

Working well

Staff wellbeing in the post-16
education and training sector



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NIACE's website is <http://www.niace.org.uk>

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1. Introduction

Aims

This resource pack promotes the positive mental health of people working in the post-16 education and training sector. It aims to raise awareness of issues and supports employers so they can develop good practice. We can support our learners most effectively and be positive role models if we look after our own mental health. The pack is about maintaining mental health as well as supporting those staff that have mental health difficulties.

Context

An analysis of health and safety cases to helplines in further, higher and adult education indicates stress is the foremost concern for staff in our sector.¹ A number of initiatives have been developed to support employers generally to foster mental well-being at work, most notably the *Mindful Employer charter*.² The Department of Health is currently developing a *Healthy Further Education Framework*.

Who this pack is for

Whilst there are a number of resources available for supporting mental well-being at work, this booklet seeks to address the specific needs of the post-16 education sector. It is intended for all staff in post-16 education including those working in colleges, adult community education, work-based learning and those involved in funding and organising learning. It is relevant for tutors and teaching staff, frontline staff, advice and guidance staff, those working in administration and estates, managers, team leaders and governors.

The pack can be used by:

- staff wanting to reflect on their mental health and support needs;
- managers and team leaders wanting to develop organisational practices that support positive mental health;
- union representatives raising mental health issues;
- trainers leading awareness sessions.

How to use the pack

The pack includes information and activities that can be completed individually or as part of teams in staff training sessions. There is also a model training session plan that can be adapted for your own use. The pack has been designed as separate cards to allow flexibility and ease of photocopying.

1 NATFHE, *Stress at work: a guide for UCU safety reps and branch/LA officers*. Available at: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2562>; accessed February 2009.

The most recent UCU survey found measures of well-being at work for UCU members were consistently below the average for the working population. Stress levels for members working in prisons were considerably worse. (UCU Briefing January 2009)

2 Mindful Employer, *Charter for employers*. Available at: <http://www.mindfulemployer.net/charter.html>; accessed February 2009.

1. Introduction

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2. Quiz: What do you know about mental health?

You can do this short quiz on your own or as a group exercise. For the group exercise, give out three different coloured cards to teams of two or three. Ask each team to show a particular colour if they think an answer is a, b or c.

1. The estimated number of people in the UK who will experience mental ill health at some stage in their life is:
 - a) 1 in 25
 - b) 1 in 10
 - c) 1 in 4
2. In the UK, stress, depression and anxiety is the:
 - a) main cause of working days lost in the UK
 - b) second-largest cause of working days lost
 - c) third-largest cause of working days lost
3. The percentage of people with mental health difficulties who report having been dismissed or forced to resign from their jobs is:
 - a) 10 per cent
 - b) 33 per cent
 - c) 40 per cent
4. Within six months of becoming unemployed, the number of men who will develop depression is:
 - a) 1 in 3
 - b) 1 in 7
 - c) 1 in 10
5. In a survey by the University and College Union (UCU) in 2008, the percentage of respondents who said they were subject to some form of bullying at work was:
 - a) 50 per cent
 - b) 30 per cent
 - c) 10 per cent
6. The percentage of people with mental health difficulties who do not mention this on job application forms is:
 - a) 24 per cent
 - b) 54 per cent
 - c) 74 per cent
7. Who said: *'I am the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would be not one cheerful face on earth. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell'.*

2. Quiz: What do you know about mental health?

Answers

1c, 2a, 3b, 4b, 5a, 6c, 7 Abraham Lincoln.

Sources

1. National Association for Mental Health (MIND) website. Available at: <http://www.mind.org.uk/> ; accessed February 2009. (The ratio 1 in 6 refers to the estimated number of people in UK who have common mental health problems at any one time.)
2. The Mindful Employer website. Available at: <http://www.mindfulemployer.net/> ; accessed February 2009.
3. Reid, J. and Baker, S. 1996. *Not just sticks and stones: A survey of stigma, taboos and discrimination experienced by people with mental health problems*. MIND.
4. MIND website. Available at: <http://www.mind.org.uk/> ; accessed February 2009.
5. University and College Union, October 2008. *Briefing*.
6. De Ponte, P. 2000. *Pull yourself together: A survey of stigma and discrimination faced by people who experience mental distress*. Mental Health Foundation.
7. www.who.int/mental_health

3. Understanding mental health

The information in this section is drawn from two main sources: the MIND website³ and James's *Supporting learners with mental health difficulties*.⁴

What is mental health?

Mental health relates to how we think and feel about ourselves and others. There is a great deal of controversy about what it is, and how people can be helped to recover. One definition is:

*'Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community'*⁵

Mental health is about resilience and our underlying self-belief. It affects our ability to communicate and to form and sustain relationships. It can affect our work and quality of life. There are many factors which protect our mental health: a close and confiding relationship, feeling safe, opportunities to fulfil our potential, good physical health, being free of pain, and financial security.

What affects mental health?

Our mental health can become a problem when it begins to have a negative effect on how we think and feel. Although people have different degrees of genetic predisposition to particular types of mental ill health, it can happen to anyone. It may arise from a temporary period of stress in our lives, such as a divorce or bereavement, or it may arise from longer-term situations such as unemployment or isolation.

Everybody shares the same risk factors, but for some there are additional factors such as racism, poverty, being a victim of crime or abuse. For some, mental health issues may develop from an accumulation of problems. These key risk factors can arise from the situation in which an individual lives or works. Particular factors at work have been shown to affect mental health. Low pay, job insecurity and adverse working conditions can be as much or even more damaging than unemployment. Lack of job control and lack of influence also have an impact.

Just as there are risk factors to our mental health, there are also protective factors such as having a close and confiding relationship, having enough money to live on, having time for meaningful and purposeful activities, and being optimistic about the future. These contribute to good mental health because they bolster our sense of well-being.

Mental illness and mental well-being

It is useful to think of mental health as a continuum, but along that continuum there are two strands of mental illness and mental well-being. Where we are on those two strands are not necessarily linked. For example, it is possible to have a diagnosis of mental ill health but have a positive sense of well-being. Conversely, it is also possible to have no diagnosis of mental ill health but to still experience poor mental health because the sense of well-being is low.

