

Greater resilience better care

A resource to support the mental
health of adult social care workers

Overview

This resource offers practical guidance to adult social care employers on how to develop resilience within their workforce.

Resilience is the ability to cope with pressure and underpins safe, high-quality, person-centred care and support.

Developing the resilience of the people who work for you is one of the keys to retaining workers with the right values and behaviours. It protects the mental and physical health and wellbeing of the people who work for you and helps them deliver quality services, consistently.

Resilience matters - it is an essential skill for all who work in adult social care. Use this resource to understand what you and your workforce can do to develop resilience.

The resource has five parts. Each part addresses a question:

- 1. What is resilience and why does it matter?**
- 2. Who is responsible for resilience?**
- 3. What can I do as an employer to develop the resilience of the people who work for me?**
- 4. What can individuals do to develop their own resilience?***
- 5. Where can I find out more about resilience?**

Look out for these icons which point out key information, questions and activities:



Information to look at



A question to ask yourself



An exercise or activity

*Section 4 is for individuals so they can consider their own mental health resilience.

Note: Resilience is a well-researched area and evidence shows how resilience can be developed. This resource is based on that evidence.

1. Understanding resilience: What is it? Why does it matter?

This part of the resource considers what we mean by resilience, why resilience matters to you and why resilience matters to those around you.

Key learning points

- Resilience is the ability to cope under pressure - it protects against stress.
- There are straight-forward, practical ways to foster resilience, in ourselves and in others.
- Stress is a major issue in adult social care - it undermines the quality of care and support and it damages the mental and physical health of workers.
- Employers have a legal obligation to address stress at work.
- Taking action to foster resilience is prudent, responsible and worthwhile - in addition to protecting yourself and others from stress-related ill health, it will also help to build the positive workplace cultures that support high-quality, person-centred care and support.

What do we mean by resilience?

Simply put, **resilience** is the ability to cope under pressure. A person who copes well under pressure is **resilient**.

Research suggests that the ability to cope well under pressure is based on a **positive outlook**, combined with **strategies** to manage pressure.

What does resilience look like?

Behaviours associated with resilience include:

- understanding and **valuing** the meaning of what you do at work
- doing what you can to get on with the people around you
- taking a problem-solving approach to difficulty
- keeping a sense of perspective (and humour) when things go wrong
- being flexible and willing to adapt to change and to learn
- greeting new situations, new people, new demands with a positive attitude
- drawing on a range of strategies to help you cope with pressure
- recognising your thoughts and emotions – and managing them

- offering support to colleagues when they need it and asking for help when **you** need it
- being willing to persevere when the going gets tough, but also...
- recognising and respecting your own limits, including what you can control and what you can't.

Where does resilience come from?

The way we behave is shaped by a range of factors, including personality and past experience as well as current circumstances and the people around us. All of these things influence a person's resilience.

Are some people naturally more resilient than others?

Some people may have qualities that make them more resilient than others. Resilience is best defined in terms of **behaviour** and **support**. Behaviours can be learned and support put in place – which means that, in practice, there is a lot we can do to help workers **become more resilient**.

That's the focus of this resource.

Why does resilience matter?

Resilience matters for two main reasons. Resilience helps to:

- protect workers from stress
- ensure the quality of services.

Protection against stress

Stress is a significant cause of mental and physical ill health. The Health and Safety Executive describes stress at work as a '*major problem*.'¹ It accounts for about 40% of all work-related illness.² Work-related stress is a particular issue in social care.

Yes, care work is rewarding: we make a positive difference to vulnerable people. It is can also be stressful.

Even in the best of circumstances caring for people is emotionally – and often physically – demanding. Too often and for whatever reasons, circumstances are not of the best, exposing workers to additional pressure: from a morning, for example, when two colleagues are sick and you have to do the work of three people, all the way to witnessing the death of a client.

¹ Health and Safety Executive, Work related stress - together we can tackle it.
www.hse.gov.uk/stress/

² Health and Safety Executive, Stress-related and psychological disorders in Great Britain 2014. www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress/index.htm

How pressure works

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress at work as *‘the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them at work’*.³

Work makes a range of demands on us. These include not only job tasks and targets, but also demands from colleagues, clients and others. These demands create pressure. So long as you feel able to meet the demands, this pressure is manageable and can be motivating. Demands that are difficult to meet, however, generate too much pressure. Too much pressure creates stress.

Resilient behaviours help you manage the pressure, control any stress and meet the demands.



What impact does stress have on quality?

The daily stressfulness of care work undoubtedly contributes to errors and misjudgements, low morale, sickness absence, burnout and worker turnover in the sector – factors that undermine quality in all sorts of ways.

What impact does stress have on people?

Stress-related ill health is damaging and wasteful to all concerned: workers, employers and people who need care and support.

Foster resilience to protect against stress

It's not possible to take all the pressure out of care work - which makes it all the more essential to do what you can to help workers, and yourself, cope with pressure - to become, in other words, more **resilient**.

What's more, the practical steps that foster resilience also help to build **positive workplace cultures** that support high-quality, person-centred care and support.

In fact, the benefits of fostering resilience go well beyond stress management.

³ www.hse.gov.uk/stress/furtheradvice/whatisstress.htm

We have a duty of care to address work-related stress

Employers are required by law⁴ to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities and then take action to control that risk. Workers have a duty of care too. That's a measure of how serious the issue is. Use this resource to help you take effective action on stress at work.

What are the benefits of fostering resilience?

For care providers, benefits include significant support for:

- performance and quality, including values-based practice
- leadership and management at every level
- learning, development and positive workplace cultures
- employee engagement and workforce morale
- worker retention
- harmonious and cohesive team working.

Care workers, including personal assistants, benefit from:

- enhanced job satisfaction
- personal development, including
- greater self-awareness and understanding of others (enhanced emotional intelligence) – leading to better personal and working relationships
- enhanced self-management skills (e.g. ability to set limits, coping skills)
- enhanced physical and psychological wellbeing (e.g. optimism and hope, confidence, solve problems, keep going despite setbacks)
- better decision-making (stress impairs our thinking processes – undermining professional judgement, often just when its needed most).

People who need care and support, including individual employers, benefit from better quality care.

⁴ Health and Safety at Work Act (1974); Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)

2. Who is responsible for resilience?

This part of the resource looks at who is responsible for resilience.

It considers how stress works, how performance works, why workplace culture is so important, what the law says about stress at work and what that means for employers and for the workforce.

Key learning points

- Responsibility for resilience is shared between employer and employee.
- Health and safety law requires employers and employees to take action on stress at work; primary responsibility rests with the employer, but employees have a duty of care too.
- Employers should focus on creating supportive workplace cultures; employees on developing their own resilience.
- Communication is crucial - the personal nature of stress makes this particularly important and line managers have a key role to play here.
- Both employer and employee have a responsibility to build positive workplace cultures that support and enable healthy working - learning sits at the heart of these cultures.

Resilience is based on a combination of positive personal behaviours and support. Support begins with effective stress management.

Stress management

Health and safety law⁵ requires employers **and** employees to take action on stress at work. Primary responsibility rests with the employer, but employees have a duty of care too. As in other areas of health and safety, **dialogue** is crucial: employers **must** consult workers; workers **must** speak up. The personal nature of stress makes this particularly important.

⁵ Health and Safety at Work Act (1974); Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999)

Guidance on stress at work from the HSE

We all have a right to work in places where risks to health and safety are properly controlled. That includes stress at work.

Employers' duty of care

It is an employer's duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and other people who might be affected by their business. Employers must do whatever is reasonably practicable to achieve this.

This means making sure that workers and others are protected from anything that may cause harm, effectively controlling any risks to injury or health that could arise in the workplace.⁶

Employees' duty of care

Workers have a duty to take care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their actions at work. Workers must co-operate with employers and co-workers to help everyone meet their legal requirements.⁷

Regarding stress at work⁸

Employers must:

- assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities
- take action to control that risk.

That includes;

- keeping up to date with good practice relating to work-related stress
- monitoring typical indicators of stress-related illness, such as absenteeism, workforce turnover, poor performance, conflict between workers
- addressing workplace stress in health and safety policy
- carrying out regular risk assessments and acting on their findings
- addressing workplace stress when planning organisational change.

Employees should:

- inform their employer if pressure at work is putting them or anyone else at risk of ill health
- suggest ways in which work might be organised to reduce stress
- inform their employer if they are suffering from a medical condition that appears to be long-term and is affecting their ability to carry out day-to-day tasks, including memory and learning

⁶ Health and Safety Executive, *Employer's responsibilities*
www.hse.gov.uk/workers/employers.htm

⁷ Health and Safety Executive, *Are you an employee*
www.hse.gov.uk/workers/responsibilities.htm

⁸ Health and Safety Executive, *Working together we can successfully tackle work related stress.* www.hse.gov.uk/stress/roles/index.htm

- discuss any reasonable adjustments that could be made to assist them in performing their job.

What responsibilities do line managers have?

Legal responsibility to control stress at work rests with the employer, but line managers have a key role to play. This includes:

- monitoring and addressing potential sources of stress
- investigating whether performance issues, including absenteeism, of individual workers is in any way stress-related
- ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made for any worker with a disability (as defined by the [Disability Discrimination Act⁹](#)).

More generally, and perhaps most importantly, line managers have a crucial part to play in the dialogue between the workforce and the employer that underpins effective control of stress at work.

For more on regulation regarding stress at work, see the Health and Safety Executive's website www.hse.gov.uk.

It's not all about work...

Finally, bear in mind that a good deal of stress-related absence is due to the combination of stress at work with stress outside of work.

Responsibility for resilience is shared

Employers have a responsibility to develop **processes** and the **positive workplace cultures** that support workers.

