



Guidance Note W2

Mental health and well-being in the workplace

A practical guide to conducting Stress Risk Assessments and creating well-being policies

- Employers have a legal duty to protect employees from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it
- This note is intended to offer guidance to businesses and organisations beginning to assess the hazards contributing to work-based stress and offer support in how to mitigate against them
- The aim is to offer assistance, guidance, advice and best practice in how to consider and adopt more proactive approaches and policies to support the welfare and well-being of staff you employ: contributing to your planning and risk assessment management on work related stress and helping you to develop a mental health and well-being policy

Last updated July 2022



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This publication forms part of the Code of Practice for the Theatre Industry produced by the Association of British Theatre Technicians with the support of the national Theatre Safety Committee.

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- **To support the process of producing “stress in the workplace” risk assessments**
- **To help identify hazards that contribute to stress in the workplace**
- **To offer suggestions in how to mitigate against these hazards – this will form the basis of your work place mental health and well-being policy**
- **To promote mental well-being for workers you employ and freelancers you engage**
- **To help you develop a cultural change towards supporting mental health and well-being in the workplace**

Employers have a legal duty to protect employees from stress at work by doing a risk assessment and acting on it:¹

- If you have less than 5 employees you don't have to write anything down
- If you have 5 or more employees you are required by law to write the risk assessment down
- Any paperwork you produce should help you communicate and manage the risks in your business
- The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have created the “working minds” initiative: offering support, templates and guidance to help you in this area. This guidance has been used to inform and populate this industry guidance note
- www.workright.campaign.gov.uk/workingminds/

This guidance note intends to help you develop plans and strategies to reduce factors that contribute to work related stress and help you in your commitment to the welfare and well-being of your staff.

¹ <https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/workingminds/working-minds-employers/>

The 6 main work areas to risk assess

The Management Standards from the HSE cover six key areas of work design that, if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence. In other words, the standards cover the primary sources of stress at work.

Below are the 6 categories that all hazards can fall under, followed by some common examples of the hazards in our industry:

Table 1. Management Hazards (Standards)

| Hazard | Industry Examples |
|--|--|
| <p>Demands Workload, work patterns, & work environment</p>  | <p>Short staffed / inadequate staffing levels Acting up into more senior roles / demands required beyond competency Out of hours working evening / weekends / overnight – Shift working Long hours Inadequate rest and holidays Impractical deadlines and targets Environmental factors – temperature / weather – indoors / outdoors Responsibility for other people / line management Complex decisions to be made regularly Line managers dealing with redundancies Insufficient resources to work Working from home / isolation / communication</p> |
| <p>Control How much say the person has in the way they do their work</p>  | <p>Poor communication between staff e.g. general managers to technical managers and backstage technical staff The divide between Front of House and Back of House staff Staff not feeling that they are heard or have a voice Inflexible work schedules: Lack of control over working patterns – i.e regular time can't be taken off for appointments / leisure hobbies. Staff not feeling they have responsibility to conduct and manage their role autonomously Career stagnation Poor Work-Life Balance Lack of development opportunities</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Support Encouragement, sponsorship & resources available to workers</p>  | <p>No encouragement to be vigilant in spotting the signs of work based stress Staff can't talk to managers about mental health and stress No sign posting for support with mental health and well-being issues Staff aren't supported when returning to work No further training to support mental health and well-being Unrecognised previous history of work related stress / mental health condition. Identifying and supporting high risk people: bereavement, divorce, mental health diagnosis etc Untrained line managers / lack of support for line managers Not feeling supported across all job roles including managers and senior roles Lack of encouragement and praise</p> |
| <p>Relationships Promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour</p>  | <p>Poor Line management relationships Poor working relationships Bullying and harrasment Blame Culture Sexual, racial, gender or other harrasment Poor communication Social actiities / lack of bonding opportunities wthin departments / cross departments</p> |
| <p>Role Understanding their role within the organisation, and ensuring no conflicting roles</p>  | <p>Job roles aren't defined and additional duties are often added to peoples roles. Over worked, understaffed, acting up into higher roles. Lone working Poor staff retention and recruitment Redundancy Lack of definition of organisational goals No support / training, skills development Workers don't feel valued in the work place</p> |
| <p>Change How change is managed and communicated</p>  | <p>Poor communication of work place changes Lack of monitoring of the changes for effects to workers and stress levels. No feedback structure Unsupported management of new large projects / shows</p> |

1. Everyone has to be involved

A commitment to reducing work related stress and improving your company's culture towards mental health and well-being should be undertaken by ALL.

