

SWORD workbook:

# Wellbeing



## KFP 5: Wellbeing

A resilient organisation prioritises the wellbeing of its workforce and takes a systemic approach to reducing stress and enhancing job satisfaction. The KFP Wellbeing is defined as where:

Workers perceive a deep commitment to their wellbeing; wherever possible, stress is reduced at source and working conditions improved.

Reasonable adjustments are made to support people to work in ways that suit their preferences and circumstances.

Workers feel able to thrive in a job that is rewarding and manageable and make a difference to people who access services.

Under the law, all employers have a duty of care to their employees, which means they must take reasonable steps to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing. This is particularly important in social care work where the risk of stress and burnout is high. A recently published narrative review that examined the effectiveness of interventions for the wellbeing and retention of child and family social workers found that organisational-level interventions such as supervision and support from colleagues, were particularly effective (Turley et al., 2020). This workbook highlights the need for interventions that are evidence-informed and systemic to support the wellbeing of workers. This final section describes a range of initiatives to tackle stress in your organisation and make it a happier and healthier place to work.

The term 'wellbeing' covers a range of issues, such as how satisfied people are with their lives and whether they feel what they do is worthwhile, their everyday emotional experiences and the state of their general mental and physical health. A sense of wellbeing also depends on whether people feel in control of important areas in their life and supported by others. Work is a major source of wellbeing and satisfaction for many, but it can also be highly stressful and a major threat to health. As highlighted earlier in this workbook, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented demands on the social care workforce and the potential for stress and burnout has increased.

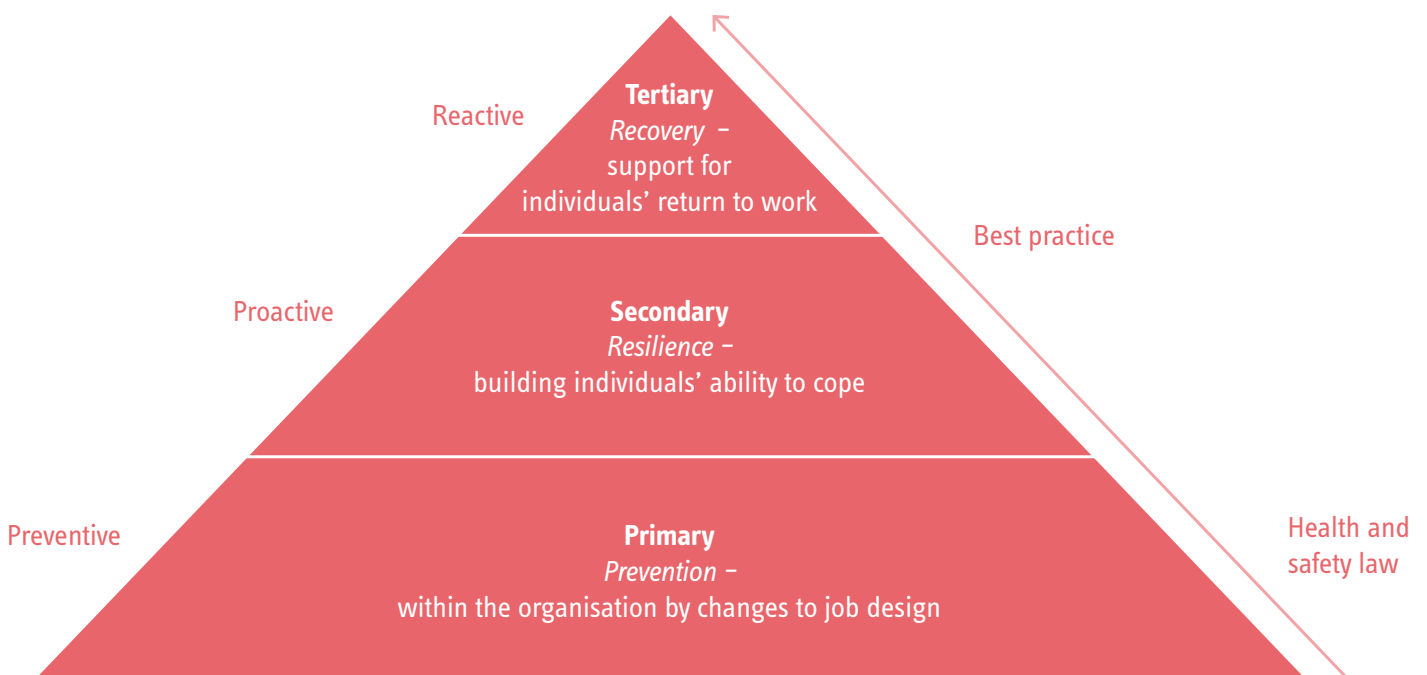
## Stress/wellbeing policies

Making sure you have a safety policy that directly addresses stress or wellbeing in the workplace is the first step. The policy should be clear and accessible and developed after consultation between workers, management and trade unions, preferably through a process of co-production (see sections on Appreciative Inquiry (KFP2 Sense of Appreciation), World Café (KFP4 Mission and Vision), and Focus Groups (later in this section). A policy should begin with a statement of intent and responsibility, setting out the organisation’s commitment to developing a working environment that supports the health and wellbeing of workers. Guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on formulating a stress policy, or checking that an existing policy is fit for purpose, can be found [here](#) and an example policy [here](#).

An effective stress policy should emphasise commitment to managing stress at three levels (Figure 5.1):

<p>1. Removing or minimising stress at source (primary management – i.e. preventative)</p>	<p>2. Improving employees’ responses to stress (secondary management – i.e. proactive)</p>	<p>3. Addressing the symptoms and consequences of stress (tertiary management – i.e. reactive).</p>
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**Figure 5.1 Multi-level approaches to managing stress**



**A three-tier approach to managing work related stress**

A stress policy will not be effective unless it includes a clear action plan that sets out the strategies that have been (or will be) implemented and ensures there are mechanisms built in for evaluation. A toolkit developed in partnership between Public Health England and the NHS (but relevant to other sectors) is also available to help employers develop and evaluate workplace wellbeing interventions – see [here](#). The framework in Figure 5.1 will also enable leaders social care organisations to plan multi-level interventions and this section provides examples of initiatives to help them accomplish this.