Processes include, at the organisation level; systems, policies and guidelines, including proper risk management for work-related stress (more on this in the next section). At team level, employers should aim to ensure that;

- managers have the skills and resources to support workers, including through supervision (in all its guises)
- workers are given the training they need to enable them to develop their own resilience.

Employees must then act on that training and take responsibility for their own resilience. Both employer and employee have a responsibility to build the positive workplace cultures that support and enable healthy working. Learning sits at the heart of these cultures.

Learn more about stress at work in our supplement which accompanies this resource.

⁹ www.hse.gov.uk/disability/

3. What can I do as an employer to develop the resilience of the people who work for me?

This part of the resource offers guidance on how to put a resilience-building framework in place.

It considers what you might do to control the risk of work-related stress, help workers develop resilient behaviours and make resilient behaviour the norm in your workplace.

Key learning points

- Take a three-pronged approach to developing resilience;
 - Use management systems to prevent and reduce stress at work.
 - Use learning and development to help managers and the workforce develop resilient behaviours.
 - Build positive workplace cultures to foster resilience.

Stress management

- Stress management provides the foundation for resilience in your workplace; it involves:
 - Organising work to minimise stress.
 - Raising awareness throughout the employment cycle about stress and how to manage it.
 - Ensuring systems identify, investigate and resolve stress-related problems.
- Stress management delivers valuable learning about stress and the shared responsibilities we have to control it which helps workers develop resilient behaviours.
- The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has developed Management Standards and free tools to help reduce the risk of workplace stress; the HSE approach supports effective people management and organisational success in other areas.

Learning and development

- Use learning and development to help workers develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge that underpin resilient behaviours, including strategies to deal with in-the-moment and long-term pressure.

- Behaviour is shaped by other people, so learning for resilience needs to be shared, e.g. team learning; modelling by line managers and reflective team learning are particularly valuable.

Positive workplace cultures

- Positive workplace cultures promote learning and shared responsibility, they reassure and motivate workers, building resilience; negative workplace cultures undermine resilience.
- Positive workplace cultures are based on the good practice people management; the HSE Management Standards will help promote positive workplace cultures.
- Use modelling by line managers and reflective team learning to build positive workplace cultures; the Social Care Commitment¹⁰ offers a useful framework, you can use its employee tasks to support reflective team learning.

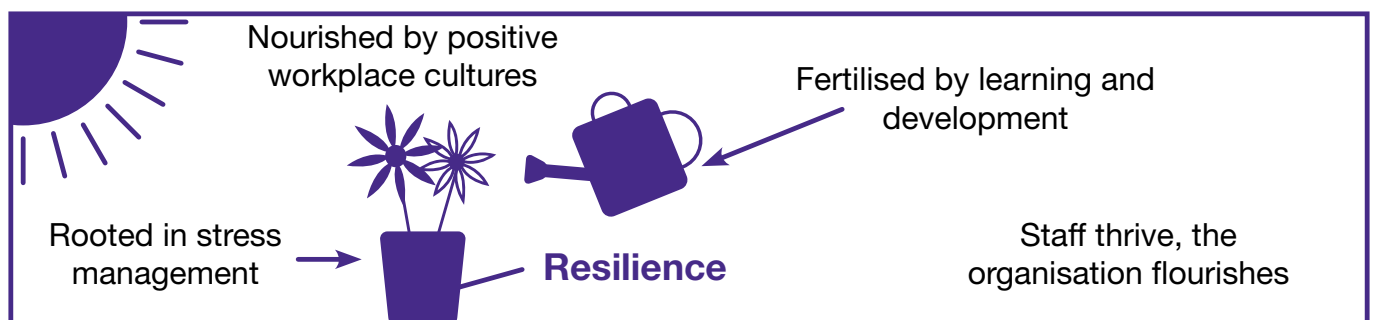
Thriving, not just surviving

As an employer, you have a responsibility¹¹ to control stress at work. That is important, in and of itself; no responsible, caring employer would want to jeopardise the health of its workforce. It's also an important part of fostering the resilience of workers – but it's only half the story. Let's put stress management in the 'surviving' box.

Resilience is about **thriving**. It helps workers embrace change, to seek out opportunities for development, to stand up for values and quality. Resilience is rooted in stress management, but it delivers broader benefits.

Take a three-pronged approach

- Use **management systems** to prevent and reduce stress at work.
- Use **learning and development** to help managers and workers develop resilient behaviours.
- Build **positive workplace cultures** to foster resilience.



¹⁰ www.thesocialcarecommitment.org.uk

¹¹ Relevant legislation includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASWA); the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005 (DDA); the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA); the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999); and the Equality Act (2010)

Management systems

To create the foundation for resilience in your workplace, you need to:

1. organise work in a way that protects the wellbeing of workers
2. raise awareness throughout the employment cycle about stress and how to manage it
3. ensure systems are in place to identify, investigate and resolve problems.

Management systems

“As part of managing the health and safety of your business you must control the risks in your workplace. To do this you need to think about what might cause harm to people and decide whether you are taking reasonable steps to prevent that harm. **This is known as risk assessment and it is something you are required by law¹² to carry out.**”

The Health and Safety Executive¹³

This includes:

- assessing the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities
- taking action to control that risk.



Are you an individual employer?

Find information on your responsibilities for health and safety in the Skills for Care Employing personal assistants toolkit. See the section called [Before your personal assistant starts¹⁴](#).

How do you organise work to protect the wellbeing of your workforce?

There are **six primary sources of stress at work**:

1. demands, including workload, work patterns and the work environment
2. control, i.e. having too little say about the way you do your work
3. support, i.e. inadequate support from the organisation, line managers, colleagues
4. relationships, including conflict and malignant behaviours (e.g. bullying, harassment)
5. role, i.e. when you lack clarity about your role, and/or you have conflicting roles
6. change, i.e. when organisational change is poorly managed and/or communicated.

These are the areas that ‘if not properly managed, are associated with poor health and well-being, lower productivity and increased sickness absence.’(Health and Safety Executive)¹⁵

12 Relevant legislation includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASWA); the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005 (DDA); the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA); the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999); and the Equality Act (2010)

13 The Health and Safety Executive, *Controlling risks in the workplace*. www.hse.gov.uk/risk/controlling-risks.htm

14 www.employingpersonalassistants.co.uk/before-your-personal-assistant-starts/

15 Health and Safety Executive, What are the Management Standards.
www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) offers detailed guidance on what to do in each area, based on their Management Standards.

HSE Stress Management Standards

*The Management Standards define the characteristics or culture of an organisation where the risks from work-related stress are being effectively managed and controlled.*¹⁶

The standards come with guidance and free tools to help you:

- identify the main risk factors for work related stress
- get to grips with the underlying causes and their prevention
- address workplace stress in health and safety policy
- structure dialogue with workers on practical improvements
- monitor your progress, including typical indicators of stress-related illness, such as absenteeism, workforce turnover, poor performance, conflict between workers
- address workplace stress when planning organisational change.

See the standards in full on the Health and Safety Executive website.

Free resources to support the HSE Management Standards

- [Stress management guides for employers](#)¹⁷ and [stress management guides for staff](#)¹⁸
- [Management Standards Indicator Tool](#)¹⁹ - a staff questionnaire to help you assess how effectively you are managing the areas currently.
- [Line Manager Competency Indicator Tool](#)²⁰ - a self-assessment tool for line managers on the behaviours known to help prevent and reduce stress at work
- [Preventing stress](#)²¹ - further resources for managers and also for learning and development practitioners

A comprehensive approach, designed by experts

In effect, the Management Standards approach offers you the complete package. It's a comprehensive approach, designed by experts. As well as helping you organise work to protect the wellbeing of workers, it will also help you to:

- raise awareness about stress and how to manage it throughout the employment cycle
- systematically identify, investigate and resolve problems.

¹⁶ Health and Safety Executive, What are the Management Standards.

www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/index.htm

¹⁷ www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg430.pdf

¹⁸ www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg424.pdf

¹⁹ www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/pdfs/indicatortool.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.htm>

²¹ <http://preventingstress.cipd.co.uk/content/Home.aspx>

If you take a different approach, at least compare it

You may have developed an excellent approach to stress management independently, but it is at least worth checking it against the HSE Management Standards. The HSE offers an 'equivalency checklist' based on the standards to help you decide if your current approach is suitable and sufficient, [find it here²²](https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/equivalence.htm).



Whatever your approach, document it!

Whether you use the Management Standards or an approach of your own, you need to be able to prove that you have carried out an adequate risk assessment, so document what you do.

What it boils down to...

is good people management. The six primary sources of stress at work (demands, control, support, relationships, role and change) are also the keys to your success as an organisation. Get them right and you create a healthy, high-performing organisation. Get them wrong and you create an unhealthy, under-performing organisation and the key to getting them right is good people management – in other words, team work, leadership, communication, workforce involvement and support. Which is why...

Effective stress management underpins high performance...

Let's list the ways. Stress management:

1. protects and promotes the wellbeing of your workforce
 2. demands work is organised effectively – and educates everyone about what that means in practice
 3. builds trust, co-operation and supportive relationships
 4. enhances communication
 5. clarifies roles and responsibilities
 6. helps manage change
- ...and the list could go on.

Is stress management really all about line managers?

No, it's about **everyone** - like everything else at work!

Line managers certainly have responsibilities and a leadership role to play, but to make it work everyone needs to be involved. That is one of the keys to building resilience.

Management systems

“Regular meetings can help to defuse stressful situations and address underlying problems. Managers and workers can learn to identify possible stressors before they emerge rather than waiting for the crisis to happen.”