When you decide to embark on this journey to review and assess work related stress it needs to be agreed and endorsed by EVERYONE: from technicians, to middle management all the way up to technical directors and senior management. You will need everyone's input at different levels to begin to properly define and identify the hazards to all staff.

Assign people to work on this body of work

As with safety risk assessments it is often beneficial to have a person in each working tier or department to work on assessing risks in each area. You end up with a team working on this project.

2. Communicate your intentions to all your staff

Make your commitment public and transparent to everyone. That you are beginning the process to review, assess and revise your strategies to identify and tackle work related stress. This will form part of your commitment to changing the culture towards mental health and well-being.

3. Get people's opinions

Take the time to open communication channels and start getting data and opinions on the hazards for work related stress. Use the 6 management standards outlined above to guide your

It's important to obtain feedback and thoughts from as many people as you can, particularly from people in a variety of different roles within your company.

Some examples of how to obtain feedback from employees:

- Team meetings
- Focus groups
- Tool box talks – the HSE offer guidance and a template for running discussions on this topic This template uses the 6 management standards and you can print it off and use it to guide sessions
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/stress-talking-toolkit.pdf>
- Collecting data via a survey – The HSE offer Stress indicator survey software (free for a sample size of up to 50). The software is easy to use and customise to collect data for your workplace
<https://books.hse.gov.uk/Stress-Indicator-Tool/>
- Informal talks with staff

4. What have we got in place already?

Gather together any existing data and policies or work that you currently have that can assist in your work towards reducing work related stress.

You may have some, or none, of the items listed below. You may also, during this process, like to start looking to see if your business would benefit from working on some of the suggestions below. It would be advisable to do this at a workable pace. Don't feel you have to tackle them all at once, pick one or two to work on as part of an annual strategy to improve your well-being policy. Let the information and opinions you have gained in point 3 guide where you might start to focus.

Some examples:

- Sickness and Absence Data
- Help-lines as a staff benefit
- Signposting – notice boards, on toilet doors etc.
- Staff turnover information
- Gender and Equality Policy
- Diversity and Inclusivity Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance Reporting Policy
- Attendance Management Policy
- Equal pay statement
- Staff handbook
- Performance Appraisals
- Team meetings minutes that include mentions of work-related stress
- Whistle Blowing Policy data (Whistle blowing means the reporting by employees of suspected misconduct, illegal acts or failure to act fairly within the business. The aim of this policy is to encourage employees and others who have concerns to come forward and voice them in a safe and secure way)
- Feedback and data from any Mental Health First Aiders (MHFAs) you have on site

NOTE: Data from MHFAs must not breach confidentiality and GDPR. The only data you are looking to obtain is how often the service is being used. i.e., you have 3 MHFAs, 1 interacted with 3 people in a month, and 1 of those cases linked directly to work related stress.

5. Start to draw up your risk assessments

Start recording your risk assessment using the 6 management standards for hazard areas from table 1: **Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role, Change.**

An example template for this can be found in Appendix 1. Be sure to keep this process open and include everyone's input.

6. Identify the people who will be affected by each hazard

People will experience different hazards depending on the role they have in the business. The complexity of the tasks, for example line managing people or making complex and important decisions, are all factors to consider. Line managers will experience different hazards to those that don't line manage. Make sure to also consider hazards that apprentices will experience. Table 2 may aid this process.

Table 2. Example Stress Related Hazard Exposure Analysis

| Examples | Technicians | HODS / Chief LX / Stage Manager etc | Senior Managers | FOH staff | Ushers |
|---|-------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|--------|
| Short staffed / inadequate staffing levels | X | X | X | X | X |
| Tight deadlines | X | X | X | X | |
| Acting up into more senior roles / demands required beyond competency | X | X | X | X | X |
| Out of hours working: evening / weekends / overnight – Shift working | X | X | | X | X |
| Long hours | X | X | X | | |
| Inadequate rest and holidays | X | X | X | | |
| Enviromental factors – Temperature / weather etc | X | X | | X | X |
| Outdoor working – Temperature / weather etc | X | X | | | X |
| Responsibility for other people / Line management | X | X | X | X | |
| Complex decisions to be made regularly | X | X | X | | |
| Line managers dealing with redundancies | X | X | X | | |
| Insufficient recources to work | X | X | X | X | X |
| Working from home / isolation / communication | | X | X | | |

7. Review what you have in place. Is it working?

In step 3 you have identified what you have in place. Now it's time to review if what you have in place is working in an effective way. The HSE uses a system call "Plan, Do, Check and Act". For this step we are focussing on looking at the "Check and Act" sections to review the performance of your implemented policy or plan.

