research
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The Social Work Organisational Resilience Diagnostic (SWORD)

tool and workbook (2nd edition: 2021)

Contents

Introduction

The project

The SWORD Change Project from Research in Practice and Dr Louise Grant (University of Bedfordshire) and Professor Gail Kinman (Birkbeck, University of London) was developed to provide senior leaders with an accessible, research-informed diagnostic tool and associated workbook to understand, build and sustain resilience in their organisations. At each stage of development, the underpinning model, and the diagnostic tool and workbook, were co-produced with groups of social care workers, line managers and leaders.

The diagnostic tool

The diagnostic tool takes the form of a workforce survey which provides feedback on organisational strengths and weaknesses. Since its launch, the tool has been widely used across the social care sector and provided leaders with guidance to help them target areas for change.

The workbook

This workbook aims to help leaders in social work and social care contexts to create a workplace climate that builds the capacity for resilience. It draws on established research findings, together with learning developed from interviews, workshops and seminars with groups of social care workers and leaders. The workbook provides a range of evidence-informed practical interventions and 'quick wins', as well as more in-depth strategies, to foster the conditions that have been shown to underpin resilience at individual, team and organisational levels. This edition of the workbook has been updated to reflect the challenges of COVID-19 for social care professionals and includes several new interventions (quick wins and more in-depth strategies) that are likely to be helpful in developing organisational resilience during the pandemic and beyond.

A note on terminology

Following consultation with leaders and practitioners across social care functions, in the diagnostic tool and workbook we use the term 'people who access services' to refer to those who might be otherwise described as clients, service users, citizens etc. To include all types of social care workers, rather than refer to social work values we use the term 'shared values, principles and expected behaviours' when referring to the general ethos of care and support.

Figure 1: The 'golden threads' – the knowledge, skills and abilities that underpin organisational resilience in social care organisations

Secure Base	Sense of Appreciation	Learning Organisation	Mission and Vision	Wellbeing
> Self-efficacy and self confidence	> Warm and approachable	> Open minded and creative	> Emotionally literate and available	> Committed to worker wellbeing
> Self-awareness and self-regulation	> Inspiring, trusting and empowering	> Knows workers as individuals	> Inspiring	> Promotes a healthy working environment
> Understands duty of care; committed to worker wellbeing	> Knows workers as individuals	> Tackles challenging issues	> Optimistic, but realistic	> Takes a systematic approach to resilience and wellbeing
> Aware of the demands of the job and acts to reduce stress	> Builds effective teams	> Is interested in the experience and opinions of others	> Understands duty of care	> Role models self-care
> Builds a culture of mutual support and connectedness	> Aware of the demands of the job and acts to reduce stress	> Provides opportunities to reflect and learn from experience	> Communicates a sense of purpose	> Aware of how stress can manifest itself
> Is accessible	> Values workers as individuals and makes reasonable adjustments according to need	> Encourages lifelong learning	> Translates values into action	> Encourages conversations about stress and signposts support
> Inspires trust and the importance of justice	> Provides SMART feedback and expresses gratitude	> Encourages learning from best practice and critical incidents	> Maintains a sense of purposeful goal direction	> Uses best practice to address workplace wellbeing
> Identifies signs of struggle and support needs	> Recognises and celebrates achievements and success	> Unlocks potential for service improvement	> Leads by example	> Committed to enhancing managers' competencies to prevent and manage stress
> Fosters a sense of belonging and equality	> Is accessible	> Creates effective personal support networks and encourages others to do so	> Fosters a sense of belonging and equality	> Identifies signs of struggle and support needs
> Leads by example	> Listens mindfully	> Recognises and celebrates achievements and success, but acknowledges areas for improvement	> Builds a culture of support and social connectedness	> Builds a culture of mutual support and connectedness
> Tackles challenging issues	> Expresses gratitude		> Recognises and celebrates achievements and success	> Resolves conflict and bullying
> Resolves conflict and bullying				> Makes reasonable adjustments according to need
> Values workers as individuals				> Supports conditions for effective flexible working and improving work-life balance
> Takes a systematic approach to resilience and wellbeing				
> Is personally resilient				