²² www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/equivalence.htm

The sorts of issues causing stress can be easily added to the agenda of most meetings and can cover issues like communication, health and safety issues, and flexible working patterns. Managers and supervisors should remember to simply talk to employees. In many workplaces the increasing use of emails has resulted in a reduction in the level of face-to-face communication. Homeworkers can feel particularly isolated unless they are in regular contact with their managers ”

[ACAS \(2014\) Advisory booklet - Stress at work²³](#)

Can you recognise stress in other people...and if you can, do you know what to do about it?

Stress is a physical reaction to too much pressure. What symptoms might it produce

- in an individual?
- in a team?

You will find answers to these and other questions on the HSE website.

If you do suspect stress, what should you do?

It is not up to you or your managers to **diagnose stress**, that's the **doctor's job**.

Your job is to **notice when behaviours change**, investigate whether something is wrong then, if it is, take prompt action. Take care not to overreact to small changes. It's when the changes persist that you need to investigate.



The Management Standards Indicator Tool may provide a useful framework for a conversation to investigate stress with an individual or a team. If you are worried about a member of your workforce, ask the person to see their GP.

Learning and development

Involve everyone in stress management and it will provide valuable learning about stress, its causes and consequences; and about the shared responsibilities we have to control it. That learning is the first essential step on the road to resilience. The next step is to equip workers with the attitudes, skills and knowledge that underpin resilient behaviours.

How do you help your workforce develop resilient behaviours?

Learning and development for resilience has three core aims:

1. communicate the concept and value of resilience, so that workers are clear about what resilience is and why it matters
2. help workers, individually and collectively, to learn about the attitudes, skills and knowledge that underpin resilient behaviours
3. help workers to apply their learning, i.e. to put the behaviours into practice at work – this is about motivation, support and reward.

Achievable aims...

These aims are perfectly achievable through your existing learning and development systems: induction, learning and development programmes, supervision (in all its forms), appraisal, team meetings, coaching and mentoring, reflective discussion – not to mention the informal, peer learning that goes on 24/7 alongside those systems.

...that support other key outcomes

The behaviours that deliver resilience overlap with the behaviours that deliver leadership, effective communication and team-working, self-management and accountability, learning and development. In other words, this is not about adding on another agenda, it's about joining the dots. Learning that supports resilience can be easily integrated into the learning and development you already offer your workforce. It will reinforce and enrich that learning and development.

What does learning for resilience focus on?

Learning for resilience focuses on:

- dealing with pressure, both in-the-moment pressure and long-term pressure; e.g. relaxation, de-stressing and mindfulness techniques, self-care (physical, psychological), boundary-setting and assertiveness, time-management
- building a positive work environment; e.g. big-picture understanding of the purpose and meaning of people's work, effective team-working, interpersonal communication skills, empathy, emotional intelligence and awareness of the impact of emotions on behaviour
- problem-solving and critical thinking skills, including the ability to use information and communicate effectively, to reflect on one's own thinking, to view problems from different perspectives, to ask for help when needed
- self-efficacy skills, including personal positivity (e.g. clarity around long-term goals, understanding the value of one's work), self-esteem, tolerance of ambiguity, self-awareness and confidence (e.g. to take responsibility, be open to new people and experiences, flexible in the face of change, to assert realistic optimism over fear of failure).

Keep the focus on behaviour

Personality, past experience and life outside work all impact on a person's resilience – but these are factors we can do little or nothing to affect. Focus instead on behaviour at work. Behaviour can be defined, modelled and learned. Behaviour at work can be supported.

...and understand that, because of how behaviour works...

Behaviour is a product of attitudes, skills and knowledge

- Attitude - how you think about something
- Skill - your ability to do something
- Knowledge - your understanding of something

...but also circumstances. Whether you're having a good or bad day will affect how you behave (just ask your colleagues). More significantly, though, so will the environment you are operating in, the resources that you have available to you and, most significantly of all, the **people you work with.**

Behaviour rubs off

We've already seen that other people's emotions impact on us (see 'Empathy: another source of stress at work' in Part 2). The same is true of behaviour.

If everyone around you is behaving in resilient ways (managing their emotions, communicating brilliantly, respecting their own and other people's limits, being fantastically supportive etc), it is much easier for you to behave resiliently. And the reverse, of course, sadly.

The learning needs to be collective

In a real sense, behaviour at work is team behaviour, even group behaviour. That's one reason why it makes sense to think **beyond the individual** when you're looking at how to help people develop resilient behaviours. There's also another reason.

Your ultimate aim is to make resilient **practices** the norm in your workplace. That means **everyone** needs to practise and support resilient behaviours, at every level of the organisation. Otherwise the good work you do in one area will be undone in another, with all the negative consequences that implies for future work. (Sounds familiar? Not too familiar, let's hope!)

A word to the wise: Before you talk the talk...

Make sure you can walk the walk. Asking workers to adopt behaviours that organisational practices don't actually support is often just a sure-fire way to lose friends and alienate people. It's always important to keep messages to workers consistent with reality.

What your resilience-building programme might look like

- **Introduce the concept of resilience** (what it is, why it matters) at induction, with regular reminders throughout the employment cycle (supervision, appraisal, team-meetings, coaching and mentoring).
- **Reinforce understanding** by referencing resilience in management systems (policies, procedures, quality initiatives etc) and leadership and management development (so that people in leadership roles at all levels of the organisation can knowingly model resilient behaviours).
- **Use formal, non-formal and informal learning to help teams and individuals** develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge that underpin resilient behaviours, e.g. via workshops and experiential learning, workplace coaching and mentoring, team discussion and critical reflection, peer learning, online modules and other forms of self-study.

- **Support for teams and individuals to establish resilient behaviours** via people management (i.e. supervision, appraisal, team-meetings); quality initiatives (e.g. the Social Care Commitment); and also through further formal, non-formal and informal learning.

See next section for more on helping individuals to develop their resilience.

With a little help

A person's ability to cope with adversity, to problem-solve, to get on with others, to set boundaries, to be assertive, to question themselves, to learn and develop – all these things take confidence.

Workers who lack self-confidence may take longer and require more support to develop resilient behaviours. It takes time and commitment to change behaviours, but, if you stick with them, they will become more resilient.

How do you establish resilient behaviours?

Learning about resilient behaviours is one thing, putting them into practice in day-to-day care work, under pressure and collectively, is something else again. Your workforce will certainly need help.

Your aim is to prompt, support and reward the behaviours, both individually and collectively. Doing this need not be rocket science (or even advanced behavioural psychology).

Prompts and rewards

Simply reminding workers about the behaviours is a good prompt. *'And while we're on this topic, I just want to remind everyone what we learned about resilience because I think it's relevant here...'*

Likewise, positive attention can make a very meaningful reward. *'I notice that you are doing X [a resilient behaviour]. That makes a real difference to the service and our clients. I really appreciate that. Thank you.'*

Offer tangible rewards...

That also promote the behaviours, e.g. a spa day, a fruit basket, a gym membership (all related to health and wellbeing) or money to spend on a course (learning and development).

Support

Regarding support, supervision, team meetings, coaching and mentoring, peer learning, staff resilience champions, e-learning and online guidance can all be effective, as can your policies and procedures as an employer (both as prompt and support).

It's worth saying just a little more about two other forms of support, modelling and reflective team learning.

Modelling

Whether they recognise it or not, line managers act as role models and standard-setters around behaviour. This makes it vital that line managers are able and willing to model resilient behaviours.

This achieves two things. It brings the behaviours to life for workers; also, it points the way to a better place – a work environment that is calm, supportive, affirming and competent – in a word, positive.

What is a positive work environment?

Put most simply, a positive work environment is one that enables people to cope with pressure and difficulty by engaging them in the meaning and purpose of what they are doing, affirming and respecting their competence and ability to problem-solve, providing them with the support they need. It nurtures resilient behaviours and is reinforced by them.

The what? The so what? The what now?

It's the classic three-part structure for a reflective discussion.

What is reflective team learning and how does it work?

Reflective team learning is when workers engage in collective discussion about the meaning of their practical, day to day work. It asks them to consider what they are doing and why. The model of learning is quite basic and equally robust:

- Talking gets people to think. Thinking gets them to talk. Thinking + talking = learning (over time).

A number of things are happening at once during this sort of discussion, all of them intrinsically valuable and all of them helpful in building resilience. Apart from opportunity to reflect explicitly on how to develop resilient practices, the discussion helps the team to:

- deepen their shared understanding of work activity, the what, how and whys
- surface uncertainties and concerns
- relate abstract concepts such as dignity to daily practice.

All good, yes? But look at what else is going on, just beneath the surface.

- Being asked to participate in a discussion about the meaning of your work with colleagues affirms you as a member of the team and also as someone with views that are of relevance to the group.
- Being asked to discuss the meaning of your work affirms that your work is meaningful.
- Participating in the discussion strengthens your connection to colleagues.
- Reflecting on the meaning of your day-to-day work deepens your understanding; that in turn makes your work more meaningful.

- Exchanging ideas with colleagues enhances your communicative competence, your critical thinking skills, your interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence and your self-awareness. It helps identify and express emotions
- Collectively and individually the discussion enhances problem-solving skills and confidence.

There's more, but you get the point. This is an activity that offers validation, respect, reassurance, connection, meaning and purpose – as well as creating a platform for discussion of resilience itself.

Build positive workplace cultures to foster resilience

To fully establish and then sustain resilient behaviours, you need a workplace culture that fosters resilience.

To foster

Promote the growth or development of; encourage; be favourable to; bring up; cherish

What is workplace culture?

Every group has its culture (that's what makes it a group) and workplaces are no exception. *'The way we do things around here'*²⁴ is probably the most famous definition of workplace culture. Certainly it captures that idea of group norms shaping individual behaviour.

It's people and systems interacting together that create and define workplace cultures. Stress management and learning and development are parts of an intervention designed to build resilience individually and collectively. Stress management takes a systems approach; learning and development focuses on people. Action to build resilience into the culture of your organisation completes the intervention.