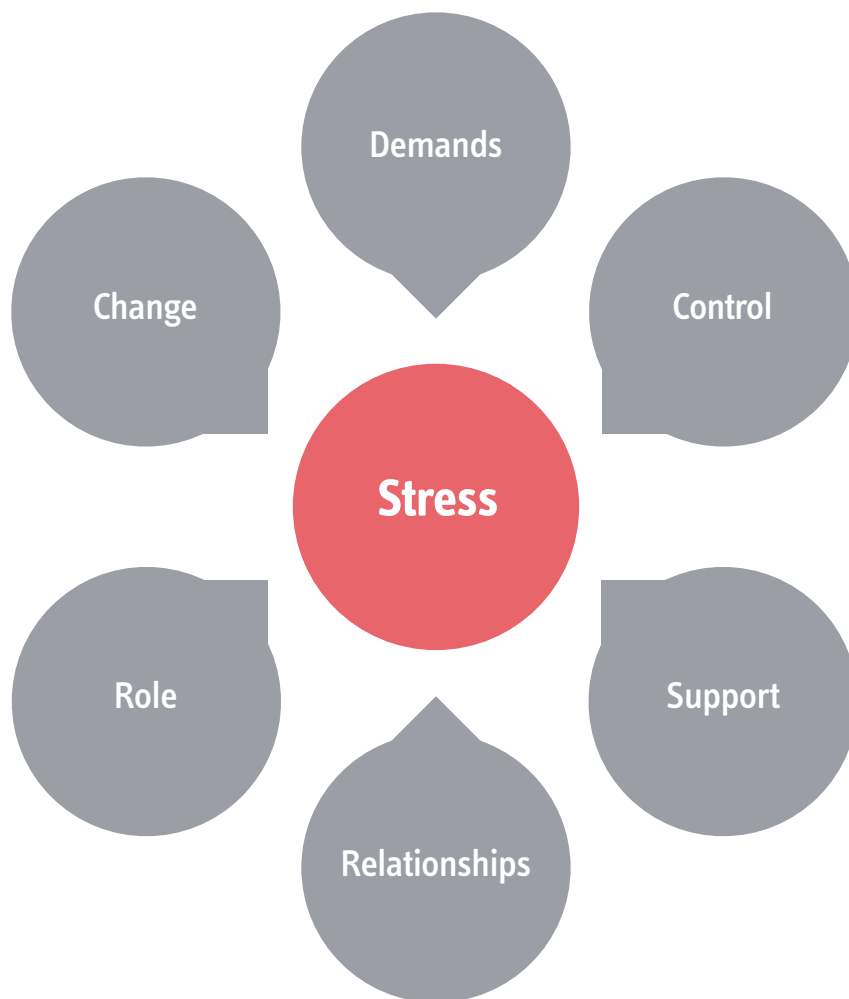
Firstly, we provide guidance on conducting psychosocial risk assessments to diagnose and manage the sources of stress.

## Managing psychosocial risks: using the HSE resources

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has developed a risk-assessment process, with a set of accompanying resources, to help employers manage work-related wellbeing in their organisation. This approach is centred on a set of benchmarks – known as the HSE Management Standards – for measuring good practice across six key areas of work that, if not properly controlled, can lead to poor health, lower productivity, higher rates of sickness absence and retention problems.

The six key areas (see Figure 5.2 and Box 5.1) – demands, control, social support (from leaders and peers), interpersonal relationships, clarity of role, and involvement in organisational change – represent potential psychosocial hazards for the workforce.

**Figure 5.2: The six areas covered by the HSE Management Standards**



The HSE framework is a widely used and effective way to identify the most stressful aspects of work for different organisations or sectors. For social care organisations in particular, the approach has strong potential to help manage workforce stress and build a culture that supports resilience. It helps employers to assess how well they are managing each potential 'hazard' and to target interventions more precisely. The process, which is illustrated in Figure 5.3, involves:

### 1. Identifying risk factors

Identify the risk factors using the **HSE's Management Standards Indicator Tool** i.e. the questionnaire – see Box 5.1); this is usually administered via an online survey. Care must be taken to assure people of anonymity and confidentiality.

### 2. Who can be harmed and how?

Analyse the data using the HSE's **Analysis Tool** and **Indicator Tool User Manual**. A 'traffic light' system is used to identify priority areas for attention (e.g. demands, control or support, or change management).

### 3. Evaluate the risks

Identify whether any groups of employees (e.g. job type, sex or mode of employment) are at greater or lesser risk than others.

### 4. Develop and implement interventions

A comprehensive **workbook** developed by the HSE provides guidance on how to shape interventions to address each of the hazards.

### 5. Monitor and review

Re-administer the survey to assess the effectiveness of the interventions.

The full range of resources and tools developed by the HSE as part of its Management Standards approach can be found [here](#).

Figure 5.3: The HSE risk assessment process



Every type of job has its own stressors, so the HSE approach can be supplemented with questions that are particularly relevant to specific working contexts. Research findings show, for example, that the emotional demands of social care can be a particular source of stress, as is working within a ‘blame culture’ (Ravalier, 2018; Travis et al., 2016). Setting up a steering group can enable leaders to identify the job-specific sources of stress experienced by workers, which might otherwise be overlooked when using a more generic approach. Steering groups and/or focus groups that are chaired by an independent facilitator in an informal environment are particularly effective in encouraging people to contribute. The HSE resources include advice on setting up a wellbeing **focus group** or **steering group**.

## Box 5.1: Identifying psychosocial risk factors using the HSE Indicator Tool

HSE has developed a self-report questionnaire – the **HSE Indicator Tool** – to help employers measure levels of risk across each of the six key work areas or potential hazards.

The questionnaire comprises 35 statements (e.g. 'I have unachievable deadlines'); workers are asked to tick one of five options to indicate the extent to which each statement applies to them. The work areas, or hazards, are:

### 1. Demands:

workload, pace of work and working hours

### 2. Control:

levels of autonomy over working methods, pacing and timing

### 3. Support:

**Peer support:** assistance and respect received from colleagues

**Managerial support:** supportive behaviours from line managers and the organisation itself, including encouragement and the availability of feedback

### 4. Relationships:

conflict at work, including bullying and harassment

### 5. Role:

role clarity and the belief that work fits into the organisation's aims

### 6. Change:

how well organisational changes are managed and communicated.



## Box 5.2: Co-producing interventions with the workforce

Interventions developed with input from employees can be especially effective in improving wellbeing. The HSE resources include a series of **case studies** highlighting the benefits of co-produced solutions. For example:

Earlier reporting of stress, due to increased awareness of the signs and symptoms	Reduced sickness absence
Greater ownership of change	Improved communication, particularly between leaders and workers
Increased recognition of the need to encourage peer support	Better understanding among leaders of the importance of listening without judgement.

Box 5.3 provides guidance on using an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach in focus groups, drawing on key frameworks of work-related stress to generate solutions. As AI is an iterative process, several meetings will be needed to identify options for interventions and evaluate their success.

### Box 5.3: Using AI approaches to develop stress management interventions

KFP2 Sense of Appreciation describes the features of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and highlights its potential to create options for self-determined change. The four stages of AI could be used in focus groups to identify simple, low-cost but effective strategies to reduce stress and improve wellbeing. That process might involve:

Finding examples of current activities that work well (Discovering)	Using them as a basis for envisioning possibilities for change (Dreaming)
Identifying potential interventions (Designing), and	Implementing those interventions (Delivering).

Mechanisms for evaluation are also required.

Work-related stress is often perceived as an ‘imbalance’ between key aspects of the working environment and individual capacities and needs. The three models of stress described below provide useful frameworks to help the workforce generate options for change.

#### 1. The Job Demands-Resources model

(Demerouti et al., 2001) recognises the importance of resources in helping employees to meet the demands of their work and remain healthy. *Demands* are aspects of the job – such as workload pressure, interpersonal conflict and insecurity – that require physical or mental effort and so have the potential to drain energy. *Resources* are factors that: a) help people meet their work goals; b) reduce demands and the associated costs to wellbeing; c) enable personal growth. Key resources include the availability of support, control and feedback at work, as well as personal resilience-building attributes, such as self-efficacy and optimism. This simple model could be used via AI techniques to identify resources that may help practitioners meet the demands of their work more effectively and enhance their personal development.