The golden threads

Strong commitment to maintaining values and building trust
Manages change and uncertainty
Involves employees in decision making and change
Effective communication structures
Emotional literacy
Cultural competence

Figure 1 shows the knowledge, skills and abilities that were found to be strongly associated with organisational resilience. The research and development process highlighted five dimensions – known as Key Foundational Principles (KFPs) – that provide the structure for the diagnostic tool and workbook:

1. **Secure Base (KFP1)**

2. **Sense of Appreciation (KFP2)**

3. **Learning Organisation (KFP3)**

4. **Mission and Vision (KFP4)**

5. **Wellbeing (KFP5).**

Also identified were some critical 'golden threads' – factors that are particularly influential in underpinning the conditions required for organisational resilience in social care organisations and that are relevant to several KFPs. These are:

A strong commitment to maintaining values and building trust

Manages change and uncertainty effectively

Involves employees in decision making and change

Effective communication structures

Emotional literacy

Cultural competence.

Ways in which leaders can enhance these 'golden threads' to build resilience at the organisational, team and individual levels are considered in each of the five KFP sections of this workbook.

The Social Work Organisational Resilience Diagnostic (SWORD) Tool

Information obtained on the knowledge, skills and abilities associated with organisational resilience has been used to develop this diagnostic tool. Its purpose is to assess, through a survey of the whole workforce, the extent to which social care organisations have in place those conditions found to underpin the wellbeing of workers and promote optimum practice. (The workbook is designed to be used alongside the SWORD Tool but can be used independently.)

The original survey questionnaire was co-produced and refined over time in workshops with social care workers from a range of backgrounds to capture diversity and difference in experience. The questionnaire has been reviewed and refined by leaders and practitioners to ensure continued relevance to the sector. It initially defines each of the five Key Foundational Principles (KFPs) and asks workers to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with a series of statements related to each KFP. (Higher scores represent higher levels of agreement for all questions: i.e. strongly disagree = 1, and strongly agree = 6.)

A 'traffic light' system is used to assess the extent to which workers agree or disagree that these conditions are present in their organisation:

Green	= strongly agree/agree (Score 5 or 6): good practice identified
Amber	= slightly agree/slightly disagree (Score 3 or 4): some action required
Red	= disagree/strongly disagree (Score 1 or 2): urgent action needed

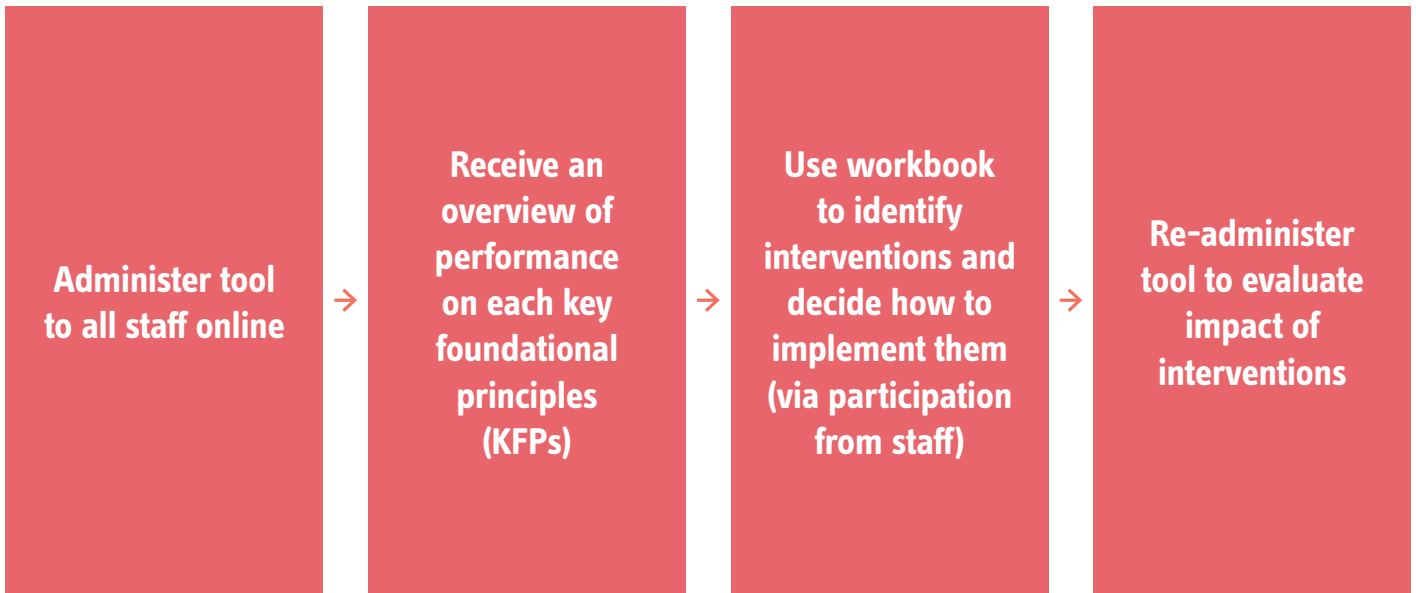| Administer tool to all staff online | → | Receive an overview of performance on each key foundational principles (KFPs) | → | Use workbook to identify interventions and decide how to implement them (via participation from staff) | → | Re-administer tool to evaluate impact of interventions |