What does a culture that fosters resilience feel like?

'My work is worthwhile. I'm part of a team that makes the world a better place for people. I feel respected and supported by the people around me, who I respect and support. Yes, there are pressures, but the support is there. Problems too, but we solve them. That is what makes the job interesting and rewarding. It gives me the chance to use my skills and to develop myself. All in all, I'm in a good place with my work and that helps me feel good about life!'

Does that describe **your** experience at work (all the time, some of the time, just occasionally)? If so, it's an indication that your workplace has the sort of **positive** culture that fosters resilience (all the time, some of the time or just occasionally).

²⁴ Bower, M. (1966), *The Will to Manage: Corporate Success through Programmed Management*. New York: McGraw-Hill

How well do we understand workplace culture?

We know **a lot** about workplace culture. Ultimately, *'the way we do things around here'* determines whether people succeed or fail in their endeavours. For that reason, workplace cultures are studied extensively.

From whatever angle researchers look – performance and productivity, quality, health and safety, organisational development, human resource management and so on – they draw the same conclusion. Success or failure is determined by the same set of practices.

Get them right, everything falls into place. Get them wrong, nothing works properly.

Participative people management practices shape positive workplace cultures

Positive workplace cultures are shaped by **participative people management practices**. These include open, respectful communication; consultation and involvement in decision-making; co-operation and team-working; goal setting; learning and development – the practices that help ensure work is well designed, well organised and well managed.

[The HSE Management Standards²⁵](#) detail them with an orientation to healthy work, but they are equally associated with **high performance working**, **employee engagement** and other quality models.

Management competencies

The [HSE's Line Manager Competency Indicator Tool²⁶](#) spells out management competencies in a useful way. See in particular its sections on:

- respectful and responsible: Managing emotions and having integrity
 - managing and communicating existing and future work
 - managing the individual in the team, and
 - reasoning/managing difficult situations.
-

Is it all about people management then?

On one level, yes. But that's hardly news. Besides, if it was just about putting systems in place, we'd all be living in paradise – which we're clearly not. Workplace cultures for most of us offer at best a mix of the positive and the negative.

²⁵ www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards

²⁶ www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/downloads.html

What are negative workplace cultures?

Negative workplace cultures are typically low trust, low-involvement, unhealthy cultures. Managers use command and control approaches, in between fire-fighting. Workers who stay do so only because they lack better options. Instead of resilience, development and engagement, these workplace cultures promote stress, blame and fear. And they certainly don't meet the HSE Management Standards.

They are instructive, however.

Compliance, blame and fear: The good, the bad and the ugly

Social care exists to support vulnerable people. It's high-stakes work: when things go wrong, there may be very serious consequences. To mitigate that risk, we research what works and what doesn't then produce guidance to support good practice.

Compliance culture

A world where good practice in care was optional would be strange and dangerous to live in. Fortunately we don't have to. We have regulation and we expect it to be followed: that's called compliance. It's part of the culture of care work and that's a good thing.

Blame culture

“I'm in trouble if I breathe the wrong way.”

Care provider

Is compliance culture's evil twin? If so, certainly not a necessary evil. More like a twin with a thought disorder: blame cultures are wrong-headed in every respect. Pointing fingers and shouting at people not only achieves nothing, it makes things much more likely to go wrong again. (For two reasons: (a) it discourages people from taking responsibility; (b) it shreds people's confidence, which undermines the quality of their judgement.) Nor does it exactly encourage resilience.

Climate of fear

Inevitably, blame cultures generate climates of fear.

“They're not happy, but they won't say anything. They're afraid that if they complain, management will just say they can't cope and fire them.”

Social care worker talking about colleagues

What a cheery climate to work in! Management is highly unlikely to fire those workers (hard enough to recruit them in the first place), but that's not the point, of course. Again, counter-productive from every perspective and clearly not conducive to resilience.

And the opposite of a blame culture is...?

A learning culture.

Instead of that finger-pointing, *You-were-at-fault-because-you-didn't-do-what-you-were-told-to-do!*-shouting approach, learning cultures start from the premise that we are all trying to do the right thing and that, with encouragement and support, people will make the effort to get it right.

Learning cultures are based on a collective **problem-solving** approach. They encourage collaboration, personal accountability and shared responsibility and personal development. They deepen people's understanding and ability. They reinforce people's confidence in themselves and their colleagues. They build a sense of shared purpose and commitment. In all these ways, they foster individual and collective resilience.

Move from blame to learning...

When you are under pressure in a do-what-you're-told culture of compliance and something goes wrong, it's all too easy to slip into blame mode: *'You were at fault! Why didn't you do what you were meant to do?'* Easy, but unhelpful and certainly not good for resilience.

Next time something goes wrong, bite your tongue, breathe, relax and then take a different approach. First reassure the people involved ('OK, what's happened has happened - now, let's deal with it together'). Then involve them in solving the problem. ('Please help me understand what happened and what you think we should do about it.').

...And build a climate of respect

Relating adult-to-adult encourages people to take responsibility. That reassures and empowers them. It creates a climate of respect. Respect for self. Respect for others.

Respect goes hand-in-glove with learning, too.

People learn things in blame cultures, too – the wrong things

People are learning all the time, of course – that's just the nature of things. The world gives you feedback and you develop and adapt accordingly – often unconsciously. Learning goes on in blame cultures; they teach workers powerful lessons, just not the lessons we want workers to learn. 'Avoid responsibility!' 'Shift the blame onto someone else!' 'Disappear right now!' 'Head down, clam up!' 'Accept it – you're useless!' 'Working here means being shouted at. It's like being a child with an angry, demanding parent.' It's a depressing list that could go on.

Learning in a compliance culture

Moving from a blame culture to a learning culture, from a climate of fear to one of respect doesn't stop people doing things wrong. It does make it much easier to put things right. And it teaches workers the right lessons. 'We're a team here – when something goes wrong, we don't blame each, we support each other to put it right.' 'Mistakes are natural. We all make them. We don't recriminate, we learn from them together.' 'You're a respected member of the team and we value your input.' This too is a list that could go on, but an uplifting one.

How do you create a learning culture?

This time it really is all about line managers! Not quite, of course, but they do play a very key role.

Learning cultures flourish or wither in the countless daily interactions between workers, supervisors and managers as they carry out work. The way managers and supervisors instruct, monitor and feedback to workers sets the tone for everyone. It determines, in effect, whether your workplace has a learning culture or a blame culture.

What's more, people are often very poor judges of the impact they have on others. Enabling managers and supervisors to develop the attitudes, skills and knowledge they need to facilitate informal learning will support resilience and a lot else besides.

The 70:20:10 model – how learning really works

Have you come across the 70:20:10 model of conscious learning? It's a neat way to remind oneself that even conscious learning is predominantly informal.

According to 70:20:10, 70% of our learning happens informally, in the course of daily activity; 20% comes from the people around us, also informally; with just 10% coming from formal, structured learning.

The percentages are just rough indicators, of course, but the idea is sound: the great majority of our learning takes place informally. Workplace learning cultures recognise that and harness it.

Simple guide to supporting informal learning

People learn best when they are encouraged to:

- think about what they are doing
- pay attention to what happens
- reflect on what they might do differently next time.

People also need:

- time to think
- support to act
- feedback on results.

Remember at all times that people need confidence to:

- ask questions
- acknowledge mistakes
- act on their learning.

People will learn more if given the opportunity to:

- listen to, observe and work with others who have more expertise
 - use their initiative to solve problems
 - take on more challenging tasks.
-

The Social Care Commitment – a framework for learning

If you don't already know it, look at the [Social Care Commitment²⁷](#) and the employee tasks it offers for workers to evidence their commitment. Those tasks offer a framework for reflective team learning, led by line managers. The tasks offer learning about quality, values, policies and procedures in ways that support the embedding of resilient behaviours and practices.

Find out more...

Creating positive workplace culture

Skills for Care has developed 'Culture for Care', a toolkit for all social care and support employers, regardless of size or services delivered.

The toolkit, which can be accessed online, or ordered in hard copy, explains why a positive workplace culture is so important, details the business benefits for culture and provides activity sheets and scenarios to help providers embed a positive workplace culture.

Supporting informal learning

Skills for Care has developed 'Core skills: a practical guide' to help you support informal learning in day-to-day work. See 'how to support core skills'.

Resilience, recruitment and retention

When you build workplace cultures that foster resilience, you also build employee engagement. Resilient, engaged employees stay with you. They also act as good-will ambassadors for you - putting out the word that they work for a good employer. Which doesn't hurt when you do need to recruit.

HSE Management Standards for work-related stress

1. **Demands** - this includes issues such as workload, work patterns and the work environment.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

²⁷ www.thesocialcarecommitment.org.uk

What should be happening/States to be achieved:

- the organisation provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work;
- people's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;
- jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and
- employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

2. Control - how much say the person has in the way they do their work.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/States to be achieved:

- where possible, employees have control over their pace of work;
- employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work;
- where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work;
- the organisation encourages employees to develop their skills;
- employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and
- employees are consulted over their work patterns.

3. Support - this includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/States to be achieved:

- the organisation has policies and procedures to adequately support employees;
- systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their workers;
- systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;
- employees know what support is available and how and when to access it;
- employees know how to access the required resources to do their job; and
- employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

4. Relationships - this includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/States to be achieved:

- the organisation promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
- employees share information relevant to their work;
- the organisation has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour;
- systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
- systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

5. Role - whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/States to be achieved:

- the organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible;
- the organisation provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;
- the organisation ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear; and
- systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

6. Change - how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that the organisation engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening/States to be achieved:

- the organisation provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes;
- the organisation ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals;
- employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs;
- employees are aware of timetables for changes; and
- employees have access to relevant support during changes

Source: [Health and Safety Executive²⁸](#).