## 2. The Conservation of Resources model

(Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000) also recognises the value of resources in protecting workers against the negative effects of job demands. It is based on the premise that people are motivated to gain and protect things they value; stress occurs when they are threatened with resource loss or fail to gain resources despite investing considerable effort. The model specifies four types of resource:

- a) objects (physical entities such as work equipment)
- b) conditions (social circumstances such as status and respect)
- c) personal (skills and attributes such as self-efficacy)
- d) energies (such as knowledge).

People use their existing resources to help them manage stress currently and to develop additional resources to sustain them in future. Those with more resources are less vulnerable to resource loss and more capable of resource gain. This model could be used in focus groups to identify resources that might help to buffer the effects of stress and create individual and collective 'resource reservoirs' (such as resilience) to offset the risks of future resource loss and build collective strength.

## 3. The Effort-Reward Imbalance model

(Siegrist, 2002) maintains that strain (such as mental and physical health problems) stems from an imbalance between the amount of effort that people believe they put into their work and the rewards they perceive they gain. Efforts are things that make work more demanding, such as heavy workload and frequent interruptions, whereas rewards are obtained from three potential sources: a) money (salary); b) esteem (respect and support) and c) security/career opportunities (promotion prospects and job security). This framework could help people generate options for change by identifying the features of social care work (e.g. meaningfulness and a sense of belonging) that make them feel rewarded and could therefore restore their feelings of equity.

## Enhancing managers' competencies

Not only must leaders be *aware* of their duty of care to protect the wellbeing of workers, they must also have the *capacity* to offer support. Several tools are available to help leaders develop the necessary knowledge and skills. First, they must be able to recognise that an employee needs support; the checklist in Box 5.4 and the use of Wellness Action Plans (see below) can help them spot any changes in behaviour that suggest an employee may be struggling and in need of support.

Reassuringly, research suggests that the 'signs of struggle' leaders identify tend to correlate highly with employees' self-reported wellbeing (Dimoff & Kelloway, 2019). Workers who are experiencing chronic and severe stress should inform their employer, but they are often reluctant to do so due to the stigma that continues to surround mental health difficulties. The checklist below (Box 5.4) can help leaders identify signs at an early stage and use supervision or one-to-one meetings to explore problems, identify potential solutions, agree an action plan and review progress. Spotting signs of struggle when people are working remotely is more challenging, particularly for new recruits, so leaders should be vigilant for subtle behavioural cues. Any workers showing extreme signs of stress, however, should be referred for professional support. Although the ability to seek support when needed is a key aspect of resilience, remember that people who see themselves as particularly resilient may have high expectations of their abilities to cope and resist reaching out to others.

### Box 5.4: Spotting signs of struggle

Changes in behaviour and attitudes.	Easily irritated, or emotional outbursts.
Confused and lacking in focus.	Quiet and withdrawn, disengaged in video calls or team meetings.
Deteriorating quality or quantity of work; missing meetings and deadlines.	Regularly sending emails out of 'usual' working hours.
Change in the tone of emails and in verbal and non-verbal communication online.	Not participating in online social activities.
Looking tired and 'zoning out'.	

This checklist was developed with input from social care practitioners who were working remotely during the pandemic and can be used to help identify when somebody needs support. The list could be discussed with teams and supplemented with any other signs people may have noticed. **Wellness Action Plans** (see below) can also be used to highlight individual signs of struggle and signpost the type of support that people might need from leaders and co-workers. Further guidance on supporting remote workers is included later in this section.

## Stress/wellbeing policies

This is an important step towards preventing work-related stress and implementing change in your organisation. Normalising conversations about stress can also reduce stigma and encourage people to speak out. The HSE have developed a **'talking toolkit'** to help leaders have conversations with workers about stress, with different templates for conversations based on the six key areas included in the HSE Management Standards Framework (see above). For example, for control, employers could ask people the following questions:

Do you feel involved in how decisions about your job are made? Think about whether you feel listened to and trusted, how you are consulted and any opportunities for input.

Do you feel your skills are used to good effect? How could they be used more effectively?

Do you feel you have a say in how your work is organised and undertaken?

What improvements or support is needed to help with any of the issues you have talked about?

Employees often identify managers' behaviour as a major factor in any work-related stress. So, leaders need also to reflect on their own behaviour and whether it adds to or helps alleviate the stress experienced by workers. The HSE, in collaboration with the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) and Investors in People, has developed a set of competencies (see Box 5.5) to help leaders assess whether they have the behaviours known to be effective for preventing and reducing stress at work (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2011).

The HSE process enables leaders to reflect on their behaviour and management style and identify areas for development. There are three related tools (see [here](#)):

1. A self-assessment tool for leaders

2. A tool that also requires input from the manager's team (180 degree)

3. And a tool that requires input from workers, senior leaders and colleagues (360 degree).

Many organisations use this framework to help them manage stress proactively by guiding the recruitment, selection and training of managers. It will help leaders in social care organisations identify the behaviours that are likely to support wellbeing and build a culture of resilience. (There is more information on the use of 360 Degree Feedback in KFP4 Mission and Vision). The CIPD provides a quiz to help leaders identify the extent to which their management approach aligns with the behaviours found to support health, wellbeing and engagement. It also offers recommendations to improve people's approach to this key issue. See [here](#).

## Box 5.5: Management competencies for preventing or reducing work-related stress

The framework comprises four broad areas of managerial behavioural (and 12 specific behaviours) that have been identified as important for preventing and reducing stress.

### 1. *Managing emotions and having integrity*

- > Managing emotions (e.g. approaches deadlines or crises calmly; does not pass their own stress on to the team)
- > Integrity (e.g. is a good role model; is honest and consistent)
- > Considerate approach (e.g. shows respect; prioritises people's work-life balance)

### 2. *Managing and communicating workload*

- > Proactive work management (e.g. communicates objectives clearly; manages current and future workloads to minimise stress)
- > Problem-solving (e.g. deals rationally with difficulties; is decisive)
- > Participative/empowering (e.g. delegates work fairly; involves team members in decision-making)

### 3. *Managing the individual within the team*

- > Personally accessible (e.g. communicates in person rather than by email; responds to requests promptly)
- > Sociable (e.g. is friendly and has a sense of humour)
- > Empathic engagement (e.g. a good listener; shows an interest in others and concern for their problems).

### 4. *Reasoning/managing difficult situations*

- > Managing conflict (e.g. remains objective; deals with conflict promptly)
- > Use of organisational resources (e.g. seeks advice and support from others to resolve difficulties)
- > Taking responsibility for resolving issues (e.g. tackles bullying; follows up conflicts after resolution).

For more information and to download the tools, see [here](#).

Identifying and developing the management behaviours that support people who are working remotely is also crucial for social care organisations; this will be discussed later in this section.

Stress, depression and anxiety related to work are common reasons for sickness absence (HSE, 2020). Some people may struggle to return after a long-term absence, while others may not return at all. Leaders' behaviours are crucial in supporting employees back to work. Munir and colleagues (2012) have identified the specific actions that are associated with successful returns after long-term sick leave:

***Communication and support during sick leave:***

e.g. communicates regularly in a supportive (not intrusive) way; expresses concern for wellbeing; emphasises continued support.

***Inclusive behaviour on initial return to work:***

e.g. offers a phased return; explains any changes to role and responsibilities; makes themselves available on first day back.