Figure 2: The SWORD Tool in action

The survey findings provide leaders with a profile of their organisation's performance for each of the five KFPs, and with the evidence they need to address issues identified in a targeted way.

As set out in Figure 2, we recommend leaders use the SWORD Tool and workbook to inform a process of continual development to:

Provide an initial diagnosis of problem areas

Identify and introduce interventions with input from employees, and

Evaluate these interventions by re-administering the tool to the workforce.

We have found that organisations tend to have some variation in their profiles. For example: Organisation A may score highly on Secure Base and Sense of Appreciation, moderately on Learning Organisation, and fairly low on Wellbeing, whereas Organisation B might have high scores for Learning Organisation and Mission and Vision, moderate scores for Wellbeing, and low scores for Secure Base and Mission and Vision.

Strategies for fostering the conditions required to enhance organisational resilience are set out in the five KFP sections of this workbook. The grid on page 27 Organisational resilience: Strategies for supporting the 5 Key Foundational Principles (KFPs) outlines all the key strategies that support the KFPs and associated quick wins and will help you navigate the workbook. Several strategies will support more than one KFP making them particularly useful. The 'golden threads' are revisited in each KFP section, reflecting their importance in developing resilience.

The SWORD questionnaire

KFP1: Secure Base

Overview

> The organisation offers a sense of containment, protection, belonging, safety and being cared for. It also fosters a culture of mutual support.
> The organisation provides opportunities for workers to explore fears and concerns and to raise constructive challenge to practice and organisational change
> This 'safe space' provides workers with support and gives them renewed energy and resources.

Questions

Leaders are available when I need support	Leaders take responsibility for creating a safe working environment
This organisation appreciates the demands of my job	Work-related stress is recognised as a serious issue and action is taken when required
I get the support and reflective supervision required to help me manage the emotional demands of my work	I have a 'safe space' at work where I can share my experiences and raise issues of concern
There is an understanding of the impact of organisational change, and action is taken to manage this effectively	I am given opportunities to work with others to find solutions to difficulties
I have a sense of belonging and commitment to my team	Leaders are sensitive to the feelings of others and offer support
Shared values, principles and expected behaviours are at the heart of what we do	I feel respected and supported by my colleagues.
Workers feel able to raise issues of bullying and harassment and speak up if necessary	I find my job meaningful
The organisation is proactive in promoting anti-discriminatory practice.	

KFP2: Sense of Appreciation

Overview

> Workers feel valued and that their individual talents and skills are appreciated
> Leaders are open and approachable, genuinely interested in workers and trust them to do a good job
> Leaders understand the pressures of the work and the need to support people to prioritise self-care and ensure a healthy work-life balance
> Leaders listen and engage with workers and provide constructive feedback.