For guidance on how to do this see: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg275.pdf>

Table 3 provides a summary of Plan, Do, Check, Act.

Table 3. The actions involved in delivering effective arrangements (HSE)

| | Conventional health and safety management | Process Safety |
|--------------|---|---|
| PLAN | Determine your policy / plan for implementation | Define and communicate acceptable performance and resources needed |
| DO | Profile risks / Organise for health and safety / implement your plan | Identify and assess risks / Identify controls / Record and maintain process safety knowledge Implement and manage control measures |
| CHECK | Measure performance (monitor before events, investigate after events) | Measure and review performance / Learn from measurements and findings of investigations |
| ACT | Review performance / Act on lessons learned | |

Some topics you might review in current policy's:

- **Staff benefit counsellor phone line** – does everyone know about this? Is it signposted well beyond sitting in the staff induction pack? Do you have statistics on its usage?
- **Whistle Blowing Policy** – Do staff know about this? Do you need to communicate this again and signpost? Do you collect data from this and report back? Is this service being used?
- **Staff Appraisals** – Is there time and space in your appraisal process to discuss work related stress, mental health and well-being? Are your staff comfortable in doing this? Does your workplace evoke a culture that is open to these discussions?
- **Mental Health First Aiders (MHFA)** – Do you have MHFAs? Do you have a system in place to support your MHFAs? Do you have a system in place to monitor the use of MHFAs: nothing that breeches confidentiality but logs of interactions with MHFAs and if work related stress is contributing to them? Do your MHFAs have check-in meetings to report back and seek support?
- **Line management structure** – Are your line managers trained and confident to deal with conversations around work related stress, mental health and well-being? Do you have a culture in your workplace where people feel happy and safe to talk about these issues?
- **Bullying and Harassment policy** – Do you have statistics and data on reports? Do you have statistics and data on follow-ups when reports are made? Are people using this reporting structure? Are people aware of his policy, is it signposted beyond just the new starters induction process? Do you have a culture where people are confident to report issues and feel something will be done?
- **Grievance procedure** – Are people aware of this procedure? Are staff confident to report using this system? Do you have statistics on the uptake of this procedure? Is it being used? Does more signposting have to happen beyond just the induction handbooks?
- **Human Resources Department / Occupational health** – Is your HR department well sign posted? Are all teams aware they can access this resource? Do they feel confident to do this? Do you have any statistics and data of HR being used as a resource? Are staff confident that issues reported will be dealt with? If your HR team are on a different site are all staff aware of how to contact them? Does more need to be done to signpost this resource?
- **Team meetings** – Are these happening? Have they slipped and often don't occur? Do you operate a rota structure that means your teams can't all meet together: e.g. the backstage team?

8. What additional policies or plans do you want to introduce?

Being guided by the hazards analysis and the feedback from your staff, start to reflect and consider additional measures that you could implement to reduce the likelihood of work-related stress.

Some examples:

- **Dealing with home-related stress** – Although you are not legally responsible for stress that originates in the home, well managed organisations will have arrangements that allow them to address it. Such as signposting to support, reasonable adaptations to work loads and work patterns to offer support, time off for appointments etc. Do you have a culture in your workplace where people are confident to talk about issues that could cause poor mental health?
- **Line managers** – Do they need additional support and training?
 - Mental Health First Aid England offer mental health training for line managers <https://mhfaengland.org/organisations/workplace/mental-health-skills-for-managers/>
 - The HSE offer a free stress management competency indicator tool. Allowing you to assess if your managers' behaviours are effective in preventing and reducing stress at work. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.htm>
- **Training** – Identifying further training that can be offered to line managers and staff
 - Use of the Mental Health First Aid England training model.
 - Use of e-learning options, such as the Zero Suicide Alliance improving awareness on suicide. <https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/suicide-awareness-training>
 - Use of Community Interest Companies (CICs) to support and assist in your work in this area: e.g. Applause For Thought <https://applauseforthought.com/>
- **Signposting for staff** – Provide signposting to useful information that will help your staff.
- **Mind** - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/how-to-be-mentally-healthy-at-work/work-and-stress/>

See signposting document in Appendix 3.