***General proactive support:***

managing the team (e.g. asks employee's permission to keep colleagues informed about progress); has an open and sensitive approach (e.g. listens to concerns and takes responsibility for rehabilitation); has strong legal and procedural knowledge (e.g. is aware of legal responsibilities and the need for reasonable adjustments).

# Building conflict resolution skills

It has been estimated that leaders spend up to 60 per cent of their time trying to resolve workplace conflict. While some degree of conflict is unavoidable, and can even enhance individual and group effectiveness, it can have a major impact on wellbeing and job performance. Interpersonal conflict at work is more negative, enduring and pervasive than other types of stress, so must be carefully managed. Quick Win 5.1 offers some useful ways to help manage conflict. More information (from CIPD) on resolving conflict at work for leaders can be found [here](#).

Quick Win 5.1: Six steps to managing conflict	
<p><b>Step 1: Consider how to achieve a mutually desirable outcome</b></p> <p>Be aware that one party 'losing' to the other is likely to escalate conflict rather than resolve it. Perceived loss encourages people to try to re-establish a sense of fairness through competition, criticism or disengagement.</p>	<p><b>Step 2: Encourage people to communicate human to human</b></p> <p>Recognise that conflict compromises people's fundamental need for respect, autonomy, feelings of competence and social status. Encouraging one party to see that the other is 'just like them' will encourage trust and the use of positive language and behaviour.</p>
<p><b>Step 3: Anticipate people's reactions and rehearse your responses to them</b></p> <p>Before having a difficult conversation, thinking through how the other person might react to your argument can expose its weaknesses. It can also help ensure your message will be received in the way that is intended without the other party becoming defensive.</p>	<p><b>Step 4: Substitute blame and criticism with curiosity</b></p> <p>Blame will escalate conflict, encourage defensiveness and lead to disengagement, whereas adopting a learning mind-set will inspire people to explore potential solutions where both parties can win.</p>
<p><b>Step 5: Ask for feedback on how you managed the conflict situation</b></p> <p>Showing fallibility can disarm opponents, as this is a quality that inspires trust in leaders. Ask people how you could have handled the situation more effectively.</p>	<p><b>Step 6: Assess psychological safety in your organisation</b></p> <p>Conflict is much less likely if people feel able to make mistakes or raise issues without fear of criticism or retribution. A psychologically safe environment (see KFP1 Secure Base and KFP3 Learning Organisation) that encourages moderate risk-taking and curiosity and enables tolerance of uncertainty will make conflict resolution easier for all.</p>

Adapted from Delizonna (2017)



# Promoting a healthy working environment

Resilient organisations will have strategies in place to support the health and wellbeing of the workforce in an effective and sustainable way. Interventions should target physical health (e.g. health promotion, occupational health support and managing disability); physical safety (e.g. safe working practices, equipment and training); mental health (stress management, risk assessments, conflict resolution training and managing mental health).

## Box 5.6: Take action to protect and support the global health and wellbeing of workers

Public Health England provides a practical **tool** for organisations to assess aspects of workplace health and wellbeing (such as activity, sleep and mental health, as well as the working environment and workplace culture). This can also inform a holistic programme of interventions that will support organisational wellbeing and resilience during the COVID pandemic and beyond. A **toolkit** is also available to help organisations develop and evaluate health interventions. This framework has four stages:

<b>1.</b> Analyse: e.g. establish internal support; set up a steering group; identify needs at an individual and organisational level; specify goals and outcomes.	<b>2.</b> Plan: e.g. prioritise goals and outcomes; plan an evaluation strategy; identify tasks for the steering group and develop a community strategy.
<b>3.</b> Implement: ensure clear roles, pilot interventions and monitor progress.	<b>4.</b> Evaluate: develop an evaluation design; review and reflect on practice.

More information on this process is available [here](#).

## Supporting mental health at work

As discussed earlier in the workbook, people working in social care are at greater risk of stress, burnout and mental health problems related to work than most other sectors. There is also evidence that the pandemic has compounded the pressures experienced by workers. The findings of a recent survey of the mental health of UK employees suggest that more than four out of ten (41%) have experienced poor mental health caused or worsened by work in the last year (Business in the Community, 2020). This represents a substantial increase from 36% in 2018. More than half (51%) indicated that their mental health symptoms were caused by pressure of work. Although the number of employees reporting that their organisation supports their mental health has increased and most (76%) felt that their managers are considerate of their mental wellbeing, fewer than one in three respondents (30%) feel comfortable talking about mental health difficulties and only 14% had spoken about this to their manager.

A comprehensive mental health toolkit for employers is available [here](#), with guidance on how to manage common problems and take pre-emptive action. Training workers in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) (see Box 5.7) and appointing Wellbeing Champions (see Box 5.8) are popular and effective ways to help reduce the stigma of mental health and support a culture of wellbeing at work. If you are considering introducing an MHFA or a Wellbeing Champion programme, you must ensure that people taking on those roles have the training, time and resources to fulfil them effectively. Volunteers also need support for their own wellbeing and make sure appropriate boundaries are in place (Narayanasamy et al., 2018). As yet, there is little evidence that MHFA has measurable benefits for individuals experiencing mental health problems at work. Remember that these initiatives cannot in themselves provide solutions to mental health difficulties in the workplace; they should be implemented alongside the other structural interventions described in KFP5 Wellbeing.

### Box 5.7: Mental Health First Aid

MHFA England provides volunteers with training in critical areas of mental health first aid, such as the signs and symptoms of common mental health difficulties, and providing 'crisis' first aid for depression, panic attacks and acute stress reactions. Mental health first aiders can provide support by engaging in an initial conversation with someone in distress and, if needed, helping them access appropriate support.

Evaluations of MHFA training suggests it can increase participants' knowledge of mental health, reduce negative attitudes among the workforce, and enhance supportive behaviours towards people with mental health difficulties (Brandling & McKenna, 2010; CMC, 2021; Kitchener & Jorm, 2006; MHFA, 2019).

Information on MHFA training and resources can be found [here](#).

### Box 5.8: Wellbeing Champions

Appointing Wellbeing Champions or Ambassadors can play a valuable role in helping to build a culture of wellbeing in your organisation. Champions can drive the wellbeing agenda (e.g. by being part of a wellbeing steering group), raise awareness of new initiatives and encourage colleagues to participate. Champions are often better placed than leaders to encourage reluctant colleagues to engage.

Time To Change provides a range of resources for the workplace, including support for running a Champions programme, and practical tips on starting conversations about wellbeing, reducing stigma and signposting support. For more information see [here](#).

### Box 5.8: Wellness Action Plans (WAPs) (Mind, undated).

WAPs can help managers support the mental health of their employees:

They are personalised, practical tools that are useful whether people have a mental health difficulty or not.

They help identify what keeps people well at work, what threatens their wellbeing, and how to address a mental health difficulty at work if this occurs.

They are particularly useful when people return to work after experiencing mental health difficulties, as they can enable a structured conversations about the actions needed to support them and the adjustments that might be required.

There are guides on setting up WAPS for **line managers** and **employees**, and WAPS for those working at home – see [here](#).

#### Wellness Actions Plans

What keeps you well at work?

Triggers and early warning signs.

Impact of mental health difficulties on performance.

Steps you and your line manager could take.

Steps you can take yourself.