Questions

I am trusted to do a good job	Best practice is strived for, acknowledged and appreciated
I feel that the contribution I make is valued	Leaders are open and approachable
People are treated as individuals and their diverse contribution recognised	Leaders appreciate the challenges that I face in my work
Leaders recognise and value the tasks that each team performs	Individual and team success is communicated and celebrated
Leaders are aware that workers have personal responsibilities and support them in maintaining a healthy work-life balance	Workers are respected for their knowledge and experience
Workers are trusted to have autonomy over how they plan and complete their work	

KFP3: Learning Organisation

Overview

> Within the organisation there is a system of shared beliefs, goals and objectives and this is communicated clearly
> Individuals, teams and the organisation itself are able to reflect and learn from experience
> There is an evidence-informed approach to improving practice and managing change, with the input of individuals actively encouraged
> Challenges provide opportunities for learning rather than blame and individual scapegoating.
> People have the freedom to speak up to raise concerns without feeling compromised, blamed or victimised.

Questions

Leaders tackle difficult issues and work towards solutions	When something goes wrong, lessons are learned rather than blame attributed
I have opportunities for reflective conversations that support my personal learning and development	Learning and development is a priority in this organisation
Leaders encourage me to express my opinions and they are considered wherever possible	Leaders encourage open and honest communication
The reason for change is communicated clearly	Change processes are informed by evidence and clearly focus on development
There is a shared understanding of what 'best practice' looks like and how it can be achieved	I am given time and space to reflect on my work
Leaders are committed to continuous development	Leaders prioritise my need for supportive supervision
The supervision I receive helps me to develop in my role and area of practice	I can access the training I need to do my best work.

KFP4: Mission and Vision

Overview

> Leaders are committed to a clear mission and vision for the organisation and use their communication skills to consult with and motivate others
> Leaders are optimistic but realistic and focus on continuous improvement, inspiring workers to identify what 'good' looks like and how to achieve it
> Change is managed constructively, especially during times of uncertainty
> There is a sense of purpose and values are translated into action.

Questions

Leaders set a good example, which inspires me to do my best	Leaders are committed to maintaining values, shared principles and expected behaviours
Leaders are well respected	Leaders are self-aware and inspire and motivate others
Leaders have the confidence and self-belief to succeed	Leaders talk optimistically about the future and what can realistically be achieved together
Workers know what they need to do to meet goals and objectives	Colleagues work together to achieve positive outcomes
Leaders articulate a clear identity, purpose and vision	Change is managed sensitively, particularly during times of uncertainty
The organisation has an ethos which informs values, shared principles and behaviours.	

KFP5: Wellbeing

Overview

> Workers perceive a deep commitment to their wellbeing; wherever possible, stress is tackled at source and working conditions improved
> Reasonable adjustments are made to support people to work in ways that suit their preferences and circumstances
> Workers feel able to thrive in a job that is rewarding and manageable and to make a difference to people who access services
> For these reasons, people are committed to the organisation and their role within it.

Questions

I am treated fairly at work	On the whole, my workload is manageable
My job is satisfying and rewarding	My job helps me flourish and grow
Overall, I feel I make a difference to people who access care and support	Appropriate support is available to me if I have a difficult experience at work
I can access a range of services to support my health and wellbeing	I am committed to this organisation
My physical conditions while working allow me to do my job effectively	I have opportunities to debrief if I experience a difficult incident while working
Overall, I have a healthy work-life balance	If I am unwell, I can take time off to recover
I would recommend my organisation as a good place to work	I see a future for myself in this organisation.

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SWORD workbook:

Understanding resilience

Dartington

Understanding resilience

Working in social care is challenging but rewarding. Research findings show that, for the most part, social care practitioners enjoy their work. Workers in children's services have reported feeling valued by children and families, and well supported by their managers and colleagues (Murray, 2015). Similarly, people working with adults typically find their work meaningful and personally rewarding (McFadden et al., 2018), and those working in mental health settings generally report being satisfied with their role (Nelson et al., 2009). Nonetheless, social care work can be challenging, emotionally demanding and stressful. For several years, the annual Labour Force Survey (Health and Safety Executive, 2020) has found that people working in social care are at greater risk of work-related stress, depression and anxiety than most other occupational groups. The sector faces many challenges that can threaten the wellbeing of workers and the quality of the service they provide, such as:

> Rapidly changing social policies, complexity of multi-agency working, frequent reorganisations, and regular revision of policies and procedures.

