

# Looking after your team's health and wellbeing guide

Ensuring you have a safe working environment

March 2023

*People Promise*





# Ensuring you have a safe working environment



Facilitators guide



Identify your team's wellbeing goals



Creating a safe and inclusive space to talk about wellbeing



Looking after your emotional, physical and mental health

## Ensuring you have a safe working environment



Ensuring you have a safe working environment



Collaborative and supportive relationships that promote social wellbeing



Finding meaning in the work you do and bringing your whole self to work



Knowing where to go when you need wellbeing support



Review and revisit



Inspiration Library









# Ensuring you have a safe working environment

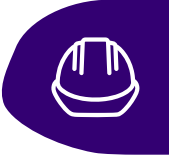
*Physical workspaces and the facilities available for our team to rest, recover and succeed*



This section will help you to review your physical workspaces and the facilities available to rest, recover and succeed. This section also explores safety at work and dealing with aggression in the workplace. It links to the NHS Health and Wellbeing Framework section on **environment**.

In this section, the team will find support on how to:

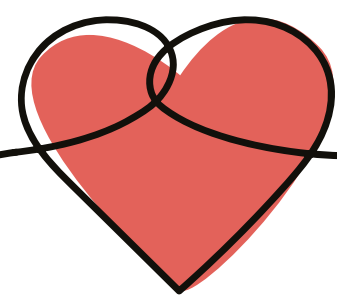
-  hold a teamwork environment huddle to begin talking about the team's work environment
-  conduct an environment audit to ensure the basics are in place to support wellbeing
-  have a team conversation about preventing and controlling aggression and violence at work to help team members recognise and know where to go for support
-  carry out a team stress risk assessment to help team members identify ways in which to reduce stress in the team





The workplace environment has an impact on how we feel at work. A healthy workplace is one that is safe and one where our need to function well is supported. Features of a safe work environment include:

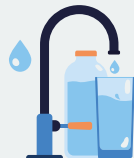
- access to rest area or a staff room with basic facilities to make tea, coffee or another drink
- an environment that is well-maintained and free of obstructions
- access to drinking water, washing facilities and toilets
- having the equipment you need to do your job



# Back to basics

## for a healthy working environment

### HYDRATION



Keeping hydrated is essential, particularly for those in safety critical areas. Dehydration can lead to decreased cognitive function and heat stress.<sup>1</sup>



Being dehydrated impairs attention, psychomotor and memory skills by **2%**.<sup>2</sup>



**0.8% - 2%** dehydration affects mental function by **10%**.<sup>3</sup>

### NUTRITION

Digestive problems are common in shift workers, due to disruption of the internal body clock and poor diet.<sup>4</sup>

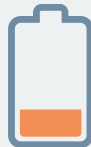


2 out of 3 of core medical trainees worked at least one shift without eating a meal.<sup>5</sup>

### SLEEP



**207,000** working days are lost in UK every year to insufficient sleep.<sup>6</sup>



Power naps at work improve performance by **34%** and alertness by **54%**.<sup>7</sup>



Putting in boundaries at specific times of the day that are free of social media can reduce anxiety and aid better sleep.<sup>8</sup>



Shift workers often turn to stimulants such as coffee or cigarettes to keep them awake and sedatives such as alcohol or sleeping pills to help them sleep.<sup>9</sup>

### BREAKS



of survey respondents said they did not get to take sufficient breaks on their last shift.<sup>10</sup>



of all respondents said they worked additional time, on average almost one hour extra.<sup>11</sup>



of nursing staff do not take breaks, compared to **56%** of hospital staff.<sup>12</sup>



NHS staff are entitled to a minimum break of 20 minutes if working longer than 6 hours.<sup>13</sup>



shifts carry an increased risk of accidents with twice the risk of accidents at around 12 hours compared to 8 hours.<sup>14</sup>



Breaks should be uninterrupted, away from the workstation, not taken at the start or end of the working day.<sup>15</sup>

### FACILITIES



Junior doctors report a shortage of rest breaks, and a lack of facilities for resting, learning and engaging with their team.<sup>16</sup>



Suitable and sufficient sanitary conveniences and washing facilities should be provided at readily accessible places and workers should be able to use them without unreasonable delay.<sup>17</sup>

1. Welfare facilities for healthcare staff  
2. Hydration Best Practice Making a difference NHS National Patient Safety Agency  
3. Hydration Best Practice Making a difference NHS National Patient Safety Agency  
4. Shift workers more likely to report poor health NHS  
5. Being a junior doctor Royal College of Physicians  
6. Why sleep matters - the economic costs of insufficient sleep Rand Corporation