## Recognising moral injury

As discussed earlier in this workbook, social care professionals are at greater risk of burnout and other emotional reactions to work than workers in most other sectors. It is therefore crucial for leaders to be aware of the effects of working conditions. Moral injury refers to the distress resulting from actions (or inactions) that violate a person's moral or ethical code. It has been seen more frequently among social care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, in response to the difficult decisions or actions that many have been obliged to take (Williamson et al., 2020). It is crucial to raise awareness of the risks of moral injury and encourage people to discuss their feelings. A workplace culture that supports ethical practice is important but ensuring that professional psychological support is readily accessible and opportunities for informal support by peers and leaders will also be effective. Leaders should also recognise the need to support workers in developing 'moral resilience' to recognise when their integrity is threatened and be aware of the actions needed to support ethical practice.

There are several ways of increasing moral resilience:

Define or refine your personal moral compass by considering how you feel about situations you have experienced or read about.

Define a personal code of ethics: setting this out in writing can be helpful.

Cultivate mindfulness to enhance focus and mental clarity.

Work on self-awareness; be aware that your feelings are based on your personal moral compass or code of ethics, so it is important to take a step back and adopt a broader perspective.

Develop self-regulation to disrupt negative patterns of thinking and behaviour; this will help to restore balance when upsets or ethical challenges occur.

Seek outside assistance by talking through complex ethical situations with others.

Identify morally resilient mentors who can help find meaning during adversity.

Nurture the willingness to take courageous action.

For further information see Rushton (2016) and Rushton et al. (2021) and see [here](#). Manttari-van der Kuip (2020) also provides an interesting discussion of how the concept of moral distress can provide insight into experiences of moral suffering among social care workers.

# Presenteeism: the risks of working while sick

Sickness absence can be high in social care organisations, frequently caused or exacerbated by work-related stress and pressure. While it is crucial to reduce unnecessary absence, leaders must also be aware of the risks to workers health and effectiveness posed by ‘presenteeism’. This term refers to situations when people continue to work despite feeling sufficiently unwell to take sick leave, or when the return to work too soon after a period of sickness. Presenteeism is particularly common among the so called ‘helping’ professionals, as they have a strong sense of duty and moral obligation for the welfare of others that can increase pressure to attend work (Kinman, 2019; Kinman & Grant, 2021). People working under conditions of high demand and low support and where staffing levels are low are also more likely to work while sick.

Although working while not fully recovered from illness can facilitate recovery, presenteeism can increase the risk of future health problems and long-term absence. It can also compromise the health and safety of colleagues and people who access services due to the risk of contracting infectious illness (a particular concern during a pandemic) and an increased likelihood of errors and accidents. Leaders who are tasked with developing a sickness absence strategy for their organisations should be aware that reducing absenteeism can increase pressure to attend work while sick. This is a particular risk during times of high demand and short staffing, and where jobs may be seen as insecure. Some ways that leaders can tackle presenteeism are shown in Box 5.9 below.

**Box 5.9: Tackling presenteeism in your organisation**

Identify the risks and causes through workforce surveys.	Undertake a review of absence management policies and practices.
Ensure that the organisational culture values and promotes employees’ health.	Consult workers about their experiences and involve them in deciding how to manage it.
Monitor their workload and working hours to ensure they are not overloaded.	Identify the support they need.
Enable workers to take sick leave when required.	Implement an employee wellness programme to highlight the importance of self-care.
As a leader, role model ‘healthy’ sickness absence behaviour.	
More information on sickness presenteeism and how to manage it is available <a href="#">here</a> .	

# Supporting conditions for work-life balance and effective flexible working

Resilient organisations encourage a healthy work-life balance among their workforces. There is growing awareness that working long hours can damage health and family relationships and reduce satisfaction with work and life in general. Worrying about work can make it hard to 'switch off', meaning that people can struggle to replenish their mental and physical energy after the working day. Social care professionals may find it especially hard to balance the demands of their work and personal lives, and this can lead to stress, mental health difficulties and relationship difficulties (Kalliath et al., 2012). Conflict between work and personal life also has serious implications for workforce retention; a recent survey of nearly 1,200 social workers identified poor work-life balance as one of the most important reasons for wishing to leave the profession (Cooper, 2019).

It is crucial, therefore, to make a clear and strong commitment to supporting work-life balance among your workforce and to provide practical strategies at organisational and individual levels. Leaders might consider developing a specific policy for helping workers achieve a healthy work-life balance. Box 5.10 lists some issues that could be covered in such a policy. Some practical tips for achieving work-life balance are in Quick Win 5.2.

## Box 5.10: Making a commitment to work-life balance

An organisation that is committed to maintaining a healthy work-life balance places this high on its list of priorities. Such an organisation:

Acknowledges that individuals are healthier, happier and more productive when they have a 'healthy' balance between their work and their personal life.	Recognises that supporting work-life balance will benefit the organisation (and people who access services) as well as its employees.	Asks employees for their views on how best to support work-life balance.
Adopts a flexible approach (acknowledges that people's needs relating to work-life balance will change over time) and offers a range of flexible working strategies and encourages their uptake.	Has policies to support carers but ensures that work-life balance initiatives are equitable and not only targeted at parents of young children.	Acknowledges that work-life balance is not just about ensuring people stop work on time; strategies are also needed to help them 'switch off' emotionally and cognitively from work.
Encourages people to work efficiently and productively, and measures performance by output (not hours worked).	Encourages joint responsibility between individuals and leaders to implement effective work-life balance solutions.	Regularly reviews workloads to ensure duties are achievable in 'standard' working hours.
Is vigilant for signs of over-commitment and over-involvement to the job among its workers and encourages boundary-setting.	Encourages leaders to lead by example by openly prioritising their own work-life balance.	Ensures that employees who take up flexible working options or who work at home are not disadvantaged in terms of promotion or progression.
Makes sure employees take their full annual leave entitlement	Is aware of up-to-date innovations in promoting work-life balance	Evaluates the success of any strategies implemented to support work-life balance.



## Quick Win 5.2: Tips to improve your self-care work-life balance

### *Have regular breaks away from your desk*

This will help reduce the intensity of work and get you in the habit of switching off. Micro breaks (two or three minutes focused on something other than work) can improve concentration and reduce stress. Regular breaks from a computer screen each day are vital for visual and musculoskeletal health. Short bursts of exercise are beneficial, but wherever possible try to get outside to exercise during the day in natural settings.

### *Use your diary to schedule activities that you enjoy*

Planning your leisure time well in advance will help make sure you get opportunities to switch off.

### *When you think about work after the working day, are you problem-solving or ruminating?*

Problem-solving can provide solutions and insights, whereas ruminating will drain your mental and physical energy. So, try to make sure any thoughts about work are restricted to the former.

### *Do something different:*

It is particularly replenishing to use a totally different skillset during leisure time. So, for example, take up a craft, join a choir, or learn a foreign language. See guidance on increasing flexibility earlier in this section and in KFP3 Learning Organisation.

### *Write a daily exit list*

Jotting down what you need to do the next day will help clear your mind and provide a sense of control and resolution. Mentally prepare yourself as you review your activities the following day.

### *Switch off when you commute home*

Try not to see commuting as extra work time; read a book or talk to a fellow passenger if you are on public transport or listen to music in the car. If you are working at home, use a 'virtual commute', such as meditation, yoga or a go for a walk, to unwind before and after the working day.

