Understanding causes of workplace stress

NetworkRail

everyone fit
for the future

As a line manager you can have significant influence on the performance of your team members. By understanding simple ways you can support their mental health and wellbeing you can create the right environment to foster high performance, engagement, motivation and success.

Causes of workplace stress

We know there are six leading causes of pressure in the workplace. If any one or a combination of these pressure areas is excessive then it could lead to one of your team members suffering workplace stress.

By understanding what they are and talking about them with your team members you can address them early and likely prevent them becoming unduly affected.

Balanced workload

'Balanced workload' could relate to volume of work, commuting time, work hours, being over or under worked.
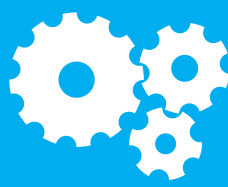
Control

'Control' refers to a number of factors including how much say a person has in the way they do their job or whether they feel that their opinions are valued and listened to.

Work relationships

'Work relationships' can refer to feeling isolated from other team members, suffering from bullying or harassment or not working collaboratively.

Job security & change

'Job security and change' refer to both how any individual perceives their job security and how they experience organisational change.

Resources & communications

'Resources and communication' refer to the need to have the right tools, training and equipment to be able to do a job effectively, and also to feel like you are part of a team or organisation.

Job conditions

'Job conditions' refers to the environment a person is expected to work in or the satisfaction a person has with the job that they do.

Examples of changes you could discuss with a team member related to each potential pressure area

Balanced workload

- Help prioritise tasks/projects appropriately
- Adjust hours/work pattern (temporary or permanent)
- Plan in regular discussions about workload
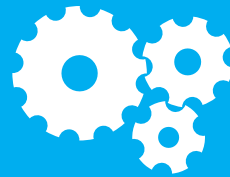
Control

- Support flexible working practises wherever possible and practical
- Agree most appropriate communication methods and frequency
- Include all team members in decision making for tasks/ planning work

Work relationships

- Encourage face to face discussions rather than email
- Report and quickly address any bullying or harassment claims
- Arrange more regular team meetings and 1-2-1

Job security & change

- Make efforts to explain the reasons for change, and the benefits, as well as information on timescales
- Make employees aware of all relevant support services
- Be honest with employees, even when news may not be positive

Resources & communications

- Support team members to develop their skills and knowledge to do their work
- Source equipment or tools needed to work effectively
- Ensure appropriate communication mechanisms are in place and operating effectively

Job conditions

- Clarify expectations in their role
- Reinforce the reporting structure
- Are there any physical hazards in the work environment that need to be managed?
- Making reasonable adjustments

Basic lifestyle advice for team members

You don't need to be a medical expert to give supportive advice to team members. There's lots of evidence that adopting healthy lifestyle behaviours, such as regularly exercising and eating a nutritious diet, can really help to improve our mental health. Provide some basic lifestyle advice to help support your team members build their personal resilience.

Things you can suggest to your team members:

- Try and get at least 20 minutes of activity every day
- Eat two pieces of fruit and three portions of vegetables (one carrot, palm serving of broccoli, handful of spinach) every day
- Find something to wind down and relax for 15 minutes before sleeping (reading a book, listening to soothing music)
- Drink plenty of water, so that urine colour is clear by mid-afternoon
- Get some healthy fats from foods like nuts, seeds and fresh fish
- Practice relaxation or meditation. Just taking a few deep breaths can help (and can be done anywhere)
- Talk to friends, family or others to get things of their chest

Where to find help and support

Early referral to Occupational Health Services is paramount to enabling more rapid recovery.

Where you can get help:

1. Health and Wellbeing Portal: http://safety.networkrail.co.uk/healthandwellbeing

2. Employee Assistance Programme:
   Call: **0800 358 4858**
   or **0330 332 9980**
   www.validium.com/vclub

Where you can get support for your team members:

1. Health and Wellbeing Portal: http://safety.networkrail.co.uk/healthandwellbeing

2. Employee Assistance Programme:
   Call: **0800 358 4858** or **0330 332 9980**
   select option 5 when you call for line manager specific support
   www.validium.com/vclub

3. Occupational Health: https://safety.networkrail.co.uk/healthandwellbeing/HelpingOthers/Supporting-wellbeing-at-work/Occupational-Health

4. HSE Website: http://www.hse.gov.uk/