against the standards.

Learning and development

Learning and development can equip staff with the skills, knowledge and values that underpin resilient behaviours.

Resilience is a behaviour, and is a product of people's:

Re ective team learning

It's important that any learning is done together, as a team.

Behaviour at work is often a team behaviour, so it's important that people learn together so that everyone knows the correct and appropriate way to act and behave. It will also help you to embed resilient behaviours as 'the norm' in your workplace.

Re ective team learning is when staff engage in a collective discussion about the meaning of their practical, day-to-day work, and asks them to consider what they're doing and why. It's an opportunity to talk about work-related stress and resilience, as well as developing resilience behaviours such as:

developing a shared understanding of what they do at work and why – this gives meaning to the work and makes everyone feel part of a team

participating in team discussions and connecting with colleagues

re ecting on their experiences and nding solutions.

Resilience-building programme

There are lots of opportunities to embed learning and development about resilience into your existing practice.

Introduce the concept of resilience, i.e. what it is and why it matters, at induction.

Reinforce understanding of resilience throughout the employment cycle, for example in supervision, appraisal, team meetings, coaching and mentoring.

Embed resilience in management systems, such as policies, procedures, quality initiatives and leadership behaviours.

Learning and development, for example, training, workshops, workplace coaching, mentoring, team discussion, critical re ection, peer learning and self-study.

It's important to reinforce resilient behaviours in everyday work-life. Simply reminding staff

Positive workplace culture

Workplace culture is an important part of managing work-related stress and promoting resilience.

One of the most famous de nitions of workplace culture is 'the way we do things around here' (Bower, 1966).

Workplace culture is the character and personality of your workplace. It's made up of the people and systems that interact within it.

Leaders and managers are responsible for creating and maintaining the right culture for their team.

In terms of resilience, they're responsible for setting the culture, and leading by example by demonstrating resilient behaviours and reinforcing behaviours in staff.

What does a culture that fosters resilience look like?

A culture that fosters resilience includes staff being encouraged to:

- speak up and ask any questions
- talk about their feelings and any challenges that they're facing, both in and out of work
- maintain composure during 'emergencies' and times of heightened stress
- seek out expertise rather than simply relying on another worker's rank or seniority
- keep an eye on their work colleagues and offer support
- be able to express when there's a need to switch to and from 'emergency' modes of operating.
- thank others for their help and discuss any other challenges.

Putting these strategies into place can help you to develop a resilient team and culture.

> "My work is worthwhile. I'm part of a team that makes the world a better place for people. I feel respected and supported by the people around me, who I respect and support. Yes, there are pressures, but the support is there. Problems too, but we solve them. That is what makes the job interesting and rewarding. It gives me the chance to use my skills and to develop myself. All in all, I'm in a good place with my work and that helps me to feel good about life!"

Blame culture v learning culture

Blame culture

Here are some other websites that you might find useful.

Health and Safety Executive	