## Quick Win 5.2: Tips to improve your self-care work-life balance (continued)

### ***Identify a corridor between work and home***

People who do emotionally demanding work often need to 'decompress' before moving into their personal life. Consider how you can transition between work and home, physically and mentally: change your clothes, have a shower, cook a meal, or go for a run. Mindful walking can be a good way to switch off. It helps you become more aware of your bodily sensations and encourages you to tune into your environment as you walk. (See [here](#) for some guidance from Headspace.)

### ***Establish an unwinding ritual***

For the last 30 minutes of your working day, only start jobs that you can complete easily. Alternatively, spend time clearing your desk.

### ***Find a restorative place***

Spend 15 to 20 minutes somewhere you feel happy and relaxed. This could be a favourite chair or a place in the garden.

### ***Disconnect***

Switching off from the outside world for a while will help you recoup your energies.

### ***Practise self-compassion and self-kindness***

avoid the punitive self-talk that can encourage you to work longer and more intensively. See guidance on using CBT techniques later in this section.

### ***Get another perspective***

Regular input and advice from a mentor or a coach can be liberating. Anticipating opportunities to talk about concerns with a trusted person can help people contain difficult emotions and to switch off.

As discussed in KFP1 Secure Base, the pandemic means that many people are working remotely for at least part of the time. And while there may be benefits, those who work off-site can feel isolated from their colleagues and may struggle with work-life balance. This can be a particular risk for social care workers who can experience intense emotional demands and require regular support from leaders and colleagues to sustain their wellbeing. There is evidence that the pandemic has posed some challenges for the continued functioning of some social work teams as a secure base (Cook et al., 2020). It should be noted that employers have a duty of care to support the health and wellbeing of workers that work remotely as well as those working on-site. Guidance can be found [here](#).

## Managing online meetings

Some guidance on mindful listening in online meetings was provided in KFP2 (Sense of Appreciation). Since the pandemic, many people are spending a considerable amount of their time online and this will continue if organisations move to permanent remote working, or hybrid working patterns. Regular ‘check ins’ with people who work remotely can provide routine and structure as well as reassurance and support. Opportunities to connect informally with colleagues are also effective. Nonetheless, a full day of remote meetings and video calls can make us feel drained and fatigued – far more so than after a day of face-to-face meetings. What has become known as ‘Zoom fatigue’ reflects the additional demands we experience during online meetings. Firstly, we need to concentrate more intently on conversations online to absorb the same amount of information. Secondly, the temptation to multitask during meetings means we can easily lose focus. Thirdly, online meetings can be stressful due to technological difficulties and the many distractions of working in the home. Finally, online conversations can be particularly challenging as we are less able to pick up non-verbal cues, may struggle to follow points arising, and the potential for misunderstandings is increased.

**Guidance** is available to help social care practitioners build rapport and establish meaningful relationships using technology, with input from people who access services. The first thing to consider is, do you really need to hold a meeting? Could the outcomes and aims could be met another way: e.g. by having a one-to-one phone call, or by using email to review and feedback on a document. A decision tree can be helpful for this – see [here](#). Some research-informed tips on reducing Zoom fatigue are:

***Avoid multitasking:***

although it is tempting to use the opportunity to do more in less time, switching between tasks takes more time and effort, we risk making errors and people are likely to notice that we are not focusing. Close any programmes or tabs that may distract you (e.g. your email inbox) and remain fully present in the meeting.

***Avoid scheduling back-to-back calls, build in breaks:***

ensure that there is enough time between online meetings to get up and move around and try not to schedule meetings during lunchtimes.

***Agree an end time for the meeting and stick to it:***

ensure that meetings do not over-run. Sharing an agenda in advance of the meeting can be helpful.

***Do not feel obliged to turn your camera on.***

***Make online social events optional:***

after a long day of online meetings, or during lunchtime, people may not want to join in.

See Bailenson (2021). For more information, see [here](#).

# Managing email

Engaging with email has become one of the most stressful activities in the workplace. People spend a high proportion of their working time on email (Hearn, 2019), and for many this will have increased substantially during the COVID-19 pandemic. As email use increases, productivity deteriorates and the risk of burnout and disengagement rises. There is also growing awareness that failing to switch off from email during evenings, weekends and holidays can be a major threat to work-life balance and wellbeing. Many organisations now offer guidelines on managing emails in a healthy way. Quick Win 5.3 has examples of strategies that can be implemented at the organisational and individual level.

Quick Win 5.3: How to be 'e-resilient'		
Develop an organisational policy on email use and etiquette, with input from workers.	Remember that email is a key part of the job, particularly when people are working at home, so should be included in job descriptions and when estimating the time taken to do tasks and overall workload.	Lead by example: leaders are powerful role models for email behaviour. Unless it is an emergency, do not send emails out of hours even if you make it clear you do not expect an immediate response (or use the delay function).
Consider limiting (or even banning) the use of the 'reply all' function.	Limit the use of 'OK' and 'thank you' emails – instead, use 'thank you in advance'.	Encourage people to review their email strategies – are they purposeful and efficient, or reactive and habitual?
Process and clear an email whenever you check it, rather than resolve to return to it later.	Switch off email notifications – they can cause stress and anxiety.	Be aware that 'switching' between email and other types of work can add up to two hours to your working day.
Use blocks, filters and folders and keep up with digital housekeeping (e.g. maintaining folders, deleting files, etc.)	Manage other people's expectations: an 'out of office' notification should mean just that.	Consider picking up the phone if emails are >3 paragraphs, or if messages fill the screen (>2 paras).
Remove email from your phone and other personal devices, or have a separate phone for work.	Develop 'rules of engagement': set boundaries and decide when you will read emails and when you will switch off.	Take email vacations – disconnect for half a day a week, or even longer.

## An individual toolbox of wellbeing skills

As well as tackling stress at source, organisations should ensure that workers are provided with guidance to develop their skills in managing stress and building resilience. It is crucial to offer a range of strategies and encourage people to try something new – this will encourage flexibility, build tolerance of uncertainty and broaden their skill set (see KFP3 Learning Organisation). Our research found that multi-modal training (including mindfulness, cognitive behavioural skills, peer coaching, reflective supervision and goal setting) can enhance the personal characteristics that underpin resilience and improve wellbeing in early career social workers (Kinman & Grant, 2014). When planning interventions, however, it should be recognised that people are often attracted to training that strengthens (or validates) the skills they already possess; for example, more action-oriented people may seek out training in time management and goal setting, rather than the relaxation techniques that would help them switch off from work. Similarly, the findings of our recent evaluation of a mindfulness intervention (Kinman et al., 2019) suggest that it tends to attract practitioners who are more ‘naturally’ reflective.

Strategies that could be included in personal toolboxes have been highlighted throughout this workbook. Some of these are likely to be particularly helpful in managing stress and enhancing wellbeing. Peer coaching techniques (see KFP3 Learning Organisation) can provide workers with a mechanism to give and receive support and identify solutions to stressful problems. Opportunities for reflective conversations will help people to manage challenging situations and explore and resolve uncomfortable emotions. In the next section, we highlight the importance of self-compassion and self-care in underpinning a resilient organisational culture. Particular focus is placed on developing cognitive behavioural skills, as they are an effective way to protect wellbeing and may be used individually, in teams and/or during supervision. We also provide some quick wins to help you fill your toolbox. More information on these strategies can be found in our book (Grant & Kinman, 2014).

