



Stress

is a key driver of workplace
wellbeing

Stress is the result of imbalance between the demands and expectations on people and the resources and abilities they have to manage those demands. Employee stress can pose serious risks to workplace wellbeing if left unaddressed, and can lead to several mental and physical health issues such as anxiety, depression and burnout. Interventions that help organisations identify and mitigate the main sources of stress are vital to achieving greater workplace wellbeing.



Stress Interventions



Involve employees in workplace decision-making

Giving employees the opportunity to participate in workplace decision-making and allowing their ideas and concerns to influence workplace change can reduce stress and improve overall wellbeing.¹ This action is particularly important when implementing new interventions – asking employees to help co-design solutions to workplace problems can lead to greater success.

- A randomised control trial of a participatory problem-solving workshop showed a reduction in sick days and improvements in mental health among employees with stress symptoms or common mental disorders.²
- A 14-month participatory intervention rolled out across 6 Danish workplaces improved working conditions and psychological wellbeing among knowledge workers.³





Stress Interventions



Identify stressors in your organisation



Knowing the causes of stress for your employees is vital to reducing its impact. This is what is known as the **psycho-social work environment**.

Only by identifying, understanding and minimising stressors can you help employees to thrive and deliver their best work.

Treating stress as an individual problem and not getting to the root cause is doomed to fail. Collecting data on your workplace will ensure you can target your interventions.

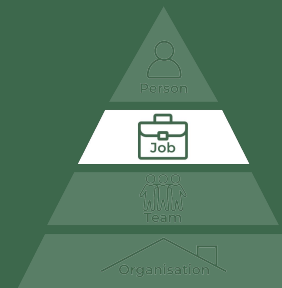


There are many tools for helping to identify the causes of stress. You can conduct a stress audit or stress risk assessment using multiple existing survey templates:

- **The UK's Health and Safety Executive Management Standards Indicator Tool** measures demands, control, support, relationships, role, and change
- A longer survey like **ASSET: An Organisational Stress Screening Tool**



Stress Interventions



Customise jobs through crafting

Job crafting gives employees the autonomy to proactively reshape their work task and relationships to better align with their personal needs, goals, and skills. It involves identifying the conditions that are hindering their wellbeing or productivity and making adjustments to reduce or eliminate them. Under **supportive** conditions, job crafting can improve employee stress and adaptability.⁴

An analysis of 826 social service employees revealed that job crafting predicted work-life balance, work engagement, and burnout above and beyond age, gender, or seniority.⁵



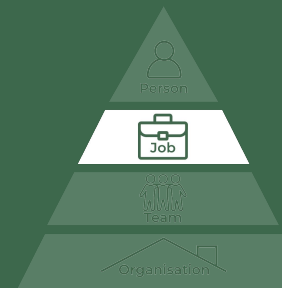
Refer also to other drivers:

- **Purpose**
- **Operational Design**





Stress Interventions



Redesign jobs

How job tasks and duties are structured and scheduled can strongly influence job quality.¹ The practice of job redesign can facilitate improvements to workflow that better support employee wellbeing such as task variety and role clarity. Job redesign means breaking the job down with employees and collaboratively developing solutions to the main problems.



A systematic review of 33 intervention studies found that employee wellbeing and performance may be improved through:

- Direct improvements to job design
- Training employees to improve their own job design
- System wide approaches that enhance job design

Successful implementation of interventions was associated with employee involvement and engagement, managerial commitment, and integration with other organisational systems.⁶