3 MIND website. Available at: <http://www.mind.org.uk/> ; accessed February 2009.

4 James, K. 2006. *Supporting learners with mental health difficulties*. LSDA.

5. The World Health Organisation, September 2007.

3. Understanding mental health

Mental distress

Mental ill health is very common. In Britain, about one in four people will have a diagnosis of mental illness at some stage of their life. Seeing it as solely an illness that requires medical treatment can be too narrow a view. Such a view discourages consideration of the many different influences that can cause mental distress. It may also prevent an exploration of various non-medical treatment options.

There are two broad types of mental health issues:

- common mental health issues;
- severe and enduring mental health issues.

Common mental health issues include anxiety, depression, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorders and panic disorders. An estimated one in six people in the UK have such mental health problems at any one time.

Severe and enduring mental health problems include psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia and bi-polar affective disorders. An estimated one in 200 adults will experience a psychotic disorder in any given year. About one in 25 has a personality disorder in the UK.

Diagnosis

A diagnosis helps medical staff to assess suitable treatment. It can be a relief to the person experiencing mental distress. However, each person's experience is unique. People with the same diagnosis may experience it differently. Diagnosing mental health difficulties can be problematic, and different doctors may give one person a completely different diagnosis. People may have a diagnosis of a mental health problem, yet lead an active and fulfilling life. It is therefore important not to make assumptions about a person based on a diagnosis of their mental health condition.

Treatment and recovery

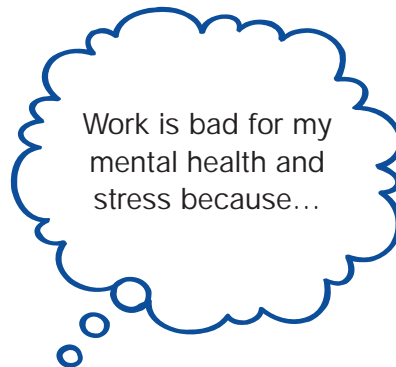
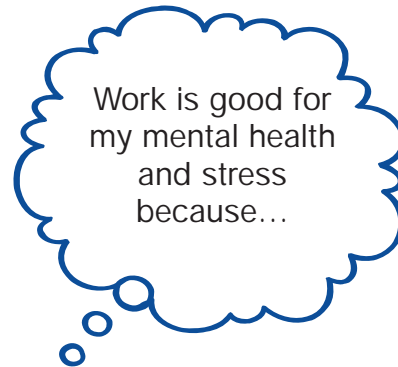
People do recover from mental health difficulties. The evidence shows:

- about half of those experiencing common mental health difficulties will no longer be affected after 18 months;
- of those with a diagnosis of schizophrenia, about a quarter will make a good recovery within five years whilst about one-tenth will develop severe long-term episodes.

Treatment can be offered through local GP surgeries or a referral made to a specialist mental health service, consultant psychiatrist or community mental health team. Treatments can include medication, talking therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy, counselling and self help activities such as relaxation exercises, assertion training and physical activity. Community care can be offered through day centres, supported housing, support groups, advocacy services, social clubs, befriending schemes, advice and information. Support can also be given through residential care or hospital treatment.

Increasingly, people with mental health illnesses are being supported to get on with their lives and retain jobs and social networks rather than wait at home for their symptoms to go away before resuming life. The latter approach can lead to social exclusion and further mental health difficulties. Recovery in the first approach is not about being free of symptoms but about rebuilding a meaningful life, living with mental illness and growing beyond it.

4. Raising awareness



Copy these simple illustrations onto flipchart paper or large coloured sheets.

Display the flip charts or sheets around your organisation in, for example, the canteen and the training room. Leave them up for about a week so that staff can fill them in at any time.

Make people aware of what they are for, how long they will be available and encourage them to fill in their answers.

4. Raising awareness

Look at the following sentences and think about those that best describe how work is good and bad for your mental health.

Work is good for my mental health because...

1. It challenges me to be better, to learn constantly – brilliant!
2. I like interacting with people every day.
3. I help change the world for the better.
4. It stops my brain turning to mush! Otherwise I would be watching daytime TV.
5. I work in a field that I really enjoy and with a great team! Work motivates me in all areas of life – I spend a lot of time here.

What about you?

Work is bad for my mental health because...

1. Sometimes things get out of proportion and I worry too much.
2. I can't sleep because I am worried about my workload and making mistakes.
3. There is too much work to do alone, but no-one has the time to help.
4. I have been prone to full scale nervous breakdowns!
5. Senior management hardly ever come to this college site and it's bad for morale.

What about you?

5. Towards a strategy

Factors influencing mental well-being at work

The **Health and Safety Executive standards**⁶ define six areas that should be investigated when tackling work-related stress:

- demands: workload, work patterns and work environment;
- control: how much say staff have in the way they do their work;
- support: from managers and colleagues;
- relationships: includes dealing with unacceptable behaviour and conflict;
- role: clear understanding of job role;
- change: consultation and management of change.

Organisations can use the Health and Safety Executive's online tool to assess levels of stress in their workplace and identify 'hot spots' as well as possible solutions.⁷

Maintaining an Overview

Business in the Community's Business Action on Health campaign in partnership with Towers Perrin human resources consultancy have created a Healthy Workplace Action Pack⁸ which identifies 12 points to ensure companies develop and maintain a health and well being programme:

- 1 Identify perceived health and well being issues in your workforce.
- 2 Know the business environment: make sure your healthy action plan relates realistically to your organisation.
- 3 Create the project team to take the action plan forward with representatives from all stakeholders and a defined person with responsibility.
- 4 Identify current resources and what is already in place
- 5 Create/review the core framework/ strategy including funding
- 6 Undertake a needs analysis and establish Key Performance Indicators
- 7 Clarify initial objectives
- 8 Develop the year's programme
- 9 Find the right partners to help you deliver
- 10 Communicate the programme
- 11 Launch the programme
- 12 Evaluate and manage the programme

6 Health and Safety Executive, *The Management Standards*. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/standards.htm>; accessed February 2009

7 Health and Safety Executive, *Work-related Stress*. Available at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/>; accessed February 2009.

8 Healthy Workplace Action Pack, Towers Perrin, 2007, www.towersperrin.com/hrservices/uk, (accessed April 09)

5. Towards a strategy

Developing an action plan (1)

Use the Health and Safety Executive standards and the Tower Perrin Action Model to develop an action plan. Divide into small groups preferably made up of people from different areas of the organisation.

Each group takes one of the headings from the standards and should identify:

- what your organisation already has in place to support you;
- what else it could do.