### Building a culture of self-compassion

For people whose work is emotionally demanding, self-compassion and self-care are essential. Social care workers gain considerable satisfaction from supporting others, but the emotional demands of the job can lead to compassion fatigue and burnout. Research has found that maintaining compassion towards the self can protect against these negative effects (Kinman & Grant, 2020b).

Self-compassion can improve coping abilities and protect us from stress and burnout. It is also one of the most powerful sources of resilience, enabling us not only to survive adversity but to flourish. And because self-compassion can enhance empathy and improve interpersonal relationships, there will also be benefits for people who access services.

Neff (2016) identifies three elements of self-compassion:

***Self-kindness:***

being warm, patient and understanding towards ourselves when we suffer, fail or feel inadequate, rather than being self-critical and hostile.

***Common humanity:***

recognising that personal suffering and feelings of inadequacy are part of the human condition, and not something that makes us different from others.

***Mindfulness:***

taking a balanced and accepting approach to our negative emotions, so feelings are neither avoided nor exaggerated.

It is particularly important to develop interventions to encourage compassionate feelings towards the self and healthy self-care strategies among social care workers early in their career, as this can be more challenging for people who have spent longer in the job. Kinman and Grant's (2020) research found that social care practitioners often see themselves as self-compassionate but are reluctant to prioritise their own wellbeing over other people's needs; this can even be seen as self-indulgent and irresponsible. Other studies have found that prioritising self-care in both working and personal lives can be challenging and workers often feel they need 'permission' to do so (Andrews et al., 2019; Egan et al., 2019).

Leaders can build a culture that supports self-compassion by role-modelling self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness, and encouraging workers to accept that, like everyone, they are not perfect. But in seeking to develop such a culture, leaders must pay attention to working conditions; a heavy workload, employee shortages and lack of appropriate supervision will thwart any attempts to improve self-compassion and self-care.

At an individual level, compassion-focused expressive writing can help people overcome self-criticism and develop the self-reflection that underpins self-compassion (see Quick Win 5.4). Other strategies, some of which are outlined in this workbook, can also help:

Reflective supervision and having reflective conversations can foster self-compassion and encourage people to prioritise self-care.

Peer coaching (see KFP3 Learning Organisation), and group approaches such as World Café (see KFP4 Mission and Vision) and Appreciative Inquiry (see KFP2 Sense of Appreciation), will help identify and share best practice among co-workers to improve self-care.

Mindfulness techniques (see Quick Win 5.5) can help us maintain personal boundaries and enhance awareness of the self and the need to care for it.

Cognitive behavioural strategies (see below) can also help us relate to ourselves in a more compassionate, friendly and forgiving way.

More information about self-compassion and some useful resources can be found [here](#).

## Quick Win 5.4: Expressive writing

Research findings show that people who regularly engage in expressive writing tend to feel happier and more satisfied. Writing about negative feelings and life experiences can help us reduce stress, depression and anxiety and discourage unhealthy rumination; it can even improve immune system functioning and physical health. There is also evidence that writing about positive experiences can be beneficial for wellbeing.

Research with social work students (Grant et al., 2014) found that writing about their emotional reactions to practice in diary form significantly improved their reflective ability and empathy and reduced feelings of distress. Studies (e.g. Sexton et al., 2009; Tonarelli et al., 2018) have also found similar benefits for the mental health and wellbeing of other 'helping' professionals. Several mechanisms are thought to underlie the benefits of expressive writing – as it involves thinking about experiences as well as expressing emotions, writing helps people process their thoughts and give meaning to their experiences. There is also evidence that expressive writing can improve emotional regulation skills, which is a key aspect of resilience for practitioners.

To get maximum benefit, people should write every day, but it need not take up much time. Studies suggest that expressing emotions in writing for only a few minutes a day can improve wellbeing (Burton & King, 2008). There is no one 'correct' way to do this, but these tips may help:

Try writing in the third person to give you some distance and even a new perspective.

Write about your emotional responses to specific situations: i.e. those that evoked negative feelings (e.g. fear, confusion, embarrassment or frustration) and those that were positive (e.g. satisfaction, pride or a sense of meaning).

Make a note of what you were doing and who you were with; this can help you identify patterns to your emotional reactions to different situations and individuals and can encourage a more in-depth understanding of your emotions.

Although writing about emotions can be helpful, it may not be effective for people who are experiencing ongoing or serious mental health challenges. Any personal reflections on emotional reactions to work experiences should always be kept in a secure location.



## Mindfulness

*Mindfulness is the basic ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we are doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what is going on around us.*  
(Mindful.org, 2014)

Many studies have demonstrated the positive effects of mindfulness, particularly for people working in social care (NICE, 2020); van der Riet et al. (2018) highlighted the effectiveness of mindfulness for the wellbeing of healthcare practitioners, and research by Kinman et al. (2019) found wide-ranging benefits for the wellbeing and resilience of social workers. They found that an eight-week mindfulness training course increased emotional self-efficacy and reduced compassion fatigue and distress. Interviews with participants revealed that mindfulness can benefit many aspects of wellbeing. In particular, it enhances work-life balance by helping people 'switch off' from work concerns and enabling them to replenish their energy and motivation.

This study also found mindfulness can help improve job performance:

When experiencing pressure, we are more aware of the options we have available to manage it.

We can sharpen our focus and prioritising skills.

We become more adept at identifying what we can and cannot control in high-stakes situations.

We carry more energy by reducing wasted effort and enhancing recovery processes.

We are less judgmental towards others and ourselves, more patient, and trust in our intuition and authority.

## Quick Win 5.5: Learning to be mindful

Several apps are available that introduce people to mindfulness principles and offer guided meditations; these can be customised to individual needs and contexts. For example, 'one-minute mindfulness' exercises can help people recover after difficult meetings and switch off from work when they get home. A 'mindful pause' can be useful when you feel overloaded or frustrated during the working day (maybe as a way of taming your inner chimp – see KFP Secure base), when you want to gain perspective, or when you are transitioning from work to personal life.

Some brief mindfulness techniques include:

### ***Mindful eating:***

paying attention to the taste, sight and textures of what you eat. For example, when drinking a cup of tea or coffee you could watch the steam that it gives off or focus on how hot and liquid it feels on your tongue. Mindful eating can also help us avoid over-eating by making us aware that we are full.

### ***Mindful walking:***

if possible, find a quiet space outside to walk. Notice the feeling of your body moving. You might notice the air against your skin, the feeling of your feet on the ground, and the different sights, smells and sounds that are around you.

### ***Body scan:***

this involves moving your attention slowly through different parts of the body. Start at the top of your head and gradually move down to your toes. You could focus on feelings of warmth or relaxation of different parts of your body.

### ***Mindful meditation:***

sit quietly and focus on your breathing, your thoughts, your bodily sensations, and what you can hear around you. You might choose to do a systematic body scan (as above), or you could choose to explore bodily sensations randomly as they occur. If your mind wanders, simply notice this is happening and gently try to focus yourself back on the present.

Grant and Kinman recommend:

**Buddhify**

**Headspace**

Both require subscriptions, but others are available free of charge - there are many excellent exercises on YouTube.

