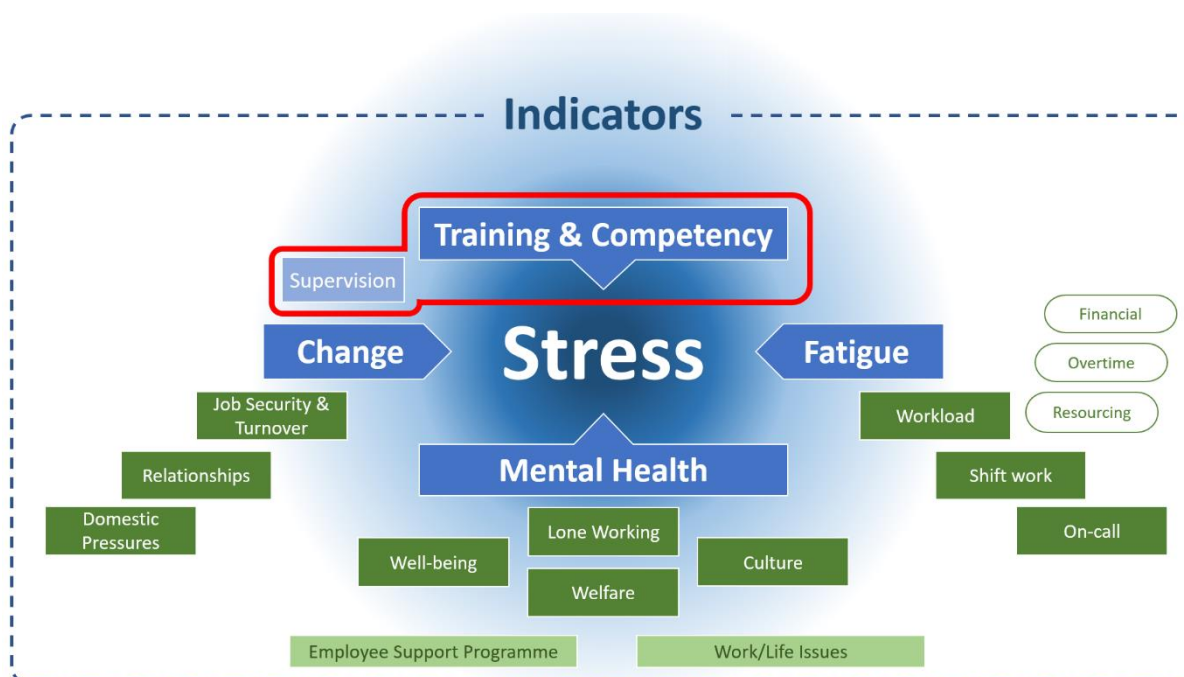


CDOIF: Training, Competence and Supervision - A guide to recognising how training, competence and supervisions impacts workplace stress



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

What is competence, and why is training, competence and supervision important?

Competence can best be described as the combination of training, skills, experience, and knowledge that a person has, and their ability to apply them to perform a task safely and effectively. Supervision is an important element too. Other factors, such as attitude and physical ability, will also affect a person's competence.

Furthermore, understanding competence helps you identify the skills needed to understand and manage stress/stressors in the workplace. Training might take the form of a recognised external qualification to help people understand stress at work.

It can also focus on the people skills needed to manage or people and their workplace stressors (e.g. not being trained in the correct use of PPE or being asked to do a presentation outside of your competency area).

Lack of competence, confidence and training, or the supervision needed to carry out required work, can raise anxiety and stress levels and consequently, may increase the likelihood of accidents and incidents.

Training, competence and supervision are important components of workplace activities. They help with:

- Identifying strengths and weaknesses
- Identifying baseline skills needed to do the job (i.e. competence standards). This helps to manage worker and manager expectations – particularly where workers need to multi-task and carry out different roles. Being aware and supporting each other is important.
- Advising workers what they need to understand to undertake the job safely and effectively. This gives workers confidence to complete the task and identify the limits of the job.

Why should an employer be concerned about suitable and sufficient training, including supervision?

Everyone who works for you needs to know how to work safely and without risk to their health. This includes contractors and self-employed people. You must give your workers clear instructions and information, as well as adequate training and supervision – e.g. site induction.

Make sure you include employees with specific training needs, for example new recruits, people changing jobs or taking on extra responsibilities, young employees and health and safety representatives.

The information and training should be easy to understand. Everyone working for you should know what they are expected to do. An employer should assess a worker's knowledge and fill any gaps identified.

How do I know if I have a problem?

Operations and/or tasks might not be completed to required standards or there may be an increase in accidents or near misses. This may be due to people not following procedures and might be identified during investigations or audits.

It could reveal issues with how health and safety is generally communicated within your workplace, with poor or decreasing levels of engagement resulting in employees under performing or mistakes being repeated. Examples may include:

- Unwillingness to report or communicate issues & concerns
- Lack of open-door engagement between management and staff
- Staff saying what you want to hear rather than what you should know
- Managers struggling with their own workload, and inability to delegate
- Poor uptake where training is provided, including technical and managerial skills

What should I be doing?

Ensure/encourage appropriate levels of competence and confidence by implementing a learning and development plan. Ensure this includes 'soft' people and management skills e.g.

- Communication - including giving and receiving feedback
- Engagement
- Supervision
- Team building

Ensure there is an open-door culture, where employees feel it is safe and are comfortable reporting and sharing issues.

Treat people who report issues with respect, discretion and without fear of reprimand - do not dismiss their concerns with 'banter'. It is essential that reported issues are acted on in a timely manner.

This will quickly build trust amongst the workforce and help bridge gaps in other areas of the business in terms of relationships with the workforce. From an external and qualitative perspective, ensure robust and tested systems are in place e.g. audits.

How can I do it?

By evaluating your organisation's activities and identifying areas that require certain levels of skill/training/experience.

By creating training specific to the activity, capturing key criteria to ensure tasks/operations are completed safely and effectively. An effective way of capturing training, competency and supervisory requirements for your staff is to involve them. This can be achieved by:

- Encouraging and acting on feedback - with a culture of trust and discretion employees will be more likely to raise areas where their competence and skills may need improving.
- Removing the fear factor of reporting incidents and near misses.
- Analysing incidents to identify underlying factors that might indicate problems with competence. For example, is additional learning needed? Incident analysis can highlight areas for improvement to help reduce the likelihood of accidents and near misses and this might include the need for an upskilled workforce.
- Equally, the same principles should be provided for supervisory level roles. They are likely to require training in management duties and skills.
- Ensure that staff are suitably recognised and appreciated for the job they are expected to do. Be clear and upfront what the requirements and tasks of the job are. Be clear where flexibility is needed and expected.
- Build a no-blame culture. This will encourage employees to be forthcoming with issues and present an opportunity to rectify and avoid repeat occurrences.

Further Information:

- (1) HSE Online guidance – What is competence?
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/competence/what-is-competence.htm>
- (2) Health and safety training – a brief guide. INDG 345 Rev
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg345.htm>
- (3) HSE online guidance – Provide information, training and supervision
[Provide information, training and supervision: Overview - HSE](#)

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.