Put the answers on a flip chart and display these on the walls of the training room, giving all participants an opportunity to comment.

The answers could form the basis of an organisational action plan.

In addition, identify what your organisation needs to put in place to maintain an overview of actions.

Developing an action plan (2)

In a group, ask each person to identify five things their organisation can do to improve mental health at work. Ask them to then write each answer on a post-it note. Collect the post-it notes on a large sheet.

Ask the group to sort the post-it notes into categories. you could use the six categories of the Health and Safety Executive Standards plus one category relating to overviews, and ask each person to allocate each category a priority number between one and five. Adding the scores for each category will indicate a priority list, for the resulting action plan.

6. Action plan and checklist

As an employee working in education, you need to look after your mental health. Even so, regardless of your role, it is not only your responsibility. Your organisation needs to ensure that working conditions support mental well-being.

The following checklist can help your organisation develop a clear plan. You may have additional ideas and you can write these in the space under each section.

Checklist

	I am aware of this	This does not exist	Action to be taken
Overview			
An action plan is in place and is reviewed			
There is a project team to take forward the action plan			
There is a senior member of staff with overall responsibility			
There is an organisational health and safety policy which includes mental health			
A needs analysis has been undertaken and key PIs developed			
Demands			
There are sufficient resources to do the work allocated			
There are arrangements to cover workloads during staff absence			
Staff have access to managers if they feel at an early stage they cannot cope and are not made to feel inadequate			
Staff are notified about unplanned tight deadlines and any exceptional need to work long hours			
Our overall culture supports a work/life balance			
Control			
Staff are involved in planning their own work			
Staff are involved in decisions and plans related to the whole college/ workplace			
Support			
Managers regularly meet with staff to identify emerging issues or pressures			
Staff aren't discriminated against on grounds of race, sex, disability or other irrelevant reason.			
There is support for staff who experience high degrees of stress			

6. Action plan and checklist

	I am aware of this	This does not exist	Action to be taken
Team members are supportive			
Procedures are in place for encouraging and supporting disclosure			
Procedures are in place for handling disclosure			
Procedures are in place for making 'reasonable adjustments'			
There is training for managers and staff about mental health at work			
Training is available to help staff deal with and diffuse difficult situations			
Staff can access appropriate training to enable them to do their job			
Training and information is available for staff about mental health			
Recruitment information makes it explicit that applications from people with disabilities including mental health difficulties are welcome			
Relationships			
It is widely known that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated within the college/workplace			
Up to date procedures are in place to deal with and take action against bullying and harassment.			
Overall there is a culture where team members can trust each other and individual contributions valued			
Work Role			
Staff are clear about their work role and have an opportunity to review job descriptions and clarify roles at staff appraisal and during team meetings.			
Change			
Staff are aware of the reasons for change and a timetable for action			
Staff are involved in discussions about change			
Support is in place to enable staff to deal with changes			

7. Celebrate

World Mental Health Day



World Mental Health Day is a global awareness campaign. It is organised by the World Federation for Mental Health and is commemorated in over 100 countries, annually on October 10th.

Possible aims for an event in your organisation could be to:

- increase understanding of mental health;
- reduce the stigma and discrimination against people living with a mental illness;
- promote positive emotional well-being.

Such an event could be targeted at staff, students and the general public. It could be themed around one of the following key messages:

- Stop the stigma!
- Don't bottle it up!
- Everyone can experience mental health difficulties.
- Positive things you can do to help maintain your mental health.

An event could include one of the following activities:

- student theatrical piece about mental health stigma;
- design competition for a screen saver based on the theme of expressing your mood;
- relaxation stations offering free manicure treatments or head and hand massages;
- body balance sessions;
- promoting the top ten ways to look after your mental health;
- massage chair;
- stalls with leaflets, fact sheets, contacts for help and advice, and freebies such as stress balls and bottled water;
- mental health talks;
- displays of students' posters on a mental health theme;
- a three-mile walk;
- local poets capturing the essence of day.

All of the above activities have been successful at one of these colleges: the City of Sunderland College, Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education or Richard Huish College in Taunton:

8. Positive work culture

The following activities could help your organisation consider its attitude towards mental health, and identify ways of making the working environment even better.

In teams consider the following negative statements about the working culture:

- There's a relentless flow of emails, some being sent at midnight and over the weekend.
- Admitting you have trouble coping with your workload is a sign of weakness.
- There is always a last-minute rush preparing papers.
- People who make mistakes are treated like an idiot.
- People spend too much time at work, never take annual leave or, worse, work during sick leave.

Do any of these apply to your team? Are there any other statements you could add?

In teams consider the following positive statements about the working culture:

- There's plenty of scope for creativity.
- I have confidence in the ability of my team.
- Staff are committed to supporting the students.
- We believe in the value of what we are doing.
- I have flexible starting times which means I can drop off my kids at school.

Do any of these apply to your team? Are there any other statements you could add?

In pairs or small groups take one or two of the negative statements you identified and discuss what can be done to address them.

8. Positive work culture



Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle has become famous for developing a positive workplace culture. Its positive approach stems from the following principles:

- choose your attitude: if you don't like this work you may be best working elsewhere;
- be present: be there for the people you work with;
- make someone's day;
- have fun at work: there's no harm in introducing a playful approach at times to energise relationships.

You can find out more about the Pike Place Fish Market at: www.pikeplacefish.com .

There is a short film made by the market at: http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=TbtsfyEF_c

When you have been inspired by the short clip, pool ideas for improving your work environment.

9. Voices

The following are quotes from staff working in post-16 education who have experienced mental ill-health at some time. They are available in the NIACE report *From Compliance to Cultural Change*.⁹ They highlight the range of responses to mental health in the education sector:

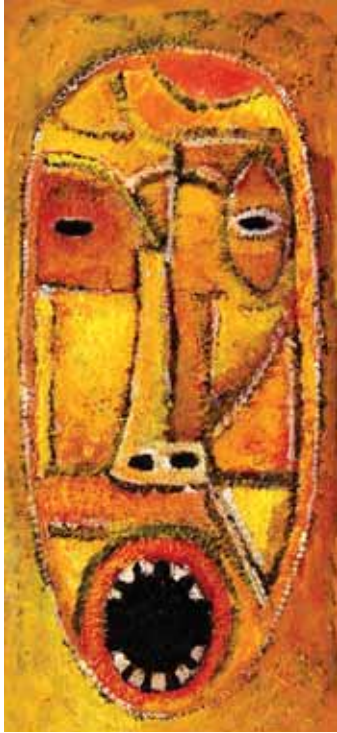


Image reproduced by kind permission of the artist, Jonathan Richmond

"The 'Two Ticks Symbol' [Guaranteed Interview Scheme] enabled me to get an interview and therefore demonstrate my true potential in person, rather than through an application form."

