**FOUR PILLARS OF WELLBEING**

**EMPLOYEE WELLBEING: ISSUE 1: FEBRUARY 2020**

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| **STRESS AWARENESS** |
| **OVERVIEW**  The council is committed to maintaining a healthy and safe working environment for its entire workforce. Good mental and physical health is fundamental to general wellbeing and by supporting and encouraging employees to achieve healthy working lives, the council believes that high levels of morale and productivity in the workplace can be achieved.  Stress can be triggered by factors both within or outside the workplace, therefore, the key aim of this briefing is to raise awareness, educate and for those suffering the effects of stress signpost them to available supports either within the council or at a local/national level. |
| **What is Stress?**  There is no medical definition of stress, however whatever your personal definition of stress is, it's likely that you can learn to manage your stress better by   * **managing external pressures,** so stressful situations don't seem to happen to you quite so often * **developing your emotional resilience,** so you're better at coping with tough situations when they do happen and don't feel quite so stressed   **What are the signs of stress?**  We all experience stress differently in different situations. Sometimes you might be able to tell right away when you are feeling under stress, but other times you might keep going without recognising the signs. Stress can affect you both emotionally and physically, and it can affect the way you behave.  How you might feel   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * irritable/aggressive | * a sense of dread | | * impatient/wound up | * over-burdened | | * anxious/nervous/afraid | * unable to enjoy yourself | | * loss of sense of humour | * uninterested in life |   How you might behave   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * indecisive | * unable to concentrate | | * snapping at people | * over indulgence in alcohol/smoking | | * constant worrying | * eating too much or too little | | * avoiding situations that are troubling | * being tearful or crying |   How you might physically be affected   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * shallow breathing/hyperventilating | * tired all the time | | * panic attacks | * grinding teeth/clenching jaw | | * headaches/sore eyes | * chest pains/muscle tension | | * change in sleep patterns/Insomnia | * feeling sick/dizzy/fainting |   [**The Power of Okay?**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CC4QzwlmhxQ)  ***“See Me Scotland”*** have developed an award-winning programme to focus on making improvements on the way people think about mental health at work and to get those who are struggling, to talk. If you see a colleague who you feel may be suffering the effects of stress as described above:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | * ask if they are okay? | * let them know it’s okay not to be okay | | * listen to what they have to say | * ask them if they are getting support? | | * encourage them to speak to others e.g. family, friends, line manager, HR etc. | * encourage them to seek help from their GP |   **Your not expected to act as a counsellor or diagnose colleagues**; your part is getting the person to talk if possible and encourage them to seek support. Your Line manager or HR may be able to assist. |
| **SUPPORTS AVAILABLE**  There are a number of supports available to you to help you manage the effects of stress and develop emotional resilience so you are better at copying with situations when they do happen. Some of these are identified as the following:   * [**Mental Wellbeing**](https://intranet.westlothian.gov.uk/article/35305/Mental-Wellbeing)   West Lothian Council has an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). The EAP is a free-phone; confidential telephone professional support service run independently by Help Employee Assistance and is available 24/7/365. They are available to provide professional support on a wide range of personal and work-related issues such as stress, alcoholism, discrimination, gambling, LGBT issues, management supports, debt advice, face to face counselling etc. to name but a few. To contact, call free and confidentially on **0800 0285148**   * [**Financial Wellbeing**](https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/money-worries)   West Lothian Council’s Advice Centre is able to provide a confidential impartial service for employees concerned with financial issues. A dedicated advisor can work you to identify and work towards your money goals, focusing on providing advice on benefits and low-income support including specific advice for anyone with a cancer diagnosis as well as debt and housing advice. To contact complete the online referral form [www.westlothian.gov.uk/money-worries](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/money-worries) where a member of the advice team will contact you directly or call **01506 283000** during office hours to speak to a trained Advisor.   * [**Physical Wellbeing**](https://intranet.westlothian.gov.uk/article/35330/Employee-Health-and-Wellbeing)   The longer-term effects of stress could cause serious health problems including depression/ anxiety, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, hair loss, alcohol/drug misuse etc. The Council’s healthy working lives group promotes sound health choices and provides some practical advice on how your body can fight stress better such as taking regular exercise, eating healthy balance meals whenever possible, getting enough rest and sleep and learn relaxation techniques such as meditation or mindfulness. Most importantly, however you should seek treatment from your GP or another medical professional.   * [**Workplace Wellbeing**](https://intranet.westlothian.gov.uk/article/2197/Health-Safety-and-Welfare)   It is important that you have a good work life balance to support good mental health. This includes working in a safe environment, where you are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, where you understand your role and responsibilities and are able to cope with the demands of your job. If you feel you or a colleague is suffering from the effects of stress you should advise your line manager at the earliest opportunity or if you do not feel comfortable doing this contact HR. |
| **Further information and practical tips on any of the above supports identified above or other wellbeing matters please visit** [**Four Pillars of Wellbeing**](https://intranet.westlothian.gov.uk/article/43633/Four-Pillars-of-Wellbeing-Toolkit) **on the Council’s Intranet Site or access through the** [**HR Mytoolkit\Employee Health & Wellbeing**](https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/49978/Employee-Health-Wellbeing) **.** |