4. What can individuals do to develop their own resilience?

This part of the resource offers practical guidance on how workers can develop their own resilience. It considers what you might do to:

- a. make a person resilient
- b. recognise the signs that pressure is causing a problem
- c. develop strategies to deal with in-the-moment pressure
- d. develop strategies to deal with long-term pressure
- e. develop a positive outlook.

Key learning points

- Personal resilience is about self-awareness, strategies, networks of support and being positive – these are all things that can be developed.
- Personal resilience is underpinned by the ability to manage in-the-moment and long-term pressure.
- Managing pressure begins with recognising when pressure is becoming excessive.
- Too much in-the-moment pressure leads people to misread situations and react inappropriately; repeated often enough, in-the-moment pressure can become a health risk.
- Simple techniques exist to relax, become self-aware and regain control of thoughts and feelings.
- Exposure to excessive long-term pressure results in chronic stress and can produce many negative physical, psychological and behavioural effects.
- Key strategies for managing long-term pressure include addressing the sources of pressure, recognising unhelpful thinking, achieving good work-life balance, respect for personal coping limits, boundary-setting, assertive communication, time-management, building networks of support.
- Research closely associates personal resilience with seven characteristics: Self-management, tolerance of ambiguity (impulse control), realistic optimism, accurate thinking, empathy, self-efficacy, openness.

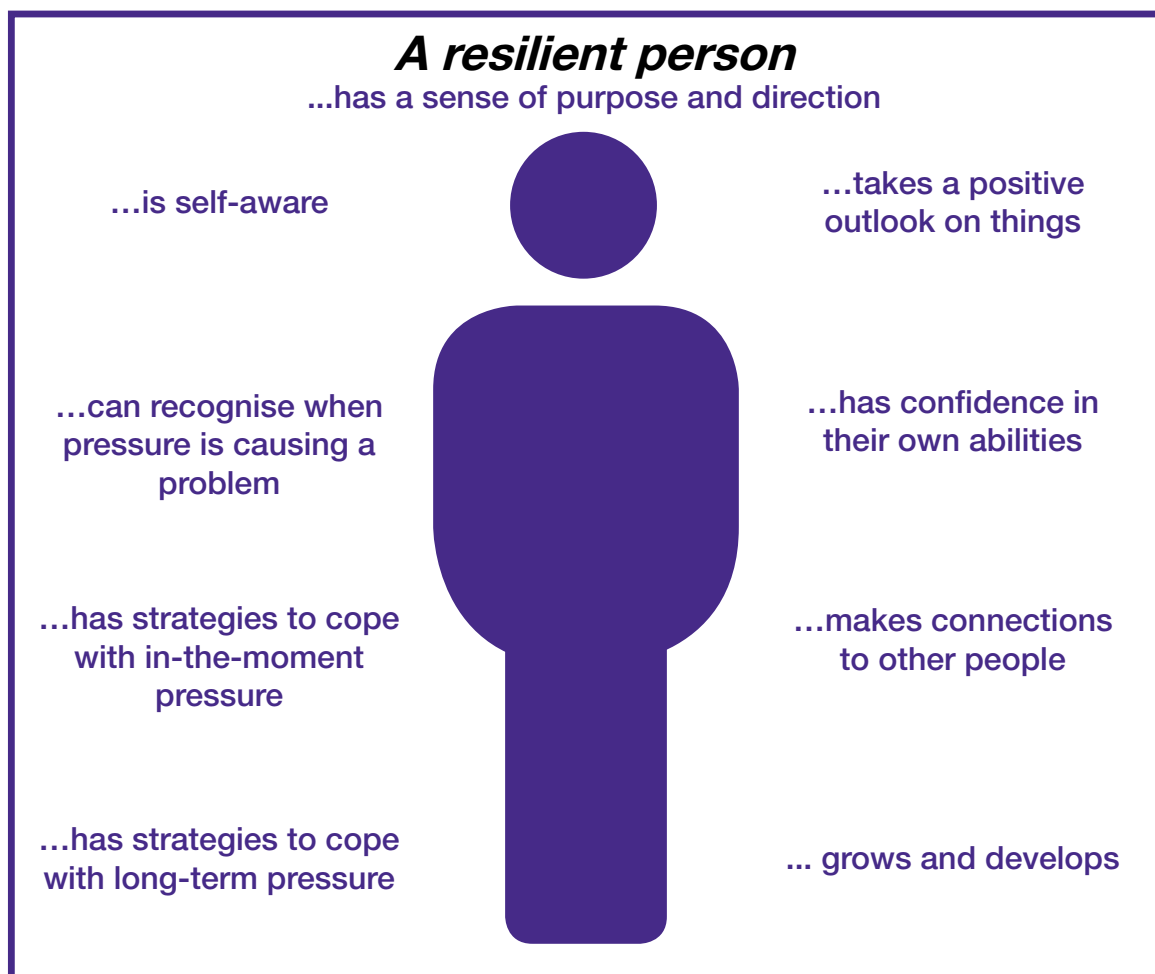
- Focus personal development on emotional intelligence, accurate thinking and realistic optimism to become more resilient.
- Optimism is linked to feeling that what you are doing is worth doing; you have the skills required and are able deal with difficulty.
- Employers can help workers develop personal resilience by reinforcing understanding of the meaning and value of what people do at work; networks of mutual support; learning and development.
- Reflective team learning is an effective way to do this.

What makes a person resilient?

Personal resilience is about self-awareness, strategies, support and being positive.

Self-awareness, strategies and support help you to cope. Feeling able to cope builds your confidence and helps you to develop a positive outlook. Confidence and a positive outlook enable you to grow and develop.

You become a source of strength and support for others.



b. Recognising that pressure is causing a problem

Part of coping with pressure is recognising when it starts to become a problem. That means being:

- aware of how you are feeling
- alert to the signs and symptoms of too much pressure.

In-the-moment and long-term pressure

Pressure can be in-the-moment, or long-term. Too much of either kind is harmful physically and psychologically.

Too much in-the-moment pressure makes people misread situations and react inappropriately - with consequences that can last well beyond the moment. Repeated often enough, in-the-moment pressure also becomes a health risk.

Long-term pressure poses a much more serious health risk, as well as undermining people's judgement and behaviour.

How to recognise when pressure in-the-moment becomes a problem

People's reactions vary, but here are typical some typical early signs.

<i>Physical</i>	Digestive problems, nausea, light headedness, dry mouth, heart pounding, rashes or flushing
<i>Emotional</i>	Immediate emotional judgement, short temper, feeling overwhelmed, paranoia
<i>Behavioural</i>	Procrastinating, neglecting responsibilities, nervous habits such as pacing, nail biting
<i>Thinking</i>	Inability to concentrate, seeing only the negative, constant worrying, self-blame, poor judgement



What are your early signs?

Take a moment to think about what your early signs are. If it's helpful, imagine you're a person in a restaurant having their card rejected. What does that moment feel like?

Why it's important to recognise the early signs

Learning to recognise those early signs is one of the most important stages in developing resilience. It enables you to take action before the threat becomes overwhelming.

c. Strategies to cope with in-the-moment pressure

Strategies for coping with in-the-moment pressure focus on simple, but highly effective, techniques to relax, become self-aware and regain control of your thoughts and feelings.

Here some examples that you might find useful.



Relaxation techniques

- **Breathe**

Breathe in for a count of seven, out for 11.

- **Tighten, then relax**

Tighten all your muscles for count of three, then let go. Repeat.

Stress can feel like being squeezed into a little box. We tighten up without realising it - literally holding all the tension we feel. This activity helps you notice that, then relax.

- **Movement**

A quick walk, going up and down stairs, stretching – it doesn't have to be strenuous. Any sort of movement will help you de-stress.

- **Targeted muscle relaxation**

Muscle tension is a very normal reaction to pressure (our word 'stress' comes from the Latin word for tighten) and can contribute to so-called 'stress headaches'. Stomach, shoulders, neck and jaw are all typical places to store tension. Notice where you are tight and consciously relax the muscles. Self-massage (e.g. pressing your fingertips into the muscles in the back of your neck, or your shoulders) is a good way to find and release muscle tension.

Techniques to manage thoughts and emotions

- **Step out of the stressful situation**

Literally walk away and give your attention to something else, even if only for a moment. It gives you a chance to calm down and regain control of thoughts and emotions.

- **Talk to a colleague**

Talking about thoughts and feelings can help to release tension. All your colleague need do is listen and make sympathetic noises while you talk. Putting things into words to another person gives you distance and helps you calm down. This person is part of your support network.

Mindfulness

You may have heard of mindfulness. It is a technique derived from meditation that has recognised therapeutic benefits. The essence of mindfulness can be summed up in three words, **be here now**. The object of mindfulness is to become as fully present in the moment as possible. That means standing aside from the thoughts (worries, upsets, plans etc) that normally absorb and preoccupy us. Mindfulness lets us step off the merry-go-round, so to speak, and just **be** for a moment. To do that, you have to disengage from your worries and upsets. That gives you both a break and some distance, helping you regain perspective and a deeper sense of self.

Mindfulness training is about acquiring techniques to focus your attention in that way.

■ Notice what you are feeling

This is a mindfulness technique to help you manage emotion. Ask yourself, 'What am I actually feeling?' Identify the feeling (or feelings) – anger, fear, embarrassment, whatever. Don't judge yourself, don't fight your feelings. Just observe and accept them. Whatever they are, those are your feelings. Taking that step back, becoming aware of your feelings and accepting them puts you back in charge and lets you move on (see 'mindfulness' for more on this).

