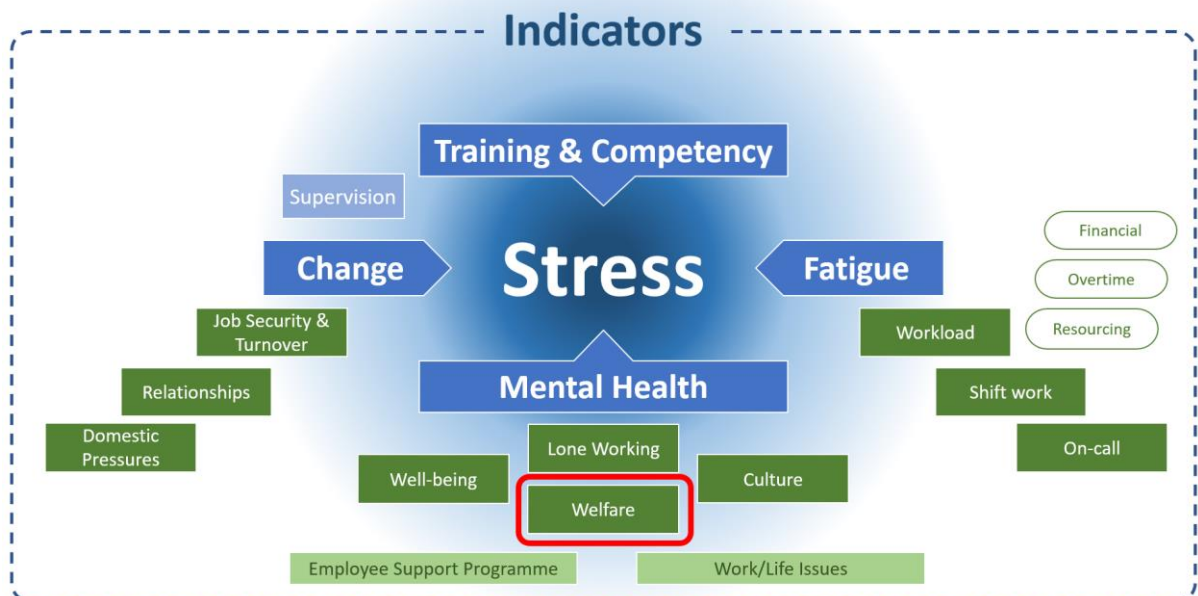


CDOIF: STRESS – Mental Health: A guide to recognising and managing welfare issues within the workplace



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

What is welfare within the workplace?

To many, welfare is often seen as just physical infrastructure such as washing facilities, a canteen etc, but they do not often consider the negative impact that poor provision and design of these facilities can have on a person's mental health and even the culture of the organisation and its employees.

Why should an employer be concerned about welfare, and how can effective management have a positive impact?

Employees and management need to have areas where they can rest and unwind during breaks, without feeling they are being monitored. Such environments help to foster trust and develop relationships where people feel at ease in raising issues and challenges, which are fundamental building blocks of a safe working culture.

How do I know if I may have a problem?

- People no longer gather in communal areas during breaks
 - Due to a lack of physical facilities for people to take breaks together or across other teams/departments/management.
 - Poor levels of cleanliness of facilities may encourage solo breaks, either at desks or within a vehicle
 - Both above bullets can foster a sense of isolated working and poor empathy or understanding towards others. This in turn can lead to the development of a poor working culture.

- Poor engagement
 - Deterioration of peer to peer support – employees lose touch with others not within their team or line managers responsibility which can lead to poor understanding or empathy of others needs and priorities.

What should I be doing?

In many cases welfare concerns can be addressed with minimal expenditure, but if no facilities are provided then investment or creative solutions may be needed.

- Cleaning regime – Review any cleaning regime of welfare facilities such as washrooms and canteens or implement one if absent. This can include spot checks by management or identified persons such as safety or union reps.
- Size of facilities – Are there adequate facilities or size of canteen to accommodate employees.
- Laundry facilities – Ensure clean and dirty PPE is kept separate, and there is sufficient locker space.
- Ensure welfare is an agenda item at meetings with site Safety or Union Reps to allow welfare issues or concerns to be raised with and actioned by management.
- Ensure that transient workers, i.e. contractors or drivers, have access to suitable facilities or can share existing-site facilities, and that any separate facilities are maintained and cleaned to the same standard.

How can I do it?

- Ensure that issues raised at meetings are documented and acted upon, with feedback being provided to the originator.
- Consider creating or proving an outside rest space to be used during good weather, as this can promote a higher sense of well-being being.
- Avoid separate facilities for employees, contractors, and management, encouraging mixing of teams and departments where possible to help build understanding, relationships and even empathy across the business
- Promote a healthy working culture. This can be achieved with a notice board or desk bulletin to provide healthy lifestyle advice. You might consider options like providing fresh fruit, holding competitions, providing or encouraging healthy breakfasts, health and lifestyle goals (e.g. achieving 10,000 steps a day), lunchtime walks etc.

By taking these steps and actively engaging and asking about the welfare of others, be that physically or mentally, the organisation can demonstrate that it cares about its workforce at all levels and that they matter.

Further Information

(1) HSE Stress website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm>

(2) Mental Health and Work, (Royal College of Psychiatrists 2008)

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/212266/hwb-mental-health-and-work.pdf

(3) Tackling workplace stress using the HSE Stress Management Standards - TUC and HSE guidance for health and safety representatives (TUC/HSE 2017)

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/tacking-workplace-stress-guide.pdf>

(4) IOSH (Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) – Stress -

<https://www.iosh.co.uk/Books-and-resources/Our-OH-toolkit/Stress.aspx>

(5) How to tackle work-related stress: A guide for employers on making the Management Standards work

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg430.pdf>

(6) [Stress Workbook \(hse.gov.uk\)](#)

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.