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Who is responsible for resilience?

Greater resilience better care
A resource to support the mental health of adult social care workers

Overview

This resource offers practical guidance to adult social care employers on how to develop resilience within their workforce.

Resilience, the ability to cope with pressure, underpins safe, high-quality, person-centred care and support. Developing the resilience of the people who work for you is one of the keys to retaining workers with the right values and behaviours. It protects the mental and physical health and wellbeing of the people who work for you. It helps them deliver quality services, consistently.

Resilience matters - it is an essential skill for all who work in adult social care.

Use this resource to understand what you and your workforce can do to develop resilience.

The resource has five parts. Each part addresses a question:

1. **What is resilience and why does it matter?**

2. **Who is responsible for resilience?**

3. **What can I do as an employer to develop the resilience of the people who work for me?**

4. **What can individuals do to develop their own resilience?***

5. **Where can I find out more about resilience?**

Look out for these icons which point out key information, questions and activities:

Information to look at

A question to ask yourself

An exercise or activity

*Section 4 is for individuals so they can consider their own mental health resilience.

Note: Resilience is a well-researched area and evidence shows how resilience can be developed. This resource is based on that evidence.

2. Who is responsible for resilience?

This part of the resource looks at who is responsible for resilience.

It considers how stress works, how performance works, why workplace culture is so important, what the law says about stress at work and what that means for employers and for the workforce.

Key learning points

- Responsibility for resilience is shared between employer and employee.
- Health and safety law requires employers and employees to take action on stress at work; primary responsibility rests with the employer, but employees have a duty of care too.
- Employers should focus on creating supportive workplace cultures; employees on developing their own resilience.
- Communication is crucial - the personal nature of stress makes this particularly important and line managers have a key role to play here.
- Both employer and employee have a responsibility to build positive workplace cultures that support and enable healthy working - learning sits at the heart of these cultures.

Resilience is based on a combination of positive personal behaviours and support. Support begins with effective stress management.

Stress management

Health and safety law[5] requires employers **and** employees to take action on stress at work. Primary responsibility rests with the employer, but employees have a duty of care too. As in other areas of health and safety, **dialogue** is crucial: employers **must** consult workers; workers **must** speak up. The personal nature of stress makes this particularly important.

5 Health and Safety at Work Act (1974); Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)

Guidance on stress at work from the HSE

We all have a right to work in places where risks to health and safety are properly controlled. That includes stress at work.

Employers' duty of care

It is an employer's duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and other people who might be affected by their business. Employers must do whatever is reasonably practicable to achieve this.

This means making sure that workers and others are protected from anything that may cause harm, effectively controlling any risks to injury or health that could arise in the workplace.[6]

Employees' duty of care

Workers have a duty to take care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions at work. Workers must co-operate with employers and co-workers to help everyone meet their legal requirements.[7]

Regarding stress at work[8]

Employers must:

- assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities
- take action to control that risk.

That includes;

- keeping up to date with good practice relating to work-related stress
- monitoring typical indicators of stress-related illness, such as absenteeism, workforce turnover, poor performance, conflict between workers
- addressing workplace stress in health and safety policy
- carrying out regular risk assessments and acting on their findings
- addressing workplace stress when planning organisational change.

Employees should:

- inform their employer if pressure at work is putting them or anyone else at risk of ill health
- suggest ways in which work might be organised to reduce stress
- inform their employer if they are suffering from a medical condition that appears to be long-term and is affecting their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, including memory and learning

6 Source: Health and Safety Executive, *Employer's responsibilities*
www.hse.gov.uk/workers/employers.htm
7 Source: Health and Safety Executive, *Are you an employee*
www.hse.gov.uk/workers/responsibilities.htm
8 Source: Health and Safety Executive, *Working together we can successfully tackle work related stress*. www.hse.gov.uk/stress/roles/index.htm

- discuss any reasonable adjustments that could be made to assist them in performing their job.

What responsibilities do line managers have?

Legal responsibility to control stress at work rests with the employer, but line managers have a key role to play. This includes:
- monitoring and addressing potential sources of stress
- investigating whether performance issues, including absenteeism, of individual workers is in any way stress-related
- ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made for any worker with a disability (as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act).

More generally, and perhaps most importantly, line managers have a crucial part to play in the dialogue between the workforce and the employer that underpins effective control of stress at work.

For more on regulation regarding stress at work, see the Health and Safety Executive's website www.hse.gov.uk.

It's not all about work

Finally, bear in mind that a good deal of stress-related absence is due to the combination of stress at work with stress outside of work.

Responsibility for resilience is shared

Employers have a responsibility to develop **processes** and the **positive workplace cultures** that support workers.

Processes include, at the organisation level; systems, policies and guidelines, including proper risk management for work-related stress (more on this in the next section). At team level, employers should aim to ensure that;
- managers have the skills and resources to support workers, including through supervision (in all its guises)
- workers are given the training they need to enable them to develop their own resilience.

Employees must then act on that training and take responsibility for their own resilience. Both employer and employee have a responsibility to build the positive workplace cultures that support and enable healthy working. Learning sits at the heart of these cultures.

Learn more about stress at work >>

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