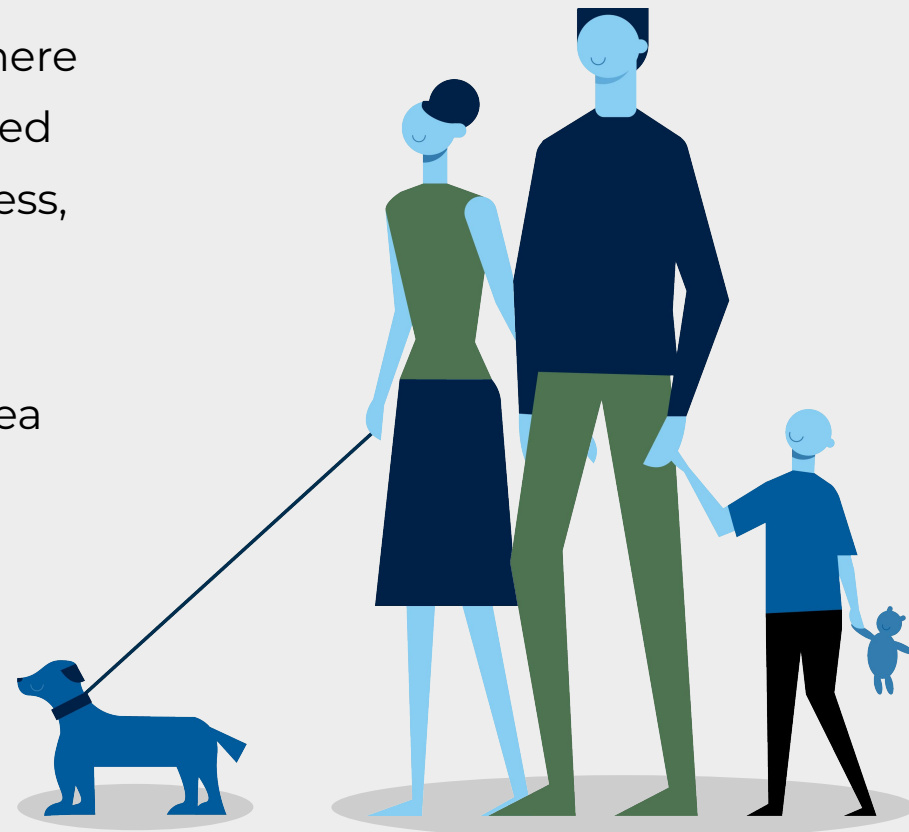
Stress Interventions



Give employees flexibility & schedule control

Flexible work arrangements allow employees to alter how, when, and where they work on a temporary or permanent basis. A flexible approach coupled with managerial support can foster greater work-life balance, reduce stress, and improve job satisfaction.⁷

An analysis of over 1000 employees across 50 organisations in South Korea revealed that work-life balance programmes and scheduling control are positively associated with job satisfaction and mental wellbeing, and the association is stronger when employees enjoy the benefits of both.⁸



Take care of your leaders

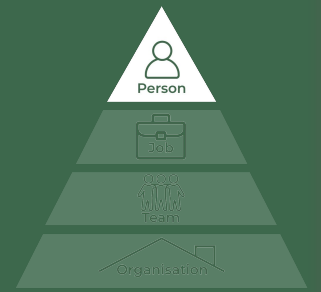
Employee wellbeing is dynamically influenced by leadership. The wellbeing and behaviours of leaders are linked to employee stress levels, absenteeism, and job satisfaction. Thus, interventions that reduce leaders' stress levels and encourage positive leadership behaviours can improve overall workplace wellbeing.



- A systematic review of leadership studies revealed that workplaces with leaders who were perceived to be considerate and supportive by their employees had higher wellbeing scores and fewer sick related absences.⁹
- A meta-analysis of studies assessing the impact of leadership on employee stress and wellbeing showed that employees with leaders who exhibit high stress levels and low moods are more likely to report the same symptoms.¹⁰ Fortunately, the opposite is also true, suggesting that targeting leaders wellbeing has positive wellbeing spillover effects.¹⁰



Stress Interventions



Promote relaxation

Relaxation techniques such as mindfulness, meditation, yoga, and muscle relaxation therapy can promote calmness and reduce work-related stress among employees.

- A randomised control trial of an 8-week relaxation programme (diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscle relaxation twice a day for 20 minutes) administered to office workers across different workplaces showed significant reductions in stress-related symptoms.¹¹
- A meta-analysis of relaxation therapies implemented in workplaces demonstrated a beneficial effect to employee health and wellbeing, especially in regard to stress.¹²



Adherence is key to success with relaxation practices which can be difficult to maintain during periods of stress. Considering this, organisations should **not** rely on this approach alone and instead, implement it in combination with other interventions that improve working conditions.



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Making the most of this resource

1 Measure

Conduct an employee survey to assess four core dimensions of employee wellbeing: **job satisfaction, happiness, stress, and sense of purpose.**

Collectively, these provide a scientifically validated, multidimensional view of how employees experience work.

Equally important, organisations should measure **the drivers of workplace wellbeing** - the underlying working conditions, relationships, and organisational factors that shape those experiences.

2 Understand

Once you've got the data, the next step is to **identify which drivers most strongly predict wellbeing outcomes within your organisation.**

Workplace wellbeing is multidimensional, shaped by a range of drivers, but not all drivers exert equal influence in every context.

By applying **data analysis at scale**, organisations can uncover which factors most powerfully explain wellbeing within their organisation.

3 Act

Once you have identified your priority drivers, the next task is to **select and implement interventions** that address them effectively.

The Playbook provides a curated selection of **evidence-based interventions** to help you act with confidence to choose interventions that are both empirically grounded and contextually feasible.

Don't forget to build **evaluation** plans into your intervention design.



Read [our guidance](#) document before getting started, to ensure you get the most out of the resources.

Sharing this resource



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Stress

is just one key driver of
workplace wellbeing

These are just some of many evidence-based interventions recommended in the Work Wellbeing Playbook.



All recommendations and academic citations, organised by driver, are available for free on our website:

www.worldwellbeingmovement.org/playbook