Disability Officer, Higher Education

"One college has offered to adapt the hours of the job and offered a job share if required as I do not feel able to do full-time work at present."

Lecturer, Further Education

"I left my previous contracted job because of discrimination, prejudice and lack of understanding about depression compounded by an expectation that all staff should work more than their allocated hours in addition for lesson preparation."

Lecturer, Higher Education

"When I explained to my line manager that I was decreasing my medication and may be more sensitive than usual, there was little allowance made. In fact it was at this time that I experienced a lack of support from my line managers. I have experienced discrimination and workplace bullying and it has been inferred by more than one staff member that I am overly sensitive and need to be more 'thick skinned'."

Manager, Adult and Community Learning

"When I first visit a venue (before I start teaching), I like to be accompanied as I can still experience panic attacks in different environments. My course coordinator has always been happy to go along with me."

Tutor, Adult and Community Learning

⁹ NIACE, 2008. *From compliance to cultural change; the final report of the Commission for Disabled Staff in Lifelong Learning*. The full report and a summary document are available at: <http://www.niace.org.uk/projects/commissionfordisabledstaff/> ; accessed February 2009.

9. Voices

"Senior staff have been very supportive and encouraging. I have been given extensions to hand reports in when I am feeling under pressure."

Tutor, Adult and Community Learning

"A list of reasonable adjustments that have been put in place in the past [would have been useful] for information purposes, instead of the onus being on the disabled member of staff to come up with them."

Admissions Assistant, Adult and Community Learning

"I have listened to my colleagues as they discuss students and parents as 'that nutter', 'you know the one who has a screw loose' etc. I tolerate these comments as I do not believe they are malicious as such, but none the less they are still hurtful."

Admissions Assistant, Higher Education

"[My mental health condition] has effectively ended any chance of progression within the organisation. Taking on too much work could cause a relapse."

Tutor, Further Education

"I rarely disclose my mental health difficulties as I suspect others would view me as less likely to be effective."

Equality and Diversity Advisor, Higher Education

"I am fine so long as people treat me decently and fairly. The problems I have been having have all been triggered by other staff treating me in a way which is negative, occasionally intimidating, lacking respect, and insensitive to my need for job security."

Learning Advisor, Higher Education

10. Well-being policy

Consider having an employee well-being policy for your organisation. The following example is an abridged version of Newcastle College's policy .



Policy statement

Newcastle College is committed to providing a rewarding working environment where employees achieve job satisfaction and are fully motivated to contribute to the success of the College and achieve their potential for the benefit of themselves and the organisation. Our aim is to provide an environment in which employees are kept safe and healthy at work, have access to information and support to improve well-being, and create a workplace which fosters personal responsibility and engagement to contribute to our organisational performance.

Linked policies

Attendance Policy, Diversity Policy, Flexible Working Policy, Special Leave Policy, Respect and Consideration for Others Policy, Parental Leave Policy, Maternity and Paternity Leave Policies.

Linked procedures

Appraisal process.

Location and access to the policy

- from the Human Resources Department;
- via the Desk Top College under College Policies.

Person responsible for the policy

The Director of Human Resources is responsible for ensuring that:

- the procedure is monitored and reviewed in line with relevant legislation, codes of practice, case law and good employer practice;
- any changes to the procedure other than purely legislative are subject to consultation with representatives of recognised trade unions;
- the implementation of the procedure is monitored to ensure fair and consistent treatment of individuals under the policy.

Responsibility

The College has legal obligations under health and safety legislation to manage risks to the health and safety of its employees. The College will put in place measures to prevent and manage risks to employee well-being, together with appropriate training and support.

Line managers

Managers will be expected to implement measures to minimise the risk to employee well-being, particularly from negative pressure at work. Managers will be expected to be familiar with the content of this policy, and understand how they can support the creation of an appropriate working environment by:

- ensuring a good match between individuals recruited to perform a job and the requirements of the job;

10. Well-being policy

- ensuring employees are kept updated with developments at work and share understanding of how this may impact on jobs and workloads;
- be available to enable employees to approach them with concerns about their role and how to resolve these;
- ensure jobs are designed so that work is allocated appropriately between team members;
- ensure the working environment is assessed to remain appropriate and fit for purpose.

Employees

Employees are responsible for managing their own health and well-being. This is evident through adopting positive health behaviours, and informing the College if they believe their work or the working environment is giving rise to a level of stress they are finding it difficult to deal with. Stress may be work or non-work related. It is important to emphasise that it is only by sharing such information that the College becomes aware of an issue and can identify steps to address it. Any health-related information disclosed through discussions with managers, HR or the occupational health service is treated in confidence.

Human resources

The HR function will be expected to develop appropriate policies and procedures to facilitate the well-being of employees, enable line managers to support their employees, and liaise as appropriate between occupational health and any other relevant professional with the objective of helping employees to maintain good physical and mental health.

Occupational health

Occupational health providers will provide a service to help employees remain at work or return to work after experiencing health problems. This will include preparing medical assessments of fitness for work following referrals, liaising with GPs, and working with individuals to support them. They will provide an important part in developing rehabilitation plans for returning to work after ill health-related absence, and work with the College in ensuring the rehabilitation is successful. The occupational health provider may also contribute to the implementation of appropriate health promotion and lifestyle programmes.

Newcastle College's policy also covers:

- health promotion activities;
- training;
- employee well-being activities;
- the impact of stress in the workplace.

11. Positive practice



As a large further education college, North Devon College takes its responsibility for the well-being of staff very seriously. A 'Stress Champion' has been nominated from the Human Resources department, who ensures that the college meets its duties under the Health and Safety Executive and ensures that stress to staff is minimised. The Stress Champion works with individual staff as well as providing whole organisation approaches to managing stress levels in staff, for example by training middle and senior managers to recognise and minimise stress and to help staff manage workloads and responsibilities. The college has also produced a self-help guide to managing stress and has developed a supportive approach to monitoring sickness absence.