9. Agree further actions and time frames to achieve these

Make achievable goals and targets. No one expects you to tackle all aspects that have been highlighted and no one expects them to be achieved overnight. Commit to reviewing and updating what you currently have and communicating those policies and procedures better. Pick a few new targets to work on to enhance your commitment to tackling work related stress. Consider packaging your actions to mitigate work-based stress into a “Work-Related Stress Policy” See Appendix 4 for example. This will show a commitment to tackling stress in the workplace and achieving a cultural change to mental health and well-being in the workplace.

10. Agree a time to review your work-related stress risk assessment

You need to allow sufficient time for any new working practices to develop within your organisation and to ensure all staff are engaged with your new policies.

Generally, risk assessments should be reviewed at least annually but this will be decided on individual organisational needs.

For more detailed guidance on tackling work-related stress see the HSE's step-by-step workbook: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wbk01.pdf>

APPENDIX 1: Example Work Related Stress Risk Assessment

*These typical examples show how you might manage risks.
You can use them as a guide and for inspiration and guidance to think about hazards in your business
They illustrate steps you may need to take to manage risks
Do not just copy an example and put your company's name to it as it would not satisfy
the law and would not protect your employees.
You must think about the specific hazards and controls for your own business.*



Setting the Scene

This theatre is a multi space venue comprising of a studio space with 60 seats and main house with 1600 seats.

The backstage team are made up of 6 full time staff, and a varied number of casual technicians throughout the year ranging between 4-12 per week.

We know from industry based research that the prevalence of mental health conditions is high within our industry.

Our backstage teams do not follow conventional patterns of work, working evenings, weekends and often over night.

We wanted to promote the welfare of our staff and work towards a cultural change towards mental health and well-being in the work place. We began to conduct risk assessments for stress in the workplace.

When we refer to Heads of Department (HOD's) we mean Head of lighting, Sound, Stage, Video. When we refer to technicians (Techs) we mean deputy levels, senior technician levels and other technical roles.

How the Risk Assessment was done

To identify the hazards:

- The manager followed guidance from the ABTT's *Guidance Note W2: Mental Health and Well-being in the workplace*. This Guidance Note uses information from the HSE's working minds campaign looking at stress in the workplace, and is informed by the Alliance of Associations and Professionals in Theatre and Live Events (AAPTLE) industry well-being study from 2021
- The manager talked to members of staff to listen to their concerns and opinions about stress in the workplace
- The people who could be harmed by the hazards were written down

To create the Risk Assessment:

- Existing controls were written down and logged
- Where more controls were felt to be needed these were also logged
- A stress risk assessment was created
- The findings were discussed with staff and the risk assessment distributed

To implement the control measures:

- All existing controls and further control measures were implemented and recorded as having been done.
- An effective way of communicating this to all staff was agreed
- It was agreed to review this each year or when any major changes happened in the work place.

Example Work-Related Stress Risk Assessment (partially completed for illustrative purposes)

| Demands, Workload, work patterns & work environment | Who is harmed? | What are you doing already? | What further action is necessary ? | Action by whom? |
|--|--------------------------|---|--|----------------------|
| Short staffed / inadequate staffing levels | Technicians casual staff | Advertising for roles Staff exit interviews? Why are staff leaving? Can this be prevented? | Audit of staff levels and roles advertised Do we need crewing agencies to step in and fill some gaps? | Senior managers / HR |
| Acting up into more responsible roles / demands required beyond competency | | | Identify staff that are in this position Further training and support for staff having to act up. Induction process for staff entering new roles | Senior managers / HR |
| Insufficient resources to work | | Weekly team meetings to communicate needs | Are these happening? Is the reporting structure working? | |
| Out of hours working / evening / weekends / overnight – Shift working | | Working Time Regulations used and adhered to in all work planning Planned work loads | Promoting a culture of email etiquette, and work life balance | |
| Long hours | | Complying with Working Time Regulations | | |
| Tight Deadlines – heavy work loads | | Monitored and managed by line managers | Are deadlines manageable? Can people report if they feel they are not feasible? | |
| Inadequate rest and holidays | | Working Time Regulations used and adhered to in all work planning | Over time checked and regulated | |
| Environmental factors – Temperature / weather etc | | Heating / Air Con / Ventilation | Water and rest breaks for periods of abnormally hot weather. See the ABTT guidance note “working in hot weather” https://www.abtt.org.uk/product/guidance-note-1-22-working-during-hot-weather/ | |
| Outdoor working – Temperature weather | | | | |
| Complex decisions to be made regularly | | | | |
| Working from home / isolation / communication | | | Develop a Home Working Policy? Communication Reporting Schedule face to face meetings Home working assessments for needs, reviewed yearly Access to mental health first aiders agreed in some way | |

