# TOP TIPS TO MAINTAINING A RESILIENT WORKFORCE DURING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Organisational change, economic downturn, restructuring and reform are all bringing increased pressures on organisations and the workforce.  There is a wealth of evidence on what are appropriate and inappropriate responses.  Inappropriate responses to workplace stress can, of course, impact negatively and cause more harm than good.

This briefing has drawn on evidence and local experience.  It has been produced by the ChaMPs Mental Health & Wellbeing Leads Network working with the North West Workplace Practitioners and the North West Health & Wellbeing Programme at New Economy Manchester.

| What you can do | Your score<br>0 = not at all<br>10 = fully<br>*(high score is good)* |
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| **1. Follow the Health & Safety Executive stress management standards**<br>Undertake the stress risk assessment that is available on the HSE website, and carry out actions arising. This can protect employers from legal disputes and develops a proactive approach to stress reduction, rather than a reactive approach. http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm | |
| **2. Trust your staff**<br>Staff feel more valued and supported if you show you trust them. Provide staff with a degree of autonomy and control over how their job is done, and they are more likely to respond with increases in productivity, and a reduction in stress. Also, provide support openly to all staff during organisational change, and trust them to take advantage of the opportunities you provide. | |
| **3. Communicate clearly with all staff**<br>Be as clear as possible with staff about organisational changes, even when decisions are still pending. Be explicit about what help will be provided for staff. Extensive research (*Proctor and Doukakis 2003*) shows that it is what people don't know that causes more concern and anxiety. Staff members are less worried about managers telling them they don't know than not being told anything. | |
| **4. Self-assess your organisation**<br>Understand what your organisation is currently doing by using the workplace wellbeing self assessment standards:<br>http://wellbeingcharter.org.uk/index.php?page=Survey | |

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| **5. Line manager awareness**<br>Make sure that all line managers are aware of the signs of distress and the link between alcohol misuse and stress. Ensure line managers know how to confidently deal with staff in these situations. | |
| **6. Line manager resilience**<br>Be aware that line managers can be affected by mental ill health as much as other staff. They also experience a variety of different demands on them, especially in a time of organisational change. Ensure that in addition to support provided for all staff, line managers can also access support to aid them in managing an individual with a mental health condition. | |
| **7. Emotional resilience**<br>Help build employee wellbeing and resilience, particularly for those whose jobs are at risk, through opportunities for work-related skill and knowledge development. | |
| **8. Monitor and assess**<br>Ensure that for any services that are in place, these are regularly monitored and assessed, especially for equality and diversity. This can help you develop and deliver better services for staff and can help you monitor the progress of your health and wellbeing strategy. | |
| **9. Engage with your health and wellbeing group**<br>Your health and wellbeing group should include employees and employee representatives at all levels – this includes at senior or board level. Actively engaging with this group, and being clear and open about what your organisation will do to support resilience in staff during change will strengthen relationships and build confidence. This can also help you to develop and commission appropriate services that are designed by and for staff. | |
| **10. Take your time**<br>Everything does not need to be done at once. Take your time to focus on the key priorities for your organisation when change occurs, and focus on issues that need to be addressed first. Take your time to get it right, and monitor what actions you have put in place to ensure they are providing the appropriate level of support. | |

| What is not helpful | Your score<br><br>0 = not at all<br>10 = fully<br>*(low score is good)* |
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| **1. Ad-hoc approaches**<br>Commissioning new activities without first undertaking the above can lead to an ad-hoc and therefore ineffective approach. | |
| **2. Patronising approaches**<br>Offering initiatives that address individual responses and symptoms of stress can be patronising if not developed through staff engagement and as part of a wider strategic and organisational approach. | |
| **3. Penalising all staff for the actions of a few**<br>It is tempting to design policies and procedures to prevent misuse but this can often make them inflexible and unresponsive to the needs of individual staff members. ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation & Arbitration Service) research shows that over 85% of staff will not misuse benefits but this falls to below 50% in organisations where procedures are seen as inflexible and arbitrary. | |
| **4. Encouraging gossip or whispering**<br>Make sure that your approach to change is seen as fair to all staff. Be very cautious about asking managers and other staff members to get involved in meetings or writing confidential reports about colleagues, without first ensuring that they really need to be involved. Make sure that those leading change don't gossip about it with colleagues. | |
| **5. Allowing department infighting**<br>At times of organisational change or financial difficulties managers can get more territorial about areas of responsibility or budgets. In-fighting between teams can start to eat into the enthusiasm and energy of individuals, and the performance of the organisation declines. Most people leave their managers, not their jobs. | |
| **6. Being a poor example to staff**<br>It is essential that managers do not engage in behaviours that undermine staff morale. Research (*Jones, HSE 2002*) shows that there are some actions that have a very strong negative impact on staff morale, these include: moaning about colleagues, not turning up for staff meetings, not giving feedback and encouraging staff to get involved in departmental infighting. | |
| **7. Ignoring good performance**<br>In times of organisational change or when resources are tight it is easy to assume that it is inappropriate to take the time to reward good work by staff members. Research (*Worley and Lawler 2006*) shows that organisations that don't take the | |

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| time to reward and develop staff will take longer to implement changes and will experience much higher sickness absence rates. Telling people they have done a good job, using staff bulletins and email to recognise success and saying 'thank you' are all shown to have positive effects on the productivity of individuals. | |
| **8. Reducing spending on health and wellbeing**<br>When reducing spending during change, ensure that health and wellbeing activities are not adversely affected. Health and wellbeing of staff becomes more – not less – important during a period of organisational transition.<br><br>*The economic evidence shows that promoting wellbeing in the workplace can save £9 per £1 invested.*[1] | |

Use your self-assessment scores for ongoing reflection, monitoring and prompting action.

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[1] Knapp M, McDaid D & Parsonage M (2011) Mental heath promotion and mental illness prevention: An economic case, London: London School of Economics/ Department of Health