■ Break the cycle

When you find yourself ruminating, caught up in a cycle of negative thoughts, deliberately turn your attention to something positive (e.g. a good memory, something good you're going to do, anything that makes you feel positive about yourself). This is a distraction/affirmation technique, the mental equivalent of stepping out of the situation – into a place that reaffirms the good things in your life.

■ Problem solve

When you find yourself worrying about something coming up, something that seems overwhelming, stop and ask yourself, 'What do I actually need to do about this?' Mentally rehearse how you will deal with the situation. Think it through logically. If you will need help, think who you will ask. This is a problem-solving technique, designed to put you back in charge.

■ When worrying is the problem

If you find yourself worrying about a problem that really is outside of your control, make a conscious decision to stop ruminating on the problem itself and focus instead on your feelings. Mentally, take a step aside and observe your feelings. Acknowledge your feelings, accept them and then make the conscious decision to think about something else. If your worries creep back in, just repeat the process.

Seeking help is a strength, not a weakness

Being resilient is **not** about being self-sufficient. Resilience is about thriving under pressure. Sourcing help when you need it is a **very** resilient behaviour!



Here's a question for you. Why do we so often feel that asking for help is somehow 'cheating'?

Practise the techniques as a team

The techniques described here are mostly quick, straight-forward and do-able anywhere. Often the trick is simply having the presence of mind to use them when you are caught up in the pressure of the moment. Team learning helps to make them a shared resource: colleagues can prompt each other.

Use reflective discussion to support self-awareness

The techniques depend on and also promote self-awareness, i.e. the ability to observe your own thoughts and feelings. Reflective discussion can support this, not least by helping people develop the language they need to analyse thoughts and feelings.

How to recognise when long-term pressure becomes a problem

Exposure to too much pressure over an extended period results in chronic stress. Chronic stress can produce a wide range of effects.

People can feel:

- tense, agitated, irritable, tearful, moody, helpless, anxious, depressed
- weary, physically and mentally
- apathetic, withdrawn
- distracted, unable to concentrate.

They may experience problems with:

- relaxation, sleep
- judgement, memory
- muscle tension, headaches, dizziness, nausea, stomach problems
- frequent colds, minor infections.

Often people:

- worry constantly, see only the negative, feel lonely and isolated
- eat too much or too little
- use caffeine, tobacco, alcohol and other drugs to help them cope
- put things off.

How pressure affects teams

Feelings are infectious, behaviour is contagious. Too much pressure on one or more of its members affects the team as a whole. Signs to be aware of include:

- conflicts and unhappiness
- sickness absence
- poor performance, complaints and grievances
- people quitting.



How are you coping at the moment?



Develop your self-awareness with a widely used self-assessment test.

At work in the last month, how often you felt...

	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Fairly often	Very often
1. Upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	0	1	2	3	4
2. Unable to control important things in your job?	0	1	2	3	4
3. Nervous and 'stressed'?	0	1	2	3	4
4. Unsure about your ability to handle problems in your job?	0	1	2	3	4
5. Things are not going your way?	0	1	2	3	4
6. You can't cope with all the things that you have to do?	0	1	2	3	4
7. Unable to control irritations in your job?	0	1	2	3	4
8. You aren't on top of things?	0	1	2	3	4
9. Angry because of things that are outside your control?	0	1	2	3	4
10. Difficulties are piling up so high that you can't overcome them?	0	1	2	3	4
Add up your scores in each column					

Now add all your scores together for an overall score

Interpret your score

- 0-10** You feel able to cope with pressure at work – you may be practising resilient behaviours already.
- 11-14** You are coping with pressure at work most, but not all, of the time – start developing your resilience now.
- 15-18** You are only coping with pressure at work some of the time – this may be affecting your judgement, behaviour and relationships at work; over time, feeling like this may start to affect your health.
- 19+** You feel overwhelmed by pressure at work – feeling like this will affect your judgement, behaviour and relationships at work; it is likely to damage your health.

If you are worried about your health, see a doctor. This questionnaire is not a professional diagnosis.

[Attribution:] Adapted from the Perceived Stress Scale developed by Dr Sheldon Cohen, Carnegie Mellon University <http://www.psy.cmu.edu/~scohen/>

Strategies to cope with long-term pressure

Strategies to cope with long-term pressure aim to help you develop **sustainable ways** to manage work demands. They combine techniques that help you to manage pressure with personal development to equip you with the attitudes, skills and knowledge associated with resilience. **Self-awareness** is a key component of the strategies.

Physical health and wellbeing

Eating a healthy diet, not smoking, taking regular exercise and getting enough sleep provide the foundation for personal resilience. In addition to protecting your body from the effects of stress, they help you maintain emotional balance and optimism.



Do you know how to look after yourself?

What foods should you eat to ensure an adequate supply of energy throughout the work day?

How many hours' sleep do you personally need to feel rested? How often in a week do you sleep that number of hours?

How much exercise should you be taking in a week? How often do you take it?

Identify three realistic changes you could make to improve your lifestyle. Are you going to make these changes?

NHS guidance

- [Healthy eating²⁹](#)
- [Sleep³⁰](#)
- [Exercise to combat stress³¹](#), and
- [Fitness activities³²](#)

Mental health and wellbeing

Factors associated with psychological health and wellbeing include:

- connection to other people
- physical activity
- doing something new
- taking an interest in your surroundings
- doing things for other people.

29 www.nhs.uk/livewell/healthy-eating/Pages/Healthyeating.aspx

30 www.nhs.uk/LiveWell/sleep/Pages/sleep-home.aspx

31 www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/mental-benefits-of-exercise.aspx

32 www.nhs.uk/Conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/Pages/welcome-to-nhs-fitness-studio.aspx

Why are these things helpful?

They build a person's confidence in their ability to flourish in the world in a positive way.

NHS guidance

- [Mental health](#)
-

Work-life balance

Life outside work has its own pressures, which can lead to conflicts between your roles at and outside work. Establishing a boundary between work and home is key to establishing a sustainable work-life balance and helps you manage role conflicts. What constitutes a good work-life balance is individual to you and changes over time, but it should ensure space to unwind properly, physically and psychologically.

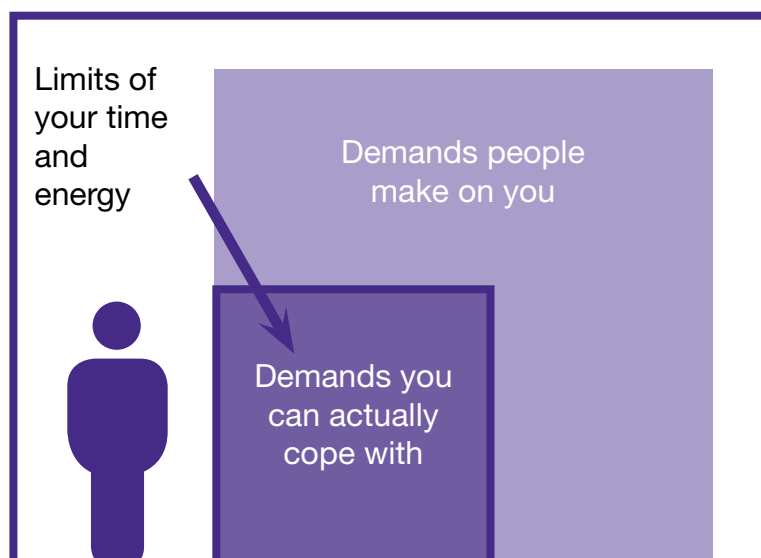
Try to dedicate some time every day to an activity that gives you both exercise and a moment to yourself. That protects your health and helps stop emotions from different parts of your life spilling over.

Limits and boundaries

Care work is just as emotionally **rewarding** as it is demanding. The rewards come from helping people, which makes one feel important, valued and good. That makes it hard to say 'no' and all too easy to say 'yes', when you're asked to do something. The more you say, 'yes', the more you and others expect you to say, 'yes' and the harder it gets to say, 'no'. There are, however, just 24 hours in the day and only one of you, so where does it end?

To manage long-term pressure you have to recognise and respect the limits of your time and energy.

Recognising your limits.



What are your limits?

Use the following exercise to become more aware of your limits. If possible, do the exercise with a colleague. Observe yourself over the course of a week. Notice when you feel pushed beyond your limits.

At the end of each day, reflect on what happened. Think through:

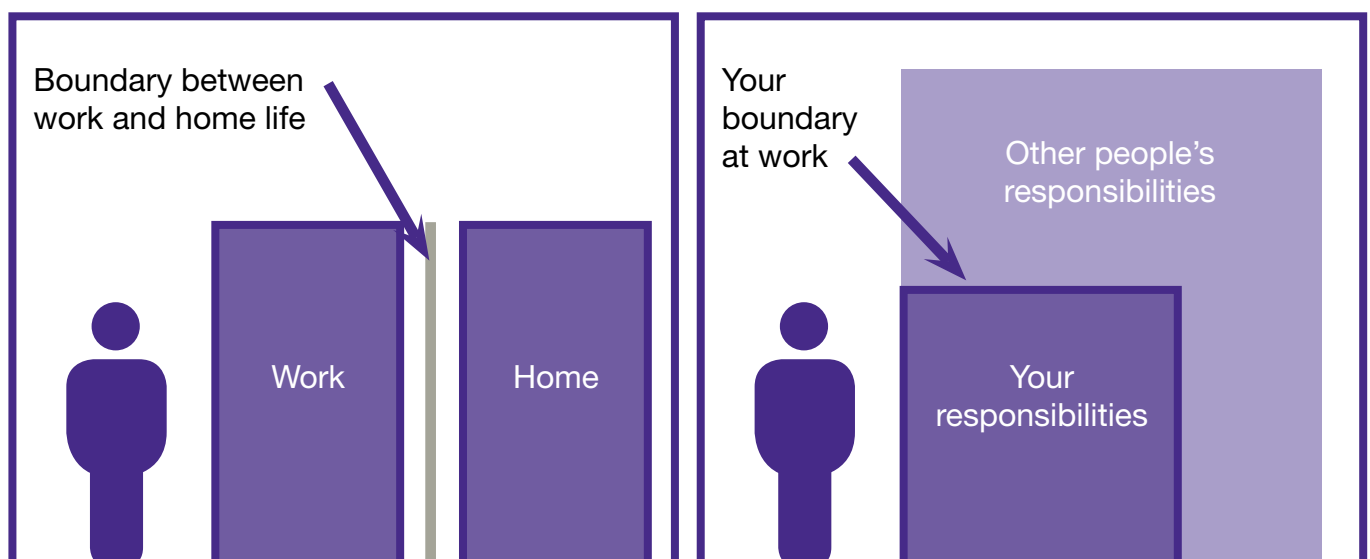
- The situation – what happened, what led up to it, who else was involved, what state were you in at the time?
- How it affected you – what buttons it pushed, the thoughts that went through your head, the feelings you experienced, how you reacted physically?
- The demand – what was actually being asked of you?
- How you responded – what options you felt you had at that moment, how you chose to respond, what prompted you to respond the way?
- What the result was – for you, for others?
- What other ways you could have responded?
- What you can learn from the experience about your limits and how to respect them?