| Control How much say the person has in the way they do their work | Who is harmed? | What are you doing already? | What further action is necessary ? | Action by whom? |
|--|----------------|---|--|-----------------|
| Poor communication with staff between general managers / technical managers and backstage technical staff | | Weekly team meetings Weekly HOD meeting Detailed staff inductions so people are aware of policies and procedures and reporting structures | | |
| Staff don't feel that they are listened to | | | Honouring action points in meetings and staff appraisals so people feel that things are listened to and done | |
| Inflexible work schedules: Some control over working patterns – i.e regular time can be taken off for appointments / leisure / hobbies | | | Do rotas to allow staff to attend appointments? Where possible accommodate staff member's request for the same evening off each week for a leisure activity? Where possible allow staff time off to attend hospital and doctors appointments, especially long term mental health appointments that reoccur | |
| Staff have degrees of responsibility to conduct and manage their role autonomously | | Staff Appraisal systems | Does the staff Appraisal system need refreshing or updating to reflect work related stress? Are action points honoured and heard from staff appraisals? | |
| Career stagnation | | | Personal development opportunities for staff - is there a budget for this, is it offered? | |
| Work-Life Balance | | | Can a staff member request the same evening off each week for a leisure activity? | |
| Development opportunities | | Staff training budget | | |
| No control in the devising of the work rota | | | Accommodate requests for regular time off for appointments? | |
| No control over being asked to work late or requests to change rotas at short notice | | Policy that rotas are set 3 weeks in advance. Staff have the option to not work late | Being mindful to allow some flexibility for short notice hospital appointments etc. | |

| Support Encouragement, sponsorship & resources available to workers | Who is harmed? | What are you doing already? | What further action is necessary ? | Action by whom? |
|--|----------------|--|--|-----------------|
| No encouragement to be vigilant in spotting the signs of work based stress | | Mental Health First Aiders in teams | Training Mentors or buddy schemes? | |
| Staff can't talk to managers about mental health and stress | | | Training for line managers Ask staff for feedback in this area Provide private space for confidential conversations | |
| No sign posting for support with mental health and well-being issues | | Signposting in toilets for crisis Mental Health First Aiders | Provide links to industry support – The Backup tech charity https://www.backuptech.uk/ | |
| Staff aren't supported when returning to work | | Occupational health team | Making sure all line managers are training sufficiently to handle the return to work process | |
| No further training to support mental health and well-being | | Mental Health First Aiders | Line management training and support for mental health in the work place and work related stress | |
| Previous history of work related stress / mental health condition | | Use of the Wellness Action plan - https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/employer-resources/wellness-action-plan-download/ | Encouraging staff to disclose pre-existing mental health conditions. Create a safe environment free from stigma for them to do this. Creating a culture in your work place that is open and free from stigma to disclose and talk about mental health | |
| Identifying and supporting high risk people: bereavement, divorce, mental health diagnosis etc | | | Creating a culture where people feel they can disclose this information. Use the "My Whole Self" campaign from Mental Health First Aid England to support this: | |
| Untrained line managers / lack of support for line managers | | Support for line managers on using the wellness action plan: https://www.mind.org.uk/media/13262/mind-wellness-action-plan-linemanagers.pdf | Training for line managers Affective line management support and appraisal processes for line managers. https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/campaigns/my-whole-self-2022/ | |
| Not feeling supported across all job roles including managers and senior roles | | Holding regular one to one meetings | Develop a culture where people can talk and are free from stigma | |
| Lack of encouragement and praise | | Staff awards Praise in news letter Appraisal system | | |

| Relationships Promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour | Who is harmed? | What are you doing already? | What further action is necessary ? | Action by whom? |
|---|----------------|---|---|-----------------|
| Poor line management relationships | | Grievance procedure for reporting issues and problems | Training for line managers | |
| Poor working relationships | | Grievance procedure | Training for line managers | |
| Bullying and harrassment | | Bullying and harrassment policy Mentioned clearly in the induction process | Statistics on reports for bullying and harrassement? Are people confident to report this behaviour? Do they feel something will be done? Conflict training for managers Use SOLT and UK Theatres 10 Principles No Bullying, Harrassment or Discirmination (<i>See Appendix 5</i>) | |
| Blame Culture | | Clear outlines of company goals and aims in induction process | Develop ways to celebrate suceses Zero blame culture – problems are for everyone to resolve and fix. Open culture to communciate and talk A culture of RESPECT | |
| Sexual, racial, gender or other harrassment Poor communication | | Bullying and Harrassment Policy | Equality and Diversity training for staff Respect and Dignity training sessions Developing a working culture where people are confident and safe to report issues | |
| Working with the public and dealing wth complaints | | Full risk assessment for dealing with the public | Support in place for staff dealing with difficult people | |