> Public scrutiny and mistrust exacerbated by a 'blame' culture and negative perceptions of the profession promoted by the media and social media.

> Limited resources and reduced funding meaning that workers are increasingly expected to 'do more with less'.

> The national social care crisis and the additional demands placed on workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

> The introduction of centralised management models of practice and decision-making with increased administrative burdens.

> The widespread introduction of agile and flexible working and associated practices (e.g. hot-desking) in some organisations with little guidance and support.

> Evidence of workplace harassment and bullying, including some employees being subjected to racism, discrimination, exclusion, homophobia or stereotyping that can compound the stress experienced from the job itself.

> High levels of absenteeism and 'presenteeism' (where employees continue to work when sick).

> Workforce shortages, high turnover of employees and recruitment difficulties resulting from challenging working conditions, low job satisfaction and chronic stress and burnout.

People working in social care are at particularly high risk of burnout (McFadden, 2015; Peinado & Anderson, 2020; Sanchez-Moreno et al., 2014), which is a state of emotional, mental and physical exertion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. A study of social workers employed in 22 local authorities in England (Hussein, 2018) found a high proportion of children's social workers were emotionally exhausted, felt jaded and cynical about their work, and lacked a sense of self-efficacy and achievement. More experienced employees were less likely to show signs of burnout, but high turnover meant there were fewer in post. Practitioners can experience burnout when organisational factors impair their ability to deliver a good quality service (Acker, 2010) and where they have little autonomy and poor support (Hamama, 2012; Johnson et al., 2012; Sanchez-Moreno et al., 2014). Lower self-perceived competence and increased role stress due to the changing ethos of services (e.g. an emerging business focus or target-based practice) can also increase the risk of burnout (Acker, 2010). Moves toward care management models, including the management of individualised budgets and their associated risks, have also added to the pressure adult social workers can feel in their role (Wilberforce et al., 2014).

Other studies have found that many social care workers struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance (Social Work Watch, 2014; Kinman, 2021). This stems from the demanding and complex nature of their work, as well as lack of support and short-staffing and individual orientations to the job, such as a strong sense of duty and involvement (Kalliath et al. 2012). Meeting the expectations of others and excessively high self-expectations can also intensify work-life conflict by breeding self-criticism and encouraging people to work harder (Kinman & Grant, 2020a). Conflict between work and personal life can be damaging, as it can impair job satisfaction and increase the risk of stress and burnout (Kalliath & Kalliath, 2014; Kinman, 2021).

It is acknowledged that retention of the social care workforce is key to improving service provision, standards and outcomes, but the sector is experiencing ongoing difficulties (Costello et al. 2019; Ravalier, 2018). Reasons for attrition include the demanding nature of the work, a poor psychosocial safety climate, lack of control, poor managerial support, low pay and limited opportunities for career progression, as well as job-related stress, feeling burned out and work-life conflict (Ayakwah, K & Cooper J. 2019, Geisler et al., 2019; Samuel, 2020a). High turnover rates are not only costly for organisations but have a negative impact on people who access services due to factors such as poor continuity of care. Moreover, stress, compassion fatigue and burnout experienced by social care practitioners can also have adverse effects on people who access services (Bride, 2007; Hansson et al., 2013). It is therefore crucial to provide workers with adequate support to protect their wellbeing. Organisations have a key role to play in creating a workplace climate that builds the capacity for resilience to ensure that work is not detrimental to employees' wellbeing or their professional practice.

Wellbeing during the pandemic and beyond

Research findings indicate that the mental wellbeing of social care workers was generally poor prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and appears to have deteriorated further during the crisis. Workers experienced many challenges during the pandemic, some of which are ongoing. They include:

> Longer working hours and an increase in the complexity, volume and intensity of work.
> Managing uncertainty.
> Anxiety about outbreaks at places of work.
> The need to balance concerns about their own and their family's health with their ethical obligations.
> Concerns about personal health and safety and the safety of people accessing services.
> Moral injury referring to the distress resulting from actions (or inactions) that violate a helping professional's moral or ethical code.
> Bereavement and grief following the deaths of people accessing services, colleagues, family members and friends.
> Moving from face-to-face care provision to a predominantly virtual service.
> Working from home with limited support and feelings of social isolation.
> Difficulties getting support for any secondary trauma they may experience.
> Uncertainty around easing lockdown restrictions and what it means for social care settings.