Jot down your conclusions – just in bullet form. At the end of the week, get together with your colleague and explain to each other what you have learned about recognising and respecting your limits.

Note: Talking things through with another person is important. It gives you another perspective and deepens your understanding. If you can't do this with a colleague, do it with a friend or family member.

Boundary-setting

Boundaries between work and home help protect your work-life balance. Boundaries at work between you and your colleagues help to keep your job manageable. Well-managed boundaries enable harmonious team working and greater understanding of self and others.



In theory, boundaries at work are clearly defined by job descriptions, policies and procedures. In practice, the unpredictability of work makes them fuzzy. A colleague has to go home early and asks you to cover. A client needs help so you stay on after regular hours. Emails arrive after work hours. Boundaries blur.

It's worth the effort to keep reminding yourself and others exactly where your boundaries are. Unpredictability and uncertainty are major sources of stress. Being clear about boundaries directly addresses that uncertainty; it makes the unpredictability much easier to manage. 'I'd really like to help, but I can't swap shifts this weekend.' Or, 'It would be great to go out for a drink with you all, but I can't tonight.'

Boundary-setting is not about being rigid and inflexible when colleagues ask for help that takes you beyond your boundaries. Work is very much about mutual support and reciprocity. Boundary-setting simply makes it clear to all concerned when you are being asked to step beyond your limits and puts you in charge of the decision.

Assertive communication

Communication underpins boundary-setting and the negotiation with colleagues that enables you to stay within your limits. Use the techniques of assertive communication to keep negotiations friendly and constructive.

Use reflective discussion to support boundary-setting

Use team reflective discussion to reinforce shared understandings of where boundaries lie and appropriate ways to negotiate them, including assertive communication.

Time-management

Boundary-setting aims to address some of the unpredictability and uncertainty that gives rise to stress at work. Effective time-management helps you maintain boundaries and can extend the limits of your time and energy, which again makes it a little easier to deal with the unpredictability and uncertainty of work.

Networks of support

Research has found that support networks offer important protection against stress. Building networks of support is a resilient behaviour.

It is useful to recognise two types of support at work, the formal and the informal. Formal support comes from management systems, including stress management, people management and quality management systems. Ensuring support to manage long-term pressure is the explicit goal of stress management; it's a central concern of people management. Quality management systems come at the issue from a different perspective, but they are no less dependent on support networks. The better you understand these systems, the more support you can draw from them.

Complement formal support by building your own, informal support networks. These require an investment of time and effort – by definition - support networks require reciprocity – but the investment is well worth making. Informal networks help you manage pressure in two ways: on a practical level; they are a problem-solving resource, on a more general level; they provide reassurance and help make work feel safer. Assertive communication, interpersonal skills and empathy all help build and sustain informal networks.

Use reflective discussion to reinforce support systems

Use team reflective discussion to reinforce shared understandings of how formal support systems function and identify ways to improve them. Use it also to reinforce the importance of mutual support and reciprocity through informal networks.

Bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment can be significant sources of workplace stress and will undermine efforts to build resilience. Forms of bullying include excluding people, belittling them, gossiping about them, humiliating them, giving them unachievable or meaningless tasks, undervaluing them.

Bullying and harassment damage victims and also others exposed to the process. If you experience or witness bullying or harassment, report it. There are well-established ways of dealing with.

For more on bullying and harassment see the [Health and Safety Executive website](https://www.hse.gov.uk/healthandsafety/executive/)³³.

Personal development to build your resilience

Research has identified seven characteristics at the heart of personal resilience.

Seven characteristics of personal resilience

People behave resiliently when they:

1. are able to identify and manage their thoughts and feelings.
2. tolerate ambiguity – in other words, they can live with the fact that there are uncertainties in a situation; that ability allows them time to assess the situation before they respond, allowing them to act thoughtfully.
3. take a positive approach – in other words, they take a realistic view of people and situations and then try to make the best of things; this has been called being realistically optimistic.
4. think accurately about events and their causes – this is essential for problem solving, but it also greatly affects how a person interprets events, which affects how they see themselves and everything around them.
5. are sensitive to other people's emotions – helpful in all sorts of ways, not least in communicating with people and in building networks of support.

³³ www.hse.gov.uk

6. have confidence in their ability to solve problems – they make a realistic assessment of their strengths and their weaknesses; they make good use of their strengths and they do not dwell on their weaknesses (in other words, they take a positive approach to themselves).
7. are willing to run the risk of failure in order to grow – they accept that failure is part life and fear of does not stop them from exploring new directions.

Personal resilience in a nutshell

You behave resiliently when you:

1. manage your own thoughts and feelings
2. assess a problem before you try to resolve it
3. are realistically optimistic
4. think accurately about things
5. are sensitive to other people’s emotions
6. are confident in your own ability to solve problems
7. are willing to embrace the new in order to grow.



How resilient do you consider yourself?

Where would you place yourself on a resilience scale? Consider each of the questions below, then decide where you sit on the line between ‘not much’ and ‘a lot’.

Afterwards, ask people who know you well if they agree.

One more question: If you think about yourself **at** work and **outside** work, is there any difference in where you are on the lines?

Figure 6. Resilience self-assessment scale.

<i>To what extent are you</i>	<i>Not much</i>	<i>A lot</i>
1. In touch with your thoughts and feelings?		
2. Able to live with an unresolved problem?		
3. Positive and optimistic about life?		
4. Able to think accurately about things?		
5. Sensitive to how people around you are feeling?		
6. Confident of solving problems?		
7. Willing to embrace the new in order to grow?		

What can you do to develop your personal resilience?

To develop the seven characteristics, focus on three areas of personal development:

- emotional intelligence
- accurate thinking
- realistic optimism.

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a measure of:

- self-awareness – the ability to identify your feelings
- self-management skills – the ability to control your feelings
- empathy – sensitivity to other people's emotions
- interpersonal skills – ability to connect with other people and sustain constructive relationships.



Can you see how developing emotional intelligence might help you behave in resilient ways?

How do you develop emotional intelligence?

There is a great deal of detailed and helpful information on emotional intelligence and how to develop it. In the end, however, it boils down to noticing and reflecting on your own and other people's reactions and responses to things.

Discussing thoughts and feelings with other people will help you both notice and reflect.

Discussing emotions safely

Care work involves contact with strong, sometimes difficult emotions. Helping people to develop the language and confidence to identify and express difficult emotions is valuable, but should always be done in a safe environment.

Resilience building tips

- Notice the clues (physical, emotional, thinking or behavioural) that you are finding in-the-moment pressure difficult to cope with and use a technique (such as 7/11 breathing) to help you manage it.
- Practice identifying your feelings and emotions. Ask yourself what it is you are actually feeling. If possible take a few moments to watch the emotion without trying to change it.
- Notice how the people around you affect your feelings. Is the effect positive?
- Make it a habit to pause for thought before forming a judgement or reaching a decision, particularly when you feel pressured. What is the reality of the situation? What might an outsider make of it?
- When faced with a problem, look at it from as many different perspectives as possible. What factors are involved? Is a problem that can be solved, or not? Are you spending too long ruminating about it. If it is possible to solve, then how? Who can help you?

- Make a point of asking yourself what the people around you are feeling and why. What might the situation look like from their perspective?
 - When listening to someone, give them your full attention. Try not to interrupt. When they have finished, summarise what you have understood back to them to check your understanding - and to show them you want to understand them.
 - When helping people solve problems, ask them questions to help them arrive at their own solution, rather than coming up with your own solution for them. Simple, sympathetic questions are best: *That sounds tricky. Have you had to deal with anything like that before? What did you do? What seems the best course of action now? Who might be able to help you?*
 - When something doesn't work out as planned remember FAIL – it stands for First Attempt In Learning. If we got everything right first time around, there wouldn't be much learning involved. Reflect on what you can learn from the experience.
-

Accurate thinking

How you **think** about something helps to determine how you **feel** about it and what you choose to **do** about it. That makes it essential to think as **accurately** as you can, particularly when dealing with any sort of problem. Problems bring pressure and, put under pressure, people often fall into patterns of thinking that confuse rather than clarify.

Develop your ability to think accurately by observing your own thinking patterns and questioning your conclusions.

Inaccurate thinking

Have you ever watched a friend jumping to a false conclusion, or worrying seriously about something that was highly unlikely to happen, or reading far too much into someone's chance remark? They get so caught up in the thing, they lose all perspective.