| Role Understanding their role within the organisation, and ensuring no conflicting roles | Who is harmed? | What are you doing already? | What further action is necessary ? | Action by whom? |
|---|----------------|---|--|-----------------|
| Job roles aren't defined and additional duties are often added to peoples roles. Over worked, understaffed, acting up into higher roles | | Clear Job descriptions Induction process | Transparency in sharing job descriptions Job descriptions monitored via the appraisal system | |
| Lone working | | Strict rules on managing lone working | | |
| Under staffed | | | Reporting when this is a problem Priorising budget and resources to resolve this | |
| Poor staff retention and recruitment | | | Start to conduct exit interviews with staff | |
| Redundancy | | Fairly managed and conducted within required guidelines | Good and timely communication with all involved Support for staff that have to conduct this procedure and deliver news | |
| Lack of definition of organisational goals | | Clear communication of goals Induction process | | |
| No support / training, skills development | | | | |
| Workers don't feel valued in the work place | | | Working to change the culture in the work place and place more value on staff and their work. Awards, incentives, staff socials, christmas parties etc. | |

| Change How change is managed and communicated | Who is harmed? | What are you doing already? | What further action is necessary ? | Action by whom? |
|---|----------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Poor communication of work place changes | | | | |
| Lack of monitoring of the changes for effects to workers and stress levels. | | | | |
| No feedback structure | | | | |
| Managing new / large projects / shows | | | Use of SMART management https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/smart-goals.htm | |
| Line managers dealing with redundancies | | | Additional support for people that have this role | |

APPENDIX 2: The case for beginning work on stress risk assessments in industry

Statistics published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), covering the 2020/21 period, show that of the 1.7 million workers suffering from a work-related illness, 800,000 had stress, depression or anxiety, the highest figures above other physical conditions.² Before the pandemic took hold it was estimated that mental health issues cost UK employers up to £45 billion a year.³

Work-related stress is a major cause of occupational ill health which can cause severe physical and psychological conditions in your workers. It can also lead to poor productivity and human error, increased sickness absence, increases in accidents, high staff turnover and poor performance in your organisation. HSE statistics show that work-related stress is a significant issue with more than 15.4 million working days lost as a result of stress, anxiety or depression at a conservative estimated cost of £5.2 billion to industry, individuals and the government.⁴

AAPTLE 2021 UK Backstage Well-being Survey

We know from industry-based research that the prevalence of people with a mental health condition in our sector of theatre and live events is higher than the UK's national average of 1 in 6.⁵ 1,234 people took part in the AAPTLE 2021 UK Backstage Well-being Survey, 40% of the participants identify with having a mental health condition.⁶



It is largely considered positive for people's mental health and well-being to be working, but it's important that it's in a "good quality job". The benefits of being in employment include social contact and a sense of achievement to name but a few.⁷ The benefits to the employer of a happy and appreciated work force are well documented in terms of higher productivity and better staff retention. It is outlined in the government's 2017 Thriving at work review as part of their 10-year plan that "employees in all types of employment have good work, which contributes positively to their mental health, our society and our economy"⁸

What is work related stress? Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them. There is a clear distinction between pressure, which can create a 'buzz' and be motivating, and stress, which occurs when this pressure becomes excessive.

² Health and safety Stats HSE: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/index.htm>

³ HSE Working Minds Campaign: <https://workright.campaign.gov.uk/campaigns/working-minds/>

⁴ HSE Stress work book: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/wbk01.pdf>

⁵ Mental health and well-being in England : Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2014 : a survey carried out for NHS Digital.: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/adult-psychiatric-morbidity-survey/adult-psychiatric-morbidity-survey-survey-of-mental-health-and-wellbeing-england-2014>

⁶ The UK Backstage Well-being Report - <https://www.abtt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/UK-BACKSTAGE-WELLBEING-SURVEY-REPORT-2021.pdf>

⁷ The effect of the gig economy on young people's health (Podcast) <https://eurohealthnet.eu/publication/podcast-the-effect-of-the-gig-economy-on-young-peoples-health/>

⁸ Thriving at work review: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/658145/thriving-at-work-stevenson-farmer-review.pdf

The evidence suggests that more work needs to be done to encourage and promote a focus to tackle work related stress in our backstage communities. The following evidence comes from the AAPTLE Backstage Well-being survey:

- 66% of respondents to the 2021 backstage well-being survey said they worked over 40 hours a week. This means a large percentage of our workers are working over the national average of 37 hours

We already know that due to the nature of our work we don't work conventional office hours, but how we manage and consider our staff's work-life balance can contribute to the well-being of our staff.