The college runs a programme of activity to promote well-being for staff and students. This has involved learners from curriculum areas such as hair and beauty who have provided reflexology and massage sessions and from students in sports studies who have led physical activities. Sessions on food and exercise have also been provided to raise awareness of the link between diet, exercise and mental well-being. This has had an impact in the college with feedback from staff about the benefits as well as a reduction in the levels of staff sickness. Unintended outcomes include bringing staff together and the setting up of staff running and climbing clubs.

The college also provides sessions for staff and students on stress and mental health awareness each term.

The staff well-being programme includes:

- sanctuary spa and skin care centre;
- climbing wall;
- slimming club;
- one-to-one healing sessions;
- college fitness room/gym;
- blood pressure and diabetes testing;
- walking for health – pedometers are available to buy;
- bike loans;
- employee counselling and welfare service;
- prostate cancer awareness week;
- singing group;
- menopause awareness session.

12. Healthy workplaces: the business case

The CBI estimates the annual cost of stress and mental health problems to be over £5 billion.¹⁰ The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health estimate the cost to employers at nearly £26 billion per year. That is equivalent to £1,035 for every employee in the UK workforce.¹¹ Promoting good mental health at work can:

- increase quality of service to learners and clients;
- reduce sickness absence;
- reduce turnover of staff;
- improve recruitment;
- improve an organisation's reputation and image.

Business in the Community (BITC) researched the financial benefits of having a healthy workforce programme.¹² The following are five examples from its report:

London Underground

A stress reduction programme is estimated to have resulted in absence reduction savings of £45,000, a return on investment of 8:1. There is evidence of improvements to productivity and the company culture as well as staff making positive health and lifestyle changes.

Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education

Since the introduction of the *Live Well Work Well* policy, sickness absence levels have reduced from 10,000 working days lost (for 1,000 staff) in 2001 to 4,266 working days lost (for 1,300 staff) in 2007. This equates to 3.23 days lost per employee, less than half the CBI figure of 7 days and the sector average of 8.8 days. Ofsted inspected Grimsby Institute in December 2007 and gave improved grades compared with the previous inspection in 2003: no teaching staff were seen delivering poor lessons.

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Decline in sickness absence from 5251 in 2002 to 3000 in 2004.

Standard Life Healthcare

Cost savings of £1 million is attributed to a health at work programme. This includes a 13 per cent reduction in staff turnover and a 25 per cent reduction in sickness absence at the office in Stockport.

British Gas

A health programme resulted in a £5.5 million cost savings from improved absenteeism rates.

¹⁰ Investors in People website. Available at: <http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>; accessed January 2009.

¹¹ www.scmh.org.uk/pdfs/mental_health_at_work.pdf

¹² BITC, *Nurture your people and grow your business*. Available at http://www.bitc.org.uk/resources/publications/nurture_grow.html; accessed January 2009.

13. Developing practice

Developing practice to support colleagues

Examples from real cases can help develop awareness of mental health issues in further education and suggest ways to support colleagues.

Option 1

Look through the examples on Card 14 and in pairs or small groups select one or two that resonate with you. Discuss what you would do in a similar situation.

Option 2

Have either a range of blank cards or cards with the following headings:

- work overload/team pressures;
- change;
- traumatic incident at work;
- bullying and harassment;
- sickness absence due to stress;
- working beyond capacity or capability;
- working outside boundaries;
- recruitment;
- workplace culture.

Invite staff to contribute a short case study or example of stress at work based on their experience and write it on one of the cards. Staff could work in pairs with one relating the example and the other writing it down. Each pair then meets with another to form a group of four and discuss together what could be done to support each example.

For both options:

- agree key support actions and put these on different coloured card;
- display examples and supporting actions on boards around the room for everyone to read;
- the ideas could be typed up and circulated for further learning within your organisation.

In considering good practice, the suggestions on Card 15 may provide a checklist or reference point.

14. Case Studies

Traumatic incidents

1. At break-time a tutor finds a learner on the floor of the washroom. The learner has self-harmed quite severely. The tutor alerts emergency services and upon return to the staff room appears to be in shock. The college cleaner, who has not been directly involved but who later had to clear a large amount of blood from the floor, is also said to be shaken.
2. A learning support tutor who has worked on a weekly basis with a learner for the last two years has just been informed in an email from the course tutor that the learner has committed suicide. The support tutor is in shock and unable to continue working.
3. A tutor working in a prison is assaulted and killed in the prison car park. The press are taking a strong interest.
4. A tutor of a group of about 30 mainly teenage students decides to leave the classroom with a very distressed student. The remaining 29 students are left alone. The tutor decides to leave them because the distressed student was clearly suicidal but she is worried if she has done the right thing.

Team overload and stress

Six months ago, your team received a grade one during an inspection, and it has also recently won a national award for best practice. The manager is making additional and unexpected demands on the team's workload and is maintaining pressure on all administrative and teaching staff with expectations of nothing less than perfection. An administrative member of staff is in tears at work because she has been made to feel like an idiot after making a mistake.

Bullying

An officer from an adult and community learning (ACL) service is working with an officer from the local authority economic development team on a programme to recruit people from the community into work. They appear to work well together but there has been some miscommunication and fewer people were recruited onto the first course than originally hoped. At a subsequent meeting, a consultant tutor from outside the ACL service attends, and the economic development team officer's line manager turns up without warning. This line manager is known for believing the ACL service to be 'wishy-washy' and too 'touchy-feely'. He accuses the ACL service officer of mismanaging the course and blames her for poor recruitment. The economic development team officer agrees with her manager. During the meeting, the ACL service officer, though shaken, tries to put across her views. However, after the meeting she feels quite shaken and angry. She feels she was unfairly treated and personally attacked. The consultant suggests the manager is a bully and there is clearly a 'blaming' culture in his team.

Return to work (1)

A staff member who has been absent from work with mental ill health for three months has returned full time to his previous teaching and personal tutor commitments. On his first day back his manager asks how he is and tells him to take it easy. The staff member feels from the way this was said that his manager's concern is mildly patronising and he may not be totally sympathetic.

Beyond boundaries

You think a colleague is getting over-involved with a group of students, giving out her personal phone number so they can call her if they have difficulties with their homework. Students have asked you for your home number and refusing makes you feel like you are not as committed to the work. In your section, it appears to be expected that you will offer this level of support.