Ways to think inaccurately

- **Filtering** out the positive to focus on the negative - for example; ignoring three nice compliments to focus on one minor criticism.
 - **Personalising** i.e. making every problem about you - for example; something goes wrong at work and you immediately assume people will blame you, even though it had nothing to do with you.
 - **Awfulising** and **catastrophising** i.e. automatically assuming that every small problem will turn into a major disaster.
 - **Polarising** i.e. seeing everything as either good or bad, right or wrong, with no middle ground - for example; one colleague is completely wonderful, another is totally useless.
-

Challenge inaccurate thinking to reach balanced conclusions

Imagine you are walking down the road and you spot a colleague from work walking past on the other side. You smile and call out to your colleague, but they ignore you completely and turn the corner.

What thoughts go through your head? Are they more like pattern A or B?

<i>Pattern A thoughts</i>	<i>Pattern B thoughts</i>
'What have I done?'	'She doesn't want to know me anymore.'
'No-one really likes me at work.'	'She looked really pre-occupied. I'll speak to her tomorrow and ask if everything is ok.'
'I wonder if she heard me.'	'Maybe that wasn't her after all.'

Pattern A thoughts belong to a category called Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANT). Pattern B thoughts are consistent with **balanced conclusions**.



Thought challenge

Use this thought-challenger exercise to develop your ability to think accurately and reach balanced conclusions.

The table below provides you with a template, using the colleague event as an example.

Choose other events to explore how you can challenge ANTs and come up with more positive (and likely) interpretations. Recording your feelings helps show how this makes you feel more confident, in control and better able to cope.

Event: Colleague ignores you

<i>Automatic Negative Thought</i>	<i>How it makes you feel (1= mild; 10=intense)</i>	<i>Other possible interpretations of what happened</i>	<i>Balanced conclusions</i>	<i>How it makes you feel (1= mild; 10=intense)</i>
She doesn't like me	Sad 8	They just didn't see me	It could be that they just didn't see me	Sad 4
I have done something wrong	Hurt 9 Anxious 7	They had something on their mind They need glasses	Maybe there is a problem that I need to talk to them about	Hurt 5 Anxious 3

Use reflective discussion to develop emotional intelligence and accurate thinking

Use reflective team discussion to help workers to develop emotional intelligence and accurate thinking.

Realistic optimism



Here's a proposition: '*We only have one life so it's important to make the most of it.*'
Would you agree with that?

Now consider this idea: The things we can change, we should. The things we can't change, we must accept.

- Realistic optimism means seeing things as they are, accurately, then making the best of them.
- Realistic optimism is **not** about wishful thinking. It's certainly not about ignoring problems. Making the best of things might mean you make radical changes to a situation – or that you leave the situation altogether.
- Realistic optimism is about engaging with life positively and constructively.
- It's about taking personal responsibility for your choices.
- It's about taking a problem-solving approach to difficulty.
- It's about looking for solutions.

Making the best of a difficult situation

A difficult situation presents you with two basic options and then a choice.

Two basic options ... *Change the situation or change your response to the situation*

1. Change the situation

*Can I change the situation? Yes – how?
Can I alter it to make it manageable?
No? Then can I avoid (or leave) the situation?*

Then a choice...

Alter it, or...

Avoid it

No – then you have to...

2. Change your response to the situation

Can I make the situation manageable by changing my behaviour? No? Then I just have to accept it and stop worrying.

Then a choice...

Adapt to it – change your behaviour, or...

Accept it and stop worrying

Reframing

In Hamlet, Shakespeare wrote, *'There is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.'*

Re-framing thoughts doesn't change the situation, but it can show you the situation from a different perspective. Seeing it from a different perspective may change your **understanding** of the situation.

Thought: *'I've worked here so long, how boring is that!?''*

Reframe: *'I'm one of the most experienced people here, how great is that!?''*

Conclusion: *'On balance, I get real satisfaction from being here.'*

You can feel different ways at the same time about a situation, of course. Realistic optimism allows that. The important thing is to understand things from as many perspectives as possible. That helps you draw **balanced conclusions**.

How do you develop realistic optimism?

Emotional intelligence and accurate thinking both help to develop realistic optimism. At its heart, however, optimism comes from feeling that

- What you are doing is **worth doing**
- You have the **skills** required
- You can **deal** with the problems and difficulties you are going to encounter.

The best way to develop those feelings is to:

- understand your role and its value; that means talking about what you do with colleagues and clients
- build networks of mutual support
- take every opportunity to learn and develop.

5. Where can I find out more about resilience?

This part of the resource points you toward sources of further information.

Investigating resilience online

Resilience is an area where practice and research are developing quickly. Internet searches offer an easy way of keeping up to date with trends and approaches.

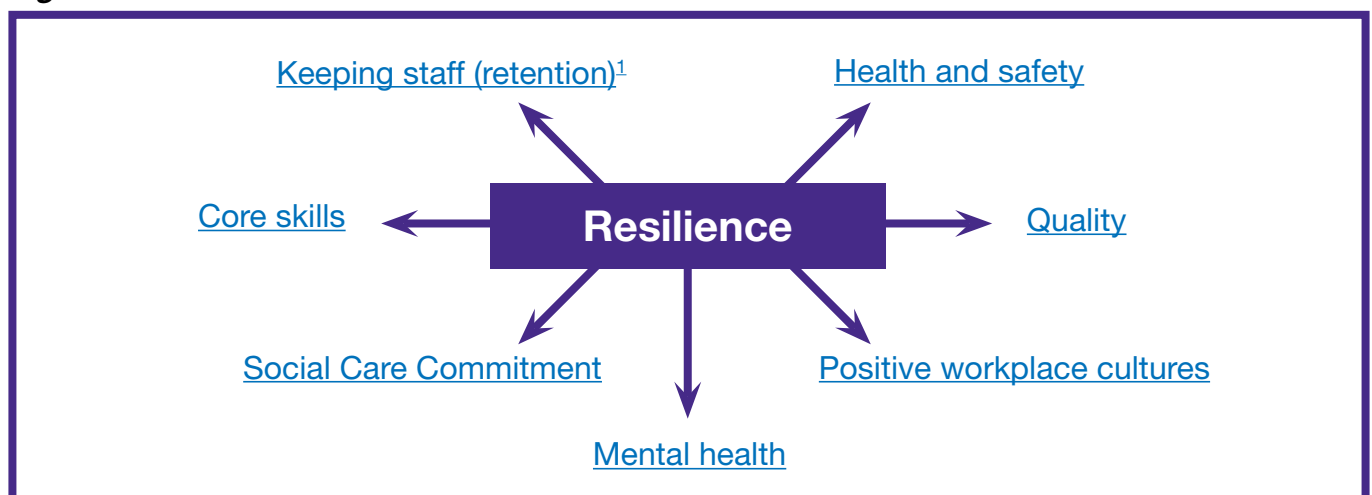
Put any of the questions below into your search engine for some interesting results:

- what is resilience?
- what is resilience at work?
- resilience and stress at work
- what are resilient behaviours/attitudes/skills?
- how can I become more resilient?
- how can I help my workforce become resilient?
- resilience training UK.

Resources from Skills for Care

Resilience connects to many other important agendas in adult social care. You can access information, guidance and resources on the Skills for Care website as follows:

Figure 8.



Keeping staff - www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Findingandkeepingworkers
Core skills - www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Skills/Core%20skills/Core-skills.aspx
Social Care Commitment - www.thesocialcarecommitment.org.uk
Mental health - www.skillsforcare.org.uk/mentalhealth
Positive workplace cultures - www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/Positive-workplace-culture/Positive-workplace-culture.aspx
Quality - www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Standards-legislation/Standards-and-legislation.aspx
Health and Safety - www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Topics/HealthandSafety

Resources to help you understand and address stress at work

Health and Safety Executive website section on stress www.hse.gov.uk/stress/

CIPD Preventing stress website <http://preventingstress.cipd.co.uk/index.aspx>

NHS resources

- Beat stress at work www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/workplace-stress.aspx
- Be a mindful employer www.mindfulemployer.net/ Help with stress www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/low-mood-stress-anxiety.aspx
- Exercise to relieve stress www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/stress-relief-exercise.aspx
- Fit for work <http://fitforwork.org/employee/>

ACAS guidance on stress www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=782

Business Balls guidance on stress management
www.businessballs.com/stressmanagement.htm

Business Balls guidance on time management www.businessballs.com/timemanagement.htm

International Stress Management Association (UK-based) www.isma.org.uk/

UK National Work Stress Network www.workstress.net/home.htm

Resources to help you understand and foster resilience

Boingboing, resilience research centre www.boingboing.org.uk/

Business in the Community toolkit on emotional resilience www.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/emotional_resilience_toolkit_0.pdf

CBT for Mental Health Professionals <http://padesky.com>

CIPD Guide on developing resilience www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/developing-resilience_2011-evidence-based.pdf

CIPD Research report on developing resilience www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/research/developing-resilience.aspx

COPE's Sphere of Wellbeing www.cope.co.uk/our-services/health-and-wellbeing/

Emotional Intelligence Consortium <http://eiconsortium.org>

In Equilibrium resources www.in-equilibrium.co.uk/resources

Organisation Health resources www.orghealth.co.uk

Roberson Cooper i-resilience: a quick online assessment to measure your own resilience
www.robertsoncooper.com/improve-your-resilience/i-resilience-free-report-preview

Saki F Santorelli - Mindfulness and Mastery in the Workplace
www.bemindful.org/mindmastery.pdf

WfD Organizational Resilience Scorecard: a quick online assessment to measure how well your organization is managing resilience www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=83146511579



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This work was researched and compiled
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Skills for Care gratefully acknowledge the
contribution of Michelle Spirit of Spirit
Resilience to this work.