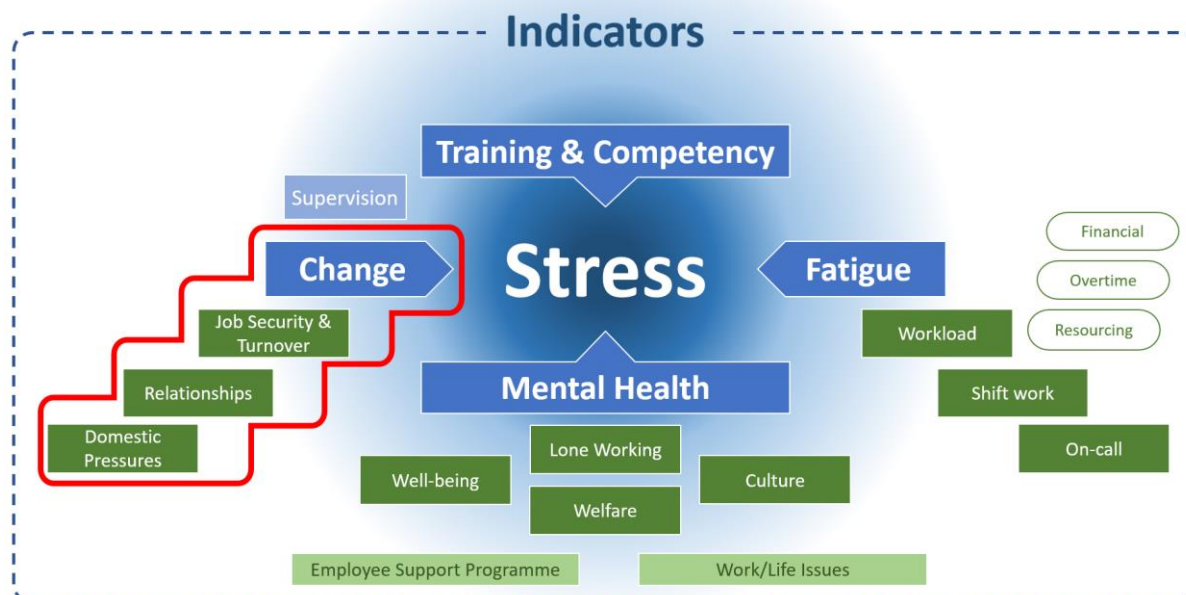


## CDOIF: Change - A guide to recognising, managing & coping with change.



Remember, we can all experience problems, so consider your own mental health, well-being and stress levels.

**Any major life changes**, a happy event such as a wedding or a job promotion or unpleasant events, such as a divorce, major financial setback, or death in the family can be significant sources of stress for your workers. Having mechanisms in place to support your workers will have a beneficial impact.

### What is change and why should an employer be concerned about change and how it affects workers?

Few things in life remain constant, change is a fact of life. However, change can impact people in different ways. Common areas of change are:

- Change of management structure or company ownership – merger or acquisition.
- Promotion, job restructuring or redeployment.
- New legislative requirements with increased workload and documentation.
- Return to the workplace following long absence or working from home.
- Personal pressures e.g. marriage, divorce, buying/selling houses, births, deaths, childcare.

Don't under-estimate the impact of small changes.

### How do I know if I have a problem?

There is no hard and fast way to identify when internal or external change factors are impacting staff well-being. The degree of resilience or susceptibility will also vary from person to person as well as from situation to situation.

There are several indicators suggesting that individuals or teams may not be coping, which include:

- Increase in accidents and near-misses.
- Decrease in productivity or quality of output.
- Decrease in engagement on consultation around company changes.
- Increase in use of grievance procedure.
- Decrease in morale and lack of engagement with colleagues.
- Group huddles i.e. private gossip or dissent within a small or closed group.
- Increase in absence or evidence of presenteeism with a change in absence pattern – such as repeated short-term absences.

### **What should I be doing?**

- Preparing to spot these impacts early will allow you to act or put plans into place before an issue escalates.
- Ensuring staff know they can talk to the organisation without fear of repercussions, which could reassure someone who is struggling to cope with a change - communication is key when making planned changes.
- Providing and communicating timelines for change with the workforce such as placing information on notice boards or in locker rooms as a visual reminder.
- Implementing an open culture, which can have a positive impact by encouraging staff to discuss issues or concerns.
- Where changes are being made in the workplace, ensuring workers affected receive appropriate training for their new responsibilities, roles or tasks.

### **How can I do it?**

- Implement awareness training on how change happens and the impact it has on people.
- Provide clear, transparent, and timely communication by introducing a system to enable staff to comment and ask questions before, during and after the change. This will help reduce fears and prevent misinformation in the workplace, which is likely to increase the risks of stress building up in vulnerable staff.
- Have a change process that maps the change, especially if it is an organisational change, with clear check points or pauses to assess the impact and effectiveness of the change along its journey.
- Implement an effective 'Open door policy'. There needs to be an ability to start confidential and sensitive discussions without fear of reprisals or information being made public.
- Utilise HR and consider implementing/encouraging use of an employee assistance program (EAP) to provide support during any change.

**Further Information:**

**(1) OECD guidance on change of ownership in hazardous facilities:**

[one.oecd.org/document/ENV/JM/MONO\(2018\)31/En/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/ENV/JM/MONO(2018)31/En/pdf)

Disclaimer

*This briefing note is shared in order to promote learning and improve safety. You should seek appropriate guidance regarding the relevance, accuracy, and completeness of this information to your circumstances prior to implementation.*