7. The importance of sleep NHS Employers  
8. Sleep In The Time of COVID-19: Advice for NHS Staff  
9. HSE, Managing shift work  
10. Safe and Effective Staffing: Nursing Against the Odds  
11. Safe and Effective Staffing: Nursing Against the Odds

12. Safe and Effective Staffing: Nursing Against the Odds  
13. Working time and breaks  
14. Safe and Effective Staffing: Nursing Against the Odds  
15. Working time and breaks  
16. Fatigue and sleep deprivation - the impact of different working patterns on doctors [2018]  
17. Welfare facilities for healthcare staff



## NHS Employers

[www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org)  
[enquiries@nhsemployers.org](mailto:enquiries@nhsemployers.org)  
[@nhsemployers](https://twitter.com/nhsemployers)



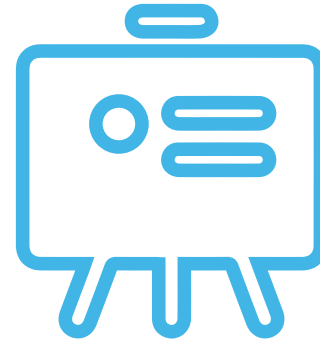
On top of the requirements of a safe workplace, there might be other things that your team think would enhance the work environment. These could include:



plants or greenery



the colour of the walls in rest spaces



display spaces or noticeboards



### Quick wins...

- Check everyone in the team is up to date with any training offered to ensure they can work safely and identify workplace risks.
- You might find this section complements other things going on across your organisation and system, so it's a good idea to find out about organisational policies and processes that might already be in place.
- An 'improve our team environment' challenge – find out if there are local funds that you can apply for to enhance staff amenities and ask team members to come up with free or low-cost ideas for the team to review at a future team meeting/huddle. Sometimes local NHS charities or trade unions have funds to help teams improve their environment and wellbeing.





## Case study: 'Tidy Fridays'

"I'm someone who needs a calm and tidy environment to work in", says Amanda. "My team works a lot with staff and stakeholders, so we have display materials and leaflets for events we attend. If we have a busy few weeks, things can get a bit chaotic, and that can have an effect on me. I suggested to the team we have 'Tidy Fridays' every few weeks, where we all pitch in and restore a bit of order."

"A Tidy Friday date is selected at a team meeting a week or so in advance, and everyone is reminded to put away, label or take home any personal possessions. The team set a timer for an hour and do as much as they can in that time."

*"When we first started, we had a list of jobs that needed doing and people volunteered. Now, we tend to know what needs to be done and just get going. The list tends to include making sure display stands have been dismantled and stored properly; checking leaflets and promotional items have been put back in boxes; removing any out-of-date information on staff noticeboards and recycling or binning any food containers hanging around the kitchen area. It makes such a difference to my state of mind, and other people have said it feels more manageable if we all take responsibility for our work environment."*





## When you have a little more time...

### Conduct a workplace environment audit

This activity will enable team members to identify ways to enhance the team's physical work environment to boost their wellbeing.

Encourage team members to reflect on their work environment by asking them to review the following prompts that are appropriate to your work setting:

- I have access to drinking water
- I have access to healthy food choices
- I have access to facilities to store food
- I have the opportunity for regular breaks and fresh air
- I have access to personal storage space
- I have access to toilets with locks
- I have adequate lighting in my workspace
- I have access to space for dedicated breaks
- I have access to a safe space to go during times of high pressure
- I have access to equipment to do my job, e.g. phone, desk, specialist equipment
- I have access to cycle storage
- I have access to shower facilities
- I take responsibility for ensuring my work environment is safe and free from hazards (such as trip hazards)
- I have the opportunity to connect and socialise with colleagues regularly (virtual or face to face)
- I have regular 1:1s with my team leader/manager and can access them for support when I need it

You may want to add some of your ideas to this list too.

Encourage team members to share their responses to identify the aspects of the team's work environment that they would like to improve.

For those areas you need support to improve, you may want to consider:

- involving colleagues from your organisation's Facilities or Health and Safety team in your discussions
- opportunities to share facilities with other teams
- if any charities/fundraising teams could help to fund some of the things you want to improve
- talking to the organisation's leaders about the things you would like to see improved the next time they do a walk-about







## Feeling safe at work

This activity will enable team members to begin to talk about and identify ways to make the team's work environment feel safer and more supportive of wellbeing. Before leading this activity, you may want to find out more about your organisation or system's Speaking Up Policy, identify the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians in your area, and be aware of how to access any available training.