Sick leave due to stress

A member of staff has been off work sick for three weeks giving different reasons for their absence: first a stomach bug, then flu followed by an earache. You suspect, following a comment from a colleague, that the real reason may be stress. The colleague thinks it is unacceptable and a sign of weakness to declare stress as a reason for absence.

14. Case Studies

Working beyond capacity or capability

You have just been asked to lead a course for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities to develop travel training within the community. You will be covering for a colleague who is on sick leave. You have not had any previous experience of working with this group of learners or teaching the topic. You can see advantages and disadvantages of accepting the work but are becoming increasingly anxious that you will not be able to work with the learners. At the same time, the course manager seems desperate that you accept and you feel you will be letting everyone down if you do not take on the work.

Inspection 1

A recent inspection has given your department a grade four. The management team do not agree this accurately reflects the quality of the work but most staff are in shock and feel very anxious about the future. Many have admitted they were not prepared for the inspection.

Inspection 2

A new college principal has been appointed and is insisting staff do absolutely everything to ensure the college receives an Ofsted grade one at next year's full inspection. The pressure on staff, including the demands on work time, has increased dramatically.

Organisational change

A combination of changing government policy and the financial environment means your organisation is going through a restructure with a potential 20 per cent loss of jobs. Already one member staff in your section has gone on sick leave with stress and you feel the tension is getting unbearable.

Recruitment

During an interview, a candidate appears to be the best person for the job. However you notice in their employment history they have had a number of periods of absence. They have indicated they have a mental health issue on their form. The position is a stressful one and there is some debate amongst the selection panel regarding this candidate's suitability.

Harassment

A student makes a complaint to a tutor's line manager about what they perceive to be unorthodox teaching methods. There is no prior discussion with the tutor. None of the other students make a complaint. The line manager removes the tutor from the class and asks the tutor to work in the library as a support tutor. In a later discussion between the tutor and the line manager in a public place – the main college foyer – the line manager shouts at the tutor saying they have made a complete mess of their job. The tutor concerned is very distressed.

Return to work (2)

A careers advisor is given a lighter workload because her manager perceives that family responsibilities are causing her stress. She is not consulted about this beforehand. She feels increasingly anxious about how her work is being viewed by her manager and work colleagues. One day when a client comes in with a query, the careers advisor can't remember what to do, but now feels too embarrassed to ask colleagues. She panics and walks out of work, pen in hand, walking for several miles and doesn't return to work for several months, due to stress. When she goes to the doctors she breaks into tears. No one from work visits, but she is contacted to say work can't deal with her situation until she goes back to work. She has hypnotherapy to try to cope with the situation and develop a positive self-image. When she does go back to work to discuss returning to work, her line manager appears to fall asleep during the interview.

15. Developing practice

Workplace processes

- ensure systems support mental health by having, for example, appraisals, access to training and development, health and safety risk assessments and diversity policies covering flexible working;
- promote well-being.

Work demands

- ensure staff's skills and abilities are matched to job demands;
- ensure staff's concerns are addressed;
- ensure systems are in place to respond to concerns;
- allow staff to have control over the pace of their work, where possible;
- ensure staff are able to use all their skills and have the chance to develop new ones;
- consult staff about work patterns.

Organisational change

- offer timely information so staff can understand the reasons for change;
- consult about changes and offer opportunities for influencing proposals;
- ensure staff are aware of the probable impact of change;
- provide training to support any job changes;
- offer a timetable for change;
- ensure access to relevant support.

Bullying and harassment

- promote positive behaviour;
- develop a culture of trust;
- celebrate success;
- provide training on how to diffuse difficult situations;
- ensure there are agreed policies and procedures for preventing and dealing with unacceptable behaviour;
- resolve conflicts;
- ensure systems are in place for reporting unacceptable behaviour.

Recruitment

- include positive statements about mental health in job adverts;
- ensure fair processes;
- ask about periods of absence but do not probe excessively;
- if a candidate says they have mental health issues, ask what appropriate adjustments can be made;
- make sure all candidates understand the demands of the job;
- give unsuccessful candidates fair and truthful reasons why they did not get the job;
- have a clear job induction for the successful candidate.

15. Developing practice

Distress at work

- spot signs early on;
- use the normal options for investigating the root of the problem such as appraisals, informal chats and talking openly;
- ensure support is available;
- raise any concerns at an early stage;
- ensure confidentiality, as appropriate;
- invite staff to bring friends to any discussion, as appropriate;
- discuss possible support or adjustments;
- monitor how the situation is developing;
- ensure staff are aware of available support whether provided internally by human resources or an external counselling service;
- let staff know it is okay to be upset;
- identify which tasks are most urgent and give a timescale for action.

Staff sickness

- agree what colleagues can be told;
- ask if they would like to be visited;
- stay in contact;
- identify support from internal and external sources;
- have a clear sickness absence policy.

Return to work

- agree, with the member of staff, a plan for their return to work;
- consider any work factors that may have contributed to the absence and make adjustments;
- make sure the immediate work load is manageable;
- arrange a return-to-work interview;
- monitor and support the situation;
- have a clear rehabilitation policy;
- have a clear retirement due to ill health policy;
- if the member of staff decides to leave, enable them to do this with dignity.

16. Top tips

Mental health is about the way we think and feel, and our ability to deal with ups and downs. Making simple changes doesn't need to cost a fortune or take a lot of time. Here are some ideas:

- keep an 'ego file' of notes, emails and letters from friends that remind you of your positive attributes;
- talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling;
- take a break;
- dance;
- play squash;
- go running;
- watch rugby;
- get outdoors;
- dig the garden;
- go out with friends;
- plan weekends away;
- plan holidays well in advance so you have something to look forward to;
- tell yourself no-one will die if you do not get all the work done on time;
- listen to music;
- play an instrument;
- have a cuddle;
- stroke the cat;
- play *Scrabble*;
- do a crossword;
- help someone else;
- do something you are good at;
- share a joke and have a laugh.



Image reproduced by kind permission of Noriko Asugara

With your colleagues, share ideas for looking after your mental health. Write the ideas down or discuss them together.

17. Stress check

This stress checklist is adapted from The Essentials for Health's website.¹³ It can help you and your colleagues think about your levels of stress. These levels often fluctuate; they can be an indicator of how we are coping and can remind us to pay attention to our needs in order to maintain positive mental health.

