

# Stress and mental wellbeing resources for Higher Education Institutions

From the Higher Education Safety and Health (HESH) Forum



## Stress and mental wellbeing resources for HEIs

### Foreword

The stress and mental wellbeing resources pack is an extensive list which has been brought together and includes links to web pages and documents about work-related stress, stress management and mental health from a range of organisations including the HSE, Acas, the CIPD and trades unions.

The pack has been developed jointly by UCEA and the trade unions through the [Higher Education Safety and Health \(HESH\) Forum](#). The Higher Education (HE) Sector-level Health, Safety and Wellbeing strategy 2016-2020 identified assisting higher education institutions (HEIs) specifically in the management of mental health and stress through, for example, reviewing available guidance, and sharing good practice and resources from within and outside the sector as one of its objectives. Theme 1 of the [HE Sector Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 -2025](#) is about mental and physical wellbeing and includes supporting HEIs in the development of a whole university approach and good practice in workplace wellbeing as a key area of focus including revising or developing wellbeing resources. The pack seeks to support these objectives by signposting in one place, for the use of people with specific responsibilities in individual HEIs, resources and good practice that they can utilise. This pack is not intended to be a definitive or exhaustive list of resources nor is it intended as prescriptive in its guidance. Rather it is a tool to support HEIs in the management of stress and mental health issues which should support and engender a proactive approach. The pack is a 'living document' which will be updated regularly and we will be pleased to receive recommendations as to further resources that might be included.

The management of stress in the workplace is a responsibility that is not new but has continued to grow in prominence over recent years and one that the HE sector employers have been addressing in an appropriately serious and systematic manner. Universities UK (UUK) launched a refreshed Step Change framework on Mentally Healthy Universities which explicitly includes staff mental health as part of a systematic whole university approach and includes a self-assessment tool to support HEIs. Mental health is recognised as a growing issue with data from MIND<sup>1</sup>, the mental health charity, telling us that approximately one in four people in the UK will be likely to experience a mental health problem each year. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on stress and mental wellbeing has been well documented, for example, research from MIND<sup>2</sup> found that those who were more likely to struggle with their mental health before the pandemic were more likely to be affected. Work-related stress and common mental health problems can often go together. Employers have a legal duty of care to employees to assess the risk to employees' health and safety from work-related stress by undertaking suitable and sufficient risk assessments and then acting on these to seek to prevent injury through proactive management. HEIs have well-established health and safety procedures and are aware of their responsibilities for risk assessments. New patterns of work such as hybrid, remote and agile working established in response to the Covid-19 pandemic present further considerations for employers with regard to their legal duty of care and risk assessment processes. Employees also have a duty to take care of their own health, safety and wellbeing whether working remotely or on campus and to cooperate with employers, informing the employer of issues and where appropriate making use of employer support, in order to help everyone to meet their legal requirements. In exercising their statutory functions, trade union health and

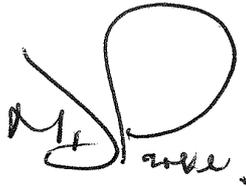
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<sup>1</sup> McManus, S., Mettzer, H., Brugha, T.S., Bebbington, P.E., Jenkins, R. (2009). [Adult psychiatric morbidity in England, 2007: results of a household survey](#). The NHS Information Centre for Health and Social Care

<sup>2</sup> MIND, [Coronavirus: the consequences for mental health](#), July 2021

safety representatives have a key role to play in representing the views of staff groups, participating in employers' health and safety consultation structures and promoting opportunities for joint working and collaboration.

Approaches to workload management and stress auditing are matters for individual institutions and there has been a great deal of activity in this area underway in institutions, much of it being taken forward in discussion with trade unions. The stress resource pack is aimed at helping the people in institutions who have particular responsibilities or roles arrive at their own solutions, geared to their institution's particular circumstances and needs. Whatever your role, I very much hope you will find the pack a helpful resource for managing work related stress and supporting mental wellbeing in your institution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Parker', with a large, stylized initial 'M' and 'P'.

Mike Parker  
Chair - Board of Governors, Liverpool John Moores University  
On behalf of the Higher Education Safety and Health (HESH) Forum

This document was first published in June 2018 and updated in September 2018, July 2020, November 2020 and December 2022.

## Health and Safety Executive (HSE)

- [Homepage of the HSE work-related stress resources](#)
- [Stress management standards](#)
- [How to tackle work-related stress](#): a guide for employers on making the management standards work
- [Tackling work-related stress using the Management Standards approach](#)
- [Working together to reduce stress – a guide for employees](#)
- [HSE Equivalence checklist](#): is my risk assessment approach suitable and sufficient?
- [HSE Line Manager Competency Indicator Tool](#)
- [HSE stress resources](#): contains links to dropdown menu of helpful sources of support
- [StressTalking Toolkits](#): to support taking forward potentially difficult conversations across teams or in one-to-ones.
- [Return to work tool](#): questionnaire for conducting conversations as an individual risk assessment or when staff are returning to work after a period of absence.

## Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas)

- [Supporting mental health at work](#): this includes:
- [Acas framework for positive mental health at work](#): outlines how employers, managers and employees share responsibility for positive mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

## Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD)

- Wellbeing: CIPD resources, reports, fact sheets and guidance including:
  - [Health and wellbeing at work 2022: Survey report](#)
  - [Stress in the workplace](#): factsheet
  - [Mental health in the workplace](#): factsheet
  - [Supporting mental health at work: guide for People Managers](#): a comprehensive good practice guide for line managers.
  - [Guidance on managing stress at work](#): practical guidance for managers on preventing and reducing stress at work,
  - [Employee financial wellbeing](#): resources for supporting financial wellbeing including evidence based insights and practical recommendations for addressing employee financial wellbeing in the workplace including practice and scientific summaries.

## HE sector resources

- [Step Change: Mentally Healthy Universities](#): Universities UK's (UUK's) refreshed whole-university framework has been co-developed with [Student Minds' University Mental Health Charter](#). It provides a shared framework for change and calls on universities to adopt mental health as a strategic priority which is fundamental to all aspects of university life for all students and staff. The model comprises:
  - Four domains: learn, support, work and live
  - Five cross-cutting themes to enable a whole-university approach: leadership, co-production, information, inclusivity and research and innovation and
  - a self-assessment tool for HEIs which maps onto the Student Minds' University Mental Health Charter
- [Mental health leadership tool](#): a toolkit developed by UUK for HEI leaders on how to lead a mentally healthy university.
- [Student Minds' University Mental Health Charter](#): the Charter provides a set of principles to support HEIs in making mental health a priority. It forms the basis of the Charter

Award Scheme being in 2020 which will recognise and reward HEIs that promote good mental health and demonstrate good practice.

- [The positive and mindful university](#): a report from HEPI which considers the importance of a proactive approach to mental wellbeing. It includes:
  - best practice from the UK, USA, Mexico and Australia
  - practical recommendations for students and staff
  - ways for improving the transition between school and university
- [Mental Health First Aid \(MHFA\) training for the higher education sector](#): MHFA aims to help people to spot the symptoms of mental health issues, offer initial help and guide the person to support. The training is designed to benefit students, academic and support staff alike. Resources for HE include:
  - A training framework and training options designed for a range of budgets and needs
  - A whole university framework for mental health

### Trade union resources

- [UNISON: Guarding against stress toolkit](#)
- [UNISON: learning for mental health and wellbeing](#)
- [UNISON: Mental health matters campaign](#)
- [UNISON: Resilience and well-being \(a guide for members\)](#)
- [Workstress](#): The UK National Work Stress Network. The network campaigns about and raises awareness of work-related stress.
- [Worksmart](#) (from the TUC): a website which provides a wide range of advice on employment rights including health and safety and illnesses and injuries.
- [Hazards magazine](#): an independent magazine which provides resources and information on health and safety for trade unions.

### Other resources

- [Mental health at work commitment](#): a simple framework for organisations to follow based on the [Thriving at Work](#) standards for organisations in order to improve and support the mental health of their employees.
- [Time to change](#): a social movement changing how we think about and act about mental health, run by charities Mind and Rethink Mental Illness.
- [Business in the Community Mental Health for Employers Toolkit](#): helping businesses to use the research and evidence base in practical and pragmatic ways to support and improve staff mental health.
- [Business in the Community Emotional Resilience Toolkit](#): providing practical guidance in promoting the resilience of individuals and teams in companies as part of an integrated health and wellbeing programme.
- [Workplace wellbeing charter](#): an accreditation standard based on best practice and the latest research to improve the health of business and organisations, run by the charity Health@Work.
- [“Address Your Stress” toolkit](#) from Mental Health First Aid: an interactive toolkit for individuals.
- [Mental Health at Work Gateway](#) from Mind: an online gateway to resources, tools, guidance and training designed to help the way mental health is approached across the UK.

## Sources of information

- [The Stevenson/Farmer review of mental health and employers](#) - Thriving At Work (2017): contains recommendations for employers to better support the mental health of employees including mental health core standards.
- [Mind](#): mental health charity
- [Mind – mental health at work website](#): A website that brings together resources, toolkits, blogs and case studies into one place.
- [NHS choices](#): NHS website that offers practical advice, interactive videos and audio guides to help individuals to feel mentally and emotionally better.
- [Remploy](#): Remploy provides specialist employment and skills support for disabled people and those with disabilities.
- [Rethink Mental Illness](#): a national charity which provides support for people affected by mental illness.

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