- A huge 98% of people think there is a difference in perceptions between physical and mental health

Nearly the entire survey sample agreed that mental health isn't considered in the same way that physical health is in the work place. Workplaces in our sector need to do more to show their staff that they place the same value and priority on people's mental health as they do on their physical health.

- 1 in 3 participants feel bullying is a factor for their poor mental health

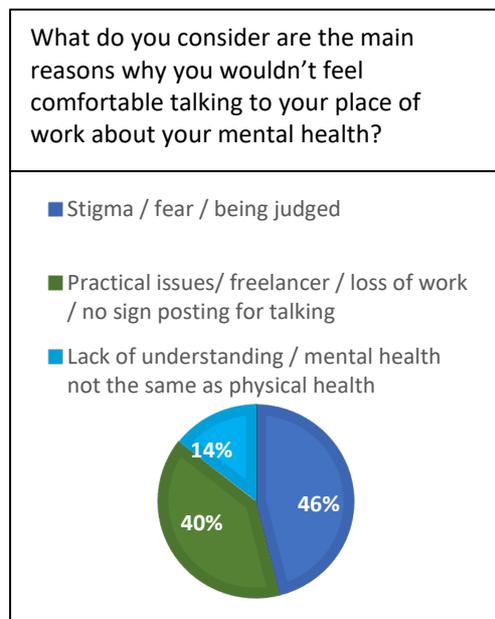
This is an alarmingly high statistic and one that can be easily rectified to reduce stress in the workplace.

- 84% of managers feel they can talk to their staff about mental health, however, 60% of people feel they can't talk to their employers about their mental health

It would seem we have overconfident managers but a work force that don't feel they can openly talk about mental health and well-being in the workplace. Improving the culture towards mental health and well-being as well as improving communication between staff encouraging non-judgmental listening can and will reduce stress. Training for managers is essential.

- 72% don't feel they can take time off work for a mental health reason

As well as not being able to talk about mental health and well-being in the work place the majority of our workers also don't feel they can take time off work for mental health related issues or illnesses.



- 51% of people are thinking or maybe thinking about leaving their backstage career
- Half of our workforce surveyed were thinking of leaving their backstage careers

All of the evidence above suggests that it is time for our industry to start to focus more on assessing the risk of stress in the workplace and on providing provision and strategic policies to help mitigate against the hazards of stress. It's time to start working towards a cultural change towards mental health and well-being in the workplace.

APPENDIX 3: Signposting for staff

Support and signposting for Suicide

- **The Stay Alive App.** – FREE. The Stay Alive app is a pocket suicide prevention resource for the UK, packed full of useful information to help you stay safe. You can use it if you are having thoughts of suicide or if you are concerned about someone else who may be considering suicide.
In addition to the resources, the app includes a safety plan, customisable reasons for living, and a life box where you can store photos that are important to you
<https://prevent-suicide.org.uk/find-help-now/stay-alive-app/>
- **The Zero Suicide Alliance** - <https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com>
The ZSA are a charity that work with NHS trusts to raise awareness on suicide and break the stigma. They offer free online suicide awareness training and resources to support people on the topic of suicide

Support and Signposting for Mental Health and Well-being

- If your employees tend to work locally, take the time to find and share local or regional support options.
 - For example, the regional crisis line number – each region has one of these. To find your local crisis line number follow this link:
<https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline>
 - Any local branches of support networks such as “Mind”⁹
 - Any additional services such as a “safe haven” (which is a drop-in centre for mental health patients in crisis needing support or feeling unsafe)¹⁰
 - If you are unsure of what services are available in your area use the “hub of hope” web link to find local community mental health services and options in your region
<https://hubofhope.co.uk>
- If your employees come from many areas in the country take the time to find and share more national support options. Help lines such as the Samaritans.
<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/crisis-services/helplines-listening-services/>
- Shout 85258 is a free, confidential, 24/7 text messaging support service for anyone who is struggling to cope. <https://giveusashout.org/>
This text-based support option is great for people that struggle to talk
- Share and signpost to the industry support options:
<https://www.theatrehelpline.org/> - The Theatre Helpline
<https://ttg.org.uk/> - The Theatrical Guild
<https://musicsupport.org/> Music Support – who also have a helpline
<https://www.artsminds.co.uk/> Arts Minds
<https://www.backuptech.uk/wellbeing-support/helpline/> Backup Tech - The Technical Entertainment Charity, who also offer financial support and assistance to people backstage
<https://www.bapam.org.uk/> - British Association of Performing Arts Medicine

All of these resources and more can be found at the ‘time for change mental health charter’ which is an updated list of well-being options available in our industry and beyond.