Do you:	Not at all	Sometimes	A lot
Break out in a sweat or have palpitations when thinking about work?			
Fail to see the funny side of things?			
Snap at people for no good reason?			
Skip lunch?			
Work for long periods without getting up to stretch, relax or clear your mind?			
Take work home with you?			
Binge on fatty or sugary foods?			
Find yourself unable to make decisions or concentrate for long periods?			
Turn down social invitations because work leaves you no time?			
Have trouble sleeping?			
Suffer from minor ailments?			
Find it hard to get up in the morning?			
Frequently become tearful but unable to pin it on something specific?			
Cancel holidays or take work with you, if you do go?			
Not feel good about yourself?			
Find it hard to talk to people about your worries or problems?			

If you answer 'a lot' to several of these questions you may be suffering from stress. Your organisation may be able to help by improving its working practices.

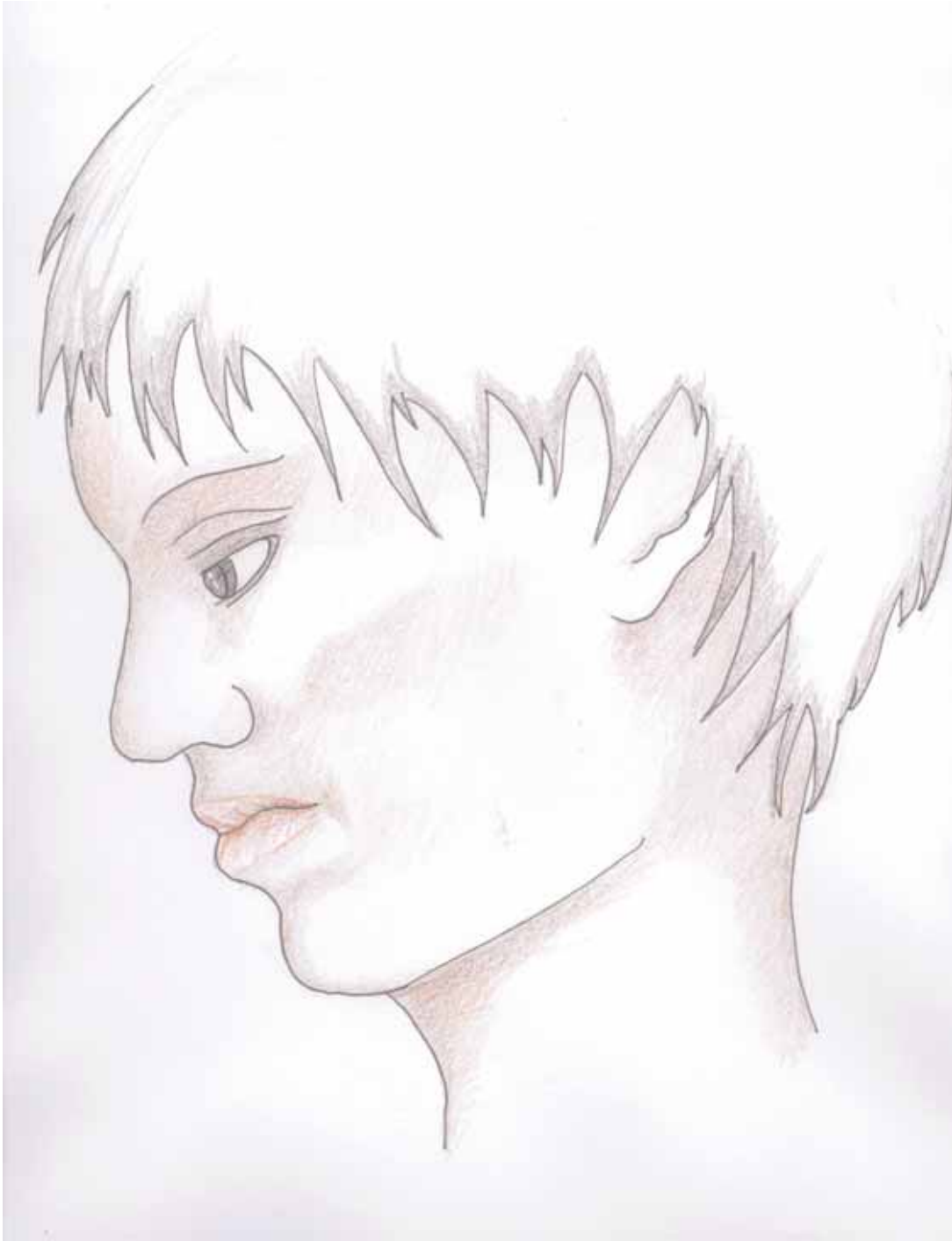
There are also things you can do to improve your well-being such as making time for yourself to enjoy your interests, seeing friends, taking exercise, eating a healthy diet, and finding someone you can talk to.

See card 19 and 20 for possible follow-on action.

¹³ Essentials for Health. *Stress – Juggling too many balls?* Available at: <http://www.stressinwork.com/stress-test.php>; accessed February 2009.

18. Doodle a healthy workplace

Draw a face like the one below, and fill it with all the words you associate with work. Use the face below, or draw a simple profile.



Now, be positive and think only of the things that make a healthy work place.

Tip: Cross out any negative words from your picture and add any extra ideas you have for creating a healthy workplace.

19. Looking after yourself

No-one is immune from mental health problems. One in four people experience some kind of mental health problem during the course of any one year.¹⁶ Mental health difficulties can affect any one of us at any time, particularly if we are experiencing a period of stress, anxiety or self-doubt. These stresses and anxieties may arise from any aspect of our lives, such as a relationship, or financial worries, but they can also arise from work.

Working in post-16 education and training is rewarding but there is a heavy workload and changing demands can make it stressful. Whatever the cause of a person's mental health difficulties, it will undoubtedly affect the way they do their job. It can affect the way they relate to colleagues and learners, and it affects their judgement and confidence.

It is important to seek support because we all have a responsibility to look after our own mental health at work. There are strategies we can use to help ourselves and get the necessary support from others.