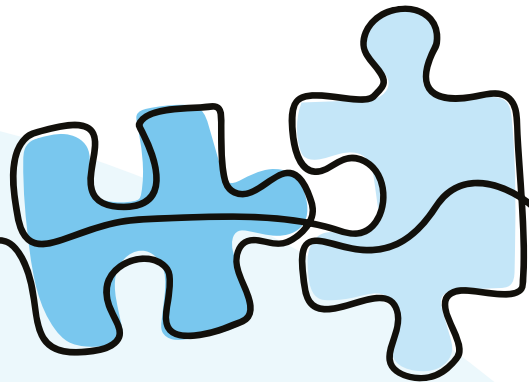
You've probably already come across the idea of psychological safety. The idea of psychological safety was first introduced by organisational behavioural scientist Amy Edmondson, who defined it as "a shared belief held by members of a team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking."

It is whether we feel able and supported to be direct, take risks, and be willing to admit mistakes.

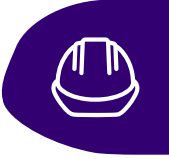
Psychological safety plays a role in wellbeing, by creating an environment in which change can be embraced, with the confidence that any conflicts can be resolved. This supports new approaches being tested and reflected on without threat to the unity of the team as a whole. It also supports learning from those times things don't turn out as expected, allowing space for reflection without the fear of blame.

At the next team meeting or huddle, add to the agenda some conversation prompts about the psychological safety. The following prompts may be helpful:

- Have people heard of psychological safety? What do they think it means? Why is it important?
- Are there ever any times when you feel you can't speak up? Is there anything we could change to make this better?
- Do you know who we can speak to about anything that gets in the way of providing good care, affects our working life or any other aspect of our life?
- What do we do, and who do we go to if we experience aggression or violence at work?



 **Don't forget to add any actions to the team wellbeing action plan**





## Have a team conversation about preventing and controlling violence and aggression at work

This activity will enable team members to have a shared understanding of where to go if they experience violence or aggression at work. This could be violence from a patient, user or family member. Consider inviting someone who leads this in your organisation to join your discussion. Some prompt questions that team members may want to consider:

- What is our organisation's approach/policy/process? What support is available if we experience violence or aggression at work?

- What would you class as violence or aggression in the workplace? Examples of aggressive or violent behaviour could include (list is not exhaustive) being shouted at, verbal threats, being pushed or shoved, someone invading your personal space to be intimidating, physical harassment, written abuse, including use of social media.
- If we see violent or aggressive behaviour towards a team member, do we know what to do? Are we clear about escalation routes?
- Are there physical things that can be put in place e.g. alarms?
- Are there training courses or resources in place that we can access?

## Team stress risk assessment

This activity will help team members to identify ways in which to reduce stress in the team. Your organisation may have risk assessment templates and processes in place.



The Inspiration Library provides further resources about Violence Prevention and Reduction (VPR).





**NHS England**

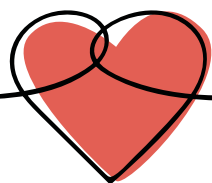
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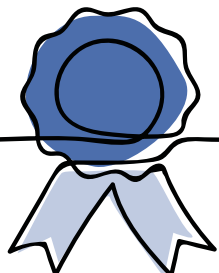
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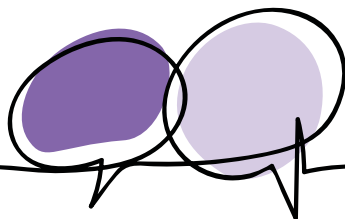
# People Promise



We are **compassionate** and **inclusive**



We are **recognised** and **rewarded**



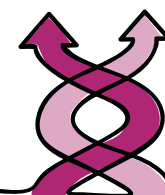
We each have **a voice that counts**



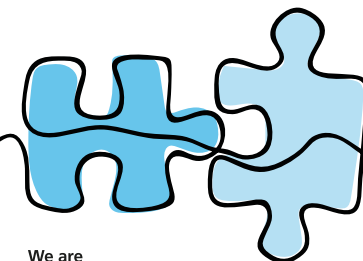
We are **safe** and **healthy**



We are **always learning**



We work **flexibly**



We are **a team**