

# MOMENTS THAT MATTER: STRESS

Stress is the feeling of being under too much mental or emotional pressure. It can manifest itself in several ways and can be caused by many factors that can be work or non-work related, and often a combination of both. Stress is not an illness, but if pressure is prolonged or intense, it can lead to stress related ill health. Stress-related absence can impact on the performance of the business and the general wellbeing of the team.

This support document is designed to help raise awareness and to provide useful information to anyone impacted by stress.

## What are the signs of stress?

There are inevitably times in our lives where excessive pressure may lead to stress, but you don't need to cope alone. It's important to be aware of the signs and symptoms.

### Symptoms

Some of the most typical symptoms of stress include:

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Having racing thoughts or difficulty concentrating
- Being irritable and impatient
- Feeling constantly worried, anxious or scared
- Feeling a lack of self confidence
- Avoiding things or people you're having problems with
- Finding it hard to make decisions
- Eating or drinking more or less than usual
- Having trouble sleeping or feeling tired a lot of the time.

## What should I do if I feel stressed?

When it comes to emotions, it can sometimes be hard to recognise or admit that you're not feeling 100%. If you think you're struggling with your wellbeing and having difficulties at work because of stress, there are several things you can do.

### Tips to help

- Speak to your manager or a colleague if you feel stressed, regardless of whether that stress has been caused from situations at work or home
- Plan for stressful days or events. Making a list of things to remember can help relieve unnecessary pressure
- Build time into your day to stop and relax
- Investigate health and wellbeing opportunities and look after your physical and mental health
- Try practicing mindfulness – it might help you find calmness and clarity to respond to stressful situations
- Make use of the free confidential services available to you from the employee assistance programme, provided by LPF (see page 2)
- Seek support from your GP or other health

## How can managers offer support?

Your role is pivotal in identifying and managing excessive pressures at work. You have knowledge of your team and their usual working styles. This insight can allow you to identify uncharacteristic behaviour that could be an early warning sign of a potential issue. To manage any potential issues effectively you need to be supportive and sympathetic so that employees feel comfortable to speak openly.

Here are some key points to consider:

- Provide clarity of what's expected in the role and how it should be done, with supporting feedback, coaching and development
- Active work force planning to ensure the right resources are in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing, in a planned and balanced way
- Routinely monitor workload and working time to ensure a fair distribution of work and balance
- Encourage open discussions to identify potential stressors
- Use regular one-to-ones to discuss any issues or concerns
- Monitor sickness absence – higher levels of short term, frequent absence may be an early indicator of stress related issues
- Ensure that your team know that it's safe and right to be able to raise concerns with you.

If anyone in your team raises concerns about stress you must complete the stress risk assessment form located in the Health & Safety folder in Bamboo HR.

This document is intended to identify stressors and ways to improve them. If you need any support completing this form, please contact the People and Communications Team.

## What resources are available to help?

The [NHS](#) has helpful advice and information on coping with stress.

[Mind](#) has clear and helpful advice on how to recognise the symptoms of stress.

[Mental Health Organisation](#) helps you identify when you're being affected by stress and gives you some tips for overcoming it.

**Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** – Call confidentially for immediate advice and support on 0800 882 4102. They'll offer one of the following:

- Direct support, advice, or information
- Appointment for telephone or face to face counselling
- Signposting for other advice
- Referral to another agency if required, for example Occupational Health, GP, or Social Services.

### Occupational Health (PAM)

You'll need the following access details:

- Username: CEC
- Password: CEC 1

### Top tips to deal with stress and burnout

 <b>Split up big tasks</b> <p>If a task seems overwhelming and difficult to start, try breaking it down into easier chunks, and give yourself credit for completing them.</p>	 <b>Allow yourself some positivity</b> <p>Take time to think about the good things in your life. Each day, consider what went well and try to list 3 things you're thankful for.</p>
 <b>Challenge unhelpful thoughts</b> <p>The way we think affects the way we feel. Watch our video to learn how to challenge unhelpful thoughts.</p> <p><a href="#">Reframing unhelpful thoughts video</a></p>	 <b>Be more active</b> <p>Being active can help you to burn off nervous energy. It will not make your stress disappear, but it can make it less intense.</p> <p><a href="#">Home workout videos</a></p>
 <b>Talk to someone</b> <p>Trusted friends, family and colleagues, or contacting a helpline, can help us when we are struggling. Watch our video for more ideas.</p>	 <b>Plan ahead</b> <p>Planning out any upcoming stressful days or events – a to-do list, the journey you need to do, things you need to take – can really help.</p>