Aspects of our work that create most stress

Working in education can be fascinating but it can also bring its own particular stresses including:

- hearing things from learners that sadden us: we may have a learner in distress and feel powerless to help in any way;
- feeling unsupported;
- learners having unreal or inappropriate expectations about what help and support we can give them;
- rare crises or situations that shock or leave us feeling shaken, upset, angry, scared or guilty;
- feeling out of our depth if we do not have a particular expertise;
- not having adequate time to keep up-to-date with the latest knowledge;
- lack of office space, hot-desking or remote working;
- lack of opportunity to take a break or working long hours;
- feeling like you never get to the end of your 'to-do' list;
- having to cope with re-structuring, redundancy notices and re-applying for your job;
- your role is task-based rather than time-based which means your workload is hard to manage;
- feeling the 'goalposts' have changed in terms of what is expected of you and what the targets are.



19. Looking after yourself

Strategies for looking after your mental health

It is important to know how to find support in your organisation when you feel you are becoming stressed.

Study the lists below and think about people and systems available for supporting you in your organisation.

Support and resources

- know who you can talk to whether this is your manager or an outside agency;
- know which situations are best dealt with by another person, who that person is, and how to contact them;
- know what procedures, processes and support are in place in your organisation;
- find out if there are defined procedures for dealing with specific situations such as getting additional learning support or a risk assessment;
- seek out your own support mechanisms and this could include colleagues, managers, union reps, counselling services, mentors and staff development;
- find out about other resources such as good practice guides, websites, networking events and conferences;
- keep a sense of perspective: for the one learner or colleague who may cause you anxiety, there will be many others offering support and successful working relationships.

Any others?

Teaching

- know the boundaries of your job, your remit and where responsibility lies with other people;
- do not get over-involved in areas outside of your boundaries;
- listen to learners and resolve any difficulties together, taking into account what they can realistically do. Be clear and honest;
- always be ethical so that whatever happens you know you have behaved professionally, fairly and respectfully of others' rights;
- reflect on your practice because there may be things you would like to change, adapt or improve;
- during an appraisal with your manager, think about and record your development needs because you may feel more confident with new skills or level of understanding.

Any others?

Emotions

- value your skills and strengths;
- it is okay to ask questions and request support;
- you do not have to struggle alone and you are not expected to know everything;
- it is okay to feel sad, anxious, nervous or embarrassed, and the important thing is to deal with these emotions appropriately and professionally.

Any others?

20. Feeling stressed: keeping well

Mindful Employer has developed a workbook that can be downloaded and used as a practical approach for addressing stress.¹⁴ It looks at the things you are doing and could do to keep yourself well.

You can complete the following questions on your own or you may like to think about them with someone you trust. They have been adapted from the *Mindful Employer* workbook.

1. What are your stress triggers?

For example, problems at work, anniversary of loss or trauma, being over-tired, problems with IT, family conflict or illness.

2. What are your early warning signs of stress?

For example, withdrawal, making a drama into a crisis, strong emotions, being mentally tired, reaction to being told off, forgetfulness or being obsessed with particular thoughts.

3. What can you do to avoid or limit your exposure to things that trigger stress? What can you ask others to do or not do to help?

For example, focusing on priorities, avoiding stressful situations, talking to a friend or playing music.

4. What can you do to prevent things from getting worse? What can you ask others to do?

5. What action can you take when you recognise an early warning sign? What can you ask others to do?

¹⁴ The Mindful Employer. *Feeling Stressed: Keeping Well – A Preventative Approach Towards Harmful Levels of Stress at Work*. Available at: [www.mindfulemployer.net/Feeling per cent20Stressed per cent20- per cent20Keeping per cent20Well.pdf](http://www.mindfulemployer.net/Feeling%20Stressed%20-keeping%20Well.pdf); accessed February 2009.

20. Feeling stressed: keeping well

6. Who are the people that you can turn to for support?

7. Who are the people you do not want involved in any way?

8. What are you like when you are well?

For example, active, calm, spontaneous, fun, creative, outgoing or clear thinking.

9. What do you do to keep yourself feeling well?

For example, phone a friend, go for a walk, sleep well, eat properly, take a holiday, take a course, review life goals or see a relativ.

10. Is there anything new you would like to try?

For example, take a holiday, drink less, sustain friendships or exercise.

11. What have you learned about yourself when you experience a difficulty?

12. What is the one smallest change you can make which would make the biggest difference next time you experience a difficulty?

13. When will be a good time to review these actions?

22. Further reading and web-based resources

Organisation	Materials	Website address
Mindful Employer	Charter, resources, links and news.	www.mindfulemployer.net
Health and Safety Executive	Stress management standards and good practice examples.	www.hse.gov.uk http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/indicatortool.pdf
SHIFT	Line managers' resource: a practical guide to managing and supporting people with mental health problems in the workplace. Resource booklet is available on the website.	www.shift.org.uk
University and College Union (UCU)	Extensive range of health and safety fact sheets relating to further and higher education, including a stress toolkit.	www.ucu.org.uk
Mental Health First Aid	Details of a course to support people with mental ill health. The website has a list of further contacts.	www.mhfa.org.uk
BBC	Web pages on emotional health including coping techniques.	www.bbc.co.uk/health/conditions/mental_health/index.shtml
Mind	Information on all aspects of mental health.	www.mind.org.uk

22. Further reading and web-based resources

Organisation	Materials	Website address
The Mental Health Foundation	Latest news on mental health issues. There are also fact sheets, publications, and an A-Z of mental health terms.	www.mentalhealth.org.uk
NIACE	Briefing sheets, events listings and moodle related to lifelong learning and mental health.	www.niace.org.uk
Health, work and well-being	Government project to well-being of working-age people	www.workingforhealth.gov.uk
Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health	Publications, employment, criminal justice, mental health information	www.scmh.org.uk

23. Sample training plan

A training session plan to promote awareness of mental health and well-being at work for staff in the post-16 education and training sector.

Date:		
Venue:		
		Card
9.30	Arrival and registration	
	What I do to bust stress	4
10.00	Welcome and introduction to the day	
10.10	Quiz: What is mental health?	2
10.45	Work is good for my mental health because...	4
10.50	An organisational framework for reducing stress	5, 6
11.00	Five things our organisation or team could do to be a mindful employer	5, 8
11.15	Coffee	
11.30	Towards a strategy	5
12.15	Lunch	
1.00	Stress check	17
1.10	Case studies	13, 14
2.00	Celebrate World Mental Health Day	7
2.15	Pike Place Fish Market and inspired thinking	8
2.30	Next steps: priorities for action	
2.45	Close	