## Challenging thinking errors: cognitive behavioural strategies

Thinking errors are cognitive distortions based on erroneous beliefs about ourselves or about the world. Everyone experiences thinking errors, but when those errors are extreme, they can impair personal functioning, relationships and wellbeing. An understanding of the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) provides insight into how cognitive distortions can be replaced by more helpful thoughts, feelings and actions. Examples of different types of thinking errors are outlined in Box 5.11 and Box 5.12. Techniques are also included to help leaders track the thinking patterns and understanding of their workforce, helping them to identify and challenge unhelpful thinking errors when they occur. How CBT can be used to manage stress and support emotional resilience is also considered.

Box 5.11: Thinking errors		
<p><b><i>Magnification and minimisation:</i></b></p> <p>recognising only the negative aspects of a situation and ignoring or downplaying the positive. 'My personal achievements are insignificant, but my mistakes are very important.'</p>	<p><b><i>Catastrophising:</i></b></p> <p>ruminating about irrational worst-case scenarios and impending disaster. 'I couldn't solve the service user's problem before the weekend – I just know something awful will happen to them.'</p>	<p><b><i>Over-generalising:</i></b></p> <p>making broad interpretations from a single incident or a single piece of evidence. 'I made a mistake with this person who uses services, so I am an incompetent worker and a bad person.'</p>
<p><b><i>'All or nothing' thinking:</i></b></p> <p>over-generalising and seeing things in extremes. 'I never do a good enough job – I am always going to fail.'</p>	<p><b><i>Dogmatic demands:</i></b></p> <p>believing that things should be a certain way can cause guilt and expectations of punishment if our rules are violated. 'I should do this/I shouldn't do that.'</p>	<p><b><i>Emotional reasoning:</i></b></p> <p>the assumption that our unhealthy emotions reflect reality. 'I feel guilty, so I must have done something bad.'</p>
<p><b><i>Magical thinking:</i></b></p> <p>a belief that one's acts will influence unrelated situations. 'I am a good person so bad things shouldn't happen to me.' (Or vice versa.)</p>	<p><b><i>Personalisation:</i></b></p> <p>the belief that one is responsible for events outside of one's control. 'The service user is upset. It's my fault; I haven't done enough to help her.'</p>	<p><b><i>Jumping to conclusions:</i></b></p> <p>interpreting the meaning of a situation despite having little or no evidence. This has two strands: a) mind-reading: interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without evidence ('I wouldn't get promotion, as I am stupid'), and b) fortune-telling: believing that future events are pre-ordained ('Things will turn out badly, so why bother?').</p>

### Box 5.11: Thinking errors (continued)

#### ***Control fallacy:***

beliefs about being in control of every situation in one's life. If we feel externally controlled, we are helpless and a victim of fate or chance: 'I did a bad job as I was given the wrong advice'; if we feel internally controlled, we assume responsibility for the wellbeing and distress of everybody: 'Why are you angry, what did I do to upset you?'

#### ***Global labelling:***

generalising one or two personal characteristics into a negative global judgement about oneself or others. 'I'm such a loser'; 'He is such an idiot'; 'People always let you down.'

#### ***'Just world' fallacy:***

the belief that the world is a fair place – good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people. 'Nobody has that much bad luck. She must have done something to bring it on.'

#### ***'Heaven's reward' fallacy:***

the belief that self-sacrifice and self-denial will eventually pay off. 'If I work hard enough, people will notice, and I will be rewarded.'

Thinking errors have implications for people's wellbeing and professional functioning. 'Personalisation' and the 'heaven's reward fallacy' might encourage over-commitment to the job, poor boundary setting and a reluctance to prioritise self-care; 'global labelling', on the other hand, could compromise positive outcomes for people who access services. We may fail to see the person behind the label and filter out any information that does not fit with our belief. So, the 'just world fallacy' may encourage us to blame 'victims' in the belief that people who are experiencing challenging circumstances must somehow have brought it on themselves. 'All or nothing thinking' is a distortion often found in those who are anxious, perfectionist or have low self-esteem. This can also be damaging for people who access services; a tendency to believe that 'everything is right, or it is wrong' may lead a worker to 'over-generalise' from one perceived 'failure' and so overlook improvements in other areas.

## Box 5.12: Identifying thinking errors in meetings and supervision

Active listening – based on warmth, genuineness and unconditional positive regard – is necessary to enable formation of a trusting relationship.

Conversations should be collaborative and should involve feedback and reflection. Notice how people use words that might signify thinking errors. For example, most people exaggerate at times, but chronic ‘all or nothing’ thinking can make us see the world and other people in over-simplified terms and encourage pessimism and feelings of helplessness. Listen out for and challenge words such as ‘always’, ‘never’, ‘everything’, ‘totally’, ‘everyone’ or ‘no one’.

A more structured approach can be used to examine specific incidents (i.e. activating events) where thinking errors have been used. By focusing on the following issues during supervision and reflective conversations, leaders can gain insight into how unhelpful behaviours and mood states are triggered – and maintained:

<b>Situational:</b> the environmental factors that were present	<b>Behavioural:</b> what the person did	<b>Cognitive:</b> the thoughts that were present at the time
<b>Affective:</b> the emotional reactions that occurred	<b>Interpersonal:</b> who else was present	<b>Physiological:</b> the bodily reaction that occurred.

## ***Cognitive behavioural techniques for stress management and resilience***

The cognitive behavioural techniques discussed above can be incorporated into supervision, reflective conversations or peer coaching sessions in which options for change are explored. Identifying thinking errors that underpin self-criticism, poor self-care, inflexibility and feelings of isolation will be particularly helpful. Cognitive behavioural techniques are an effective stress management tool for individuals. They can provide a fresh perspective on a situation, help people reduce the physical and emotional symptoms of stress and regain a sense of control, and encourage self-compassion.

There is evidence that stress management training based on the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is more effective than many other methods (Bhui et al., 2012). Research (Grant & Kinman, 2016) found that CBT also has the potential to enhance wellbeing and many of the qualities that underpin resilience. Computerised CBT programmes can be as beneficial as face-to-face training for reducing stress and improving mental health (Proudfoot et al., 2003) and are more cost-effective. CBT principles can also be applied to teams and organisations. Spotting and challenging individual and collective thinking errors has clear potential for enhancing group problem-solving and guiding systemic change. More information on developing resilience using CBT strategies for social care workers can be found in Alexander and Henley (2020). This guide will also be relevant for healthcare professionals.

## **The importance of self-care for leaders**

Leaders play a key role in preventing and reducing work-related stress and are expected to be role models for 'healthy' behaviour. This is a major responsibility, especially if you are struggling to maintain your own work-life balance and protect your own wellbeing.

What you can realistically achieve may feel constrained by the need to manage teams with large caseloads or having day-to-day responsibility for the functioning of an entire service. At the time of writing, leaders are required to navigate their organisations through considerable uncertainty that will compound the existing pressures of the job. Although the social care sector tends to have a more positive approach to stress, mental health and wellbeing, you might work within an organisational culture that stigmatises (albeit unconsciously) stress and help-seeking, encourages long working hours and presenteeism, and overlooks the adverse implications for the wellbeing and performance of its workforce.

Protecting your own wellbeing will be challenging under such conditions; but if you are not able to take care of yourself, then you will not be able to support your team. Remember, the strategies in this workbook apply to you as much as to your team or workforce. Self-care is not a luxury for leaders of social care organisations but a core competency, and it is essential for survival. So, it is crucial that you develop your own 'toolbox' of strategies to sustain your resilience and make sure you are as compassionate towards yourself as you are to others.