<http://www.time4changementalhealthcharter.com/resources.html>

⁹ <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

¹⁰ <https://www.mhm.org.uk/pages/search.aspx?q=safe%20havens>

- Encourage and signpost 'app' based options which freelancers use:
 - **The Thrive app:** is an NHS endorsed mobile phone application.
"Thrive helps you to prevent and manage stress, anxiety and related conditions. The game-based app can be used to relax before a stressful situation or on a more regular basis to help you live a happier, more stress-free life."
The thrive app is being endorsed by Music Support. Follow the link for more information <https://musicsupport.org/thrive-app/>
 - **The Headspace app:** is a mindfulness mobile phone application with exercises and podcasts aimed at helping you find more joy, less stress and a better night's sleep. It has a free option, and a subscription option. <https://www.headspace.com/>

APPENDIX 4: Example stress policy (HSE)

Introduction

We are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

This policy will apply to everyone in the company. Managers are responsible for implementation and the company is responsible for providing the necessary resources.

Definition of stress

HSE defines stress as ‘the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them’. This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be positive if managed correctly, and stress, which is likely to be detrimental to physical or mental health if it is prolonged.

Policy

The organisation will:

- conduct risk assessments to identify all workplace stressors and eliminate or control the risks from stress. These risk assessments will be regularly reviewed;
- consult with trade union safety representatives on all proposed action relating to the prevention of workplace stress;
- provide training for all managers and supervisors in good management practices;
- provide confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors;
- provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the company’s agreed stress management strategy tackling work-related stress using the Management Standards approach

Responsibilities

Managers will:

- conduct and implement recommendations of risks assessments within their area;
- ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes;
- ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties;
- ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities;
- monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded or underutilised;
- discourage work-related contact with staff outside normal working hours or whilst on holiday;
- monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking; monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement;
- attend training, as requested, in good management practice and health and safety;
- ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated within their jurisdiction.
- be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff experiencing stress outside work, e.g. bereavement or separation.

Occupational health and safety staff will:

- provide specialist advice and awareness training on stress;
- train and support managers in implementing stress risk assessments;
- support individuals who have been off sick with stress and advise them and their management on a planned return to work;
- refer to workplace counsellors or specialist agencies as required;
- monitor and review the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress; inform the employer and the health and safety committee of any changes and developments in the field of stress at work.

Human resources will:

- give guidance to managers on the stress policy;
- help monitor the effectiveness of measures to address stress by collating sickness absence statistics;
- advise managers and individuals on training requirements;
- provide continuing support to managers and individuals in a changing environment and encourage referral to occupational workplace counsellors where appropriate.

Employees will:

- raise issues of concern with your safety representative, line manager or occupational health;
- take an active part in the process of assessing the risk, eg completing surveys or providing honest feedback when requested;
- accept opportunities for counselling when recommended.

Safety representatives:

- must be meaningfully consulted on any changes to work practices or work design that could precipitate stress;
- must be able to consult with members on the issue of stress including conducting any workplace surveys;
- must be meaningfully involved in the risk assessment process;
- should be allowed access to collective and anonymous data from human resources;
- should be provided with paid time away from normal duties to attend any trade union training relating to workplace stress;
- should conduct joint inspections of the workplace at least every three months to ensure that environmental stressors are properly controlled.

The safety committee will:

- involve representation or represent the views of all elements of the workforce;
- perform a pivotal role in ensuring that this policy is implemented;
- oversee monitoring of the efficacy of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety.

Signed by

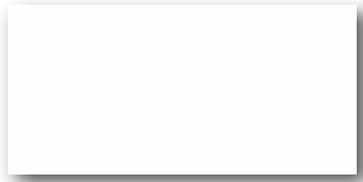
Managing Director:

Date:

Employee Representative:

Date:

10 Principles



For Safe & Inclusive Workplaces

In Theatre