See: Alston et al., 2021; Ashcroft et al., 2021; Gov (2021); Harrikari et al., 2021; Samuel (2020b); Turner (2020); Williamson et al. (2020).

Social care practitioners worked tirelessly during the pandemic to ensure that service delivery was maintained. Research provides evidence of their resilience in adapting to new practices and the use of considerable creativity and innovation when under pressure (Baginksy & Manthorpe, 2021; Kingstone et al. 2021). This may have been to the detriment of workers, as there is evidence that concerns about delivering services remotely, providing adequate support and feelings of failure have increased the risk of poor wellbeing and mental health problems (Atfield et al., 2021). Another recent study, however, that surveyed social workers before and during the pandemic suggests that mental wellbeing and the quality of working life may have improved rather than deteriorated, owing to increased support and beneficial changes to working practices (McFadden et al., 2021). Nonetheless, challenges are ongoing and organisations need effective support structures to help employees maintain and improve their wellbeing.

In the UK, there is a national shortage of social care workers, with the demand expected to rise to meet demographic and other social changes. The current shortfall of workers and the projected increase in demand means that more support is needed during the current crisis and beyond, as the impact on the wellbeing of workers is likely to persist over time. As highlighted above, unmanageable work demands, stress and burnout are frequently cited as reasons for leaving social care work. Without better support, many experienced workers are likely to leave, compromising the quality of care and providing additional challenges for those that remain. Organisations have a key role to play in creating a workplace climate that builds the capacity for resilience so that the wellbeing of workers is protected. A healthy workplace climate can also enhance the delivery of services and the satisfaction of the people that use them.

Defining resilience

There is no consensus on the definition and meaning of resilience. It is seen as a personal trait that helps people adapt positively to adversity, as an aspect of the environment that enables people to thrive, and as a dynamic relationship between personal characteristics and the ability to access support (see Grant & Kinman, 2014).

Building resilience: individual approaches

Research conducted with social workers from different professional backgrounds (Grant & Kinman, 2013) found that resilience is commonly seen as an individual quality: the ability to resist, 'bounce back', or recover from difficulties or setbacks. More specifically, as the ability to use the learning gained from negative experiences to adapt to different contextual and developmental challenges. Practitioners also referred to people's capacity to achieve personal growth during times of adversity, so that they become more resourceful than before.

A range of personal qualities and environmental resources has been associated with individual resilience:

Self-awareness: the capacity for introspection and a strong sense of personal identity.	*Confidence and self-efficacy:* positive beliefs and attitudes about oneself and one's ability to exert control over motivation, behaviour and the social environment.
Emotional literacy: the ability to attend to, recognise and regulate moods in oneself and others; an understanding of how emotional states can influence problem-solving and personal functioning.	*Autonomy, purposefulness and persistence:* a sense of mastery and purpose; the capacity to identify priorities now and in the future; the ability to derive meaning and recover from difficulties.
Social support: a strong network of supportive relationships that one can draw upon during challenging times.	*Social competence:* advanced social skills and self-assurance in social situations.
Adaptability, resourcefulness and effective problem-solving skills: the ability to respond to challenges positively and flexibly, and to generate ideas and solutions from different perspectives; the ability to adapt to change and to learn from experience; the ability to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity.	*Enthusiasm, optimism and hope:* having a positive but realistic outlook; generally expecting that positive change is possible.

Although these are all individual qualities, the extent to which workers can develop and draw upon them during challenging times will depend on their personal circumstances and the context in which they are working.

Table 1 sets out key resilience-building qualities and resources, along with examples of interventions and strategies that can enhance those resources at a personal level.[1]

Key resilience-building qualities	Definition	Relevant interventions/strategies
Emotional literacy / emotional self-efficacy:	Attending to, monitoring and regulating emotional reactions to practice; awareness of the impact of emotions on decision-making.	> Mindfulness > Reflective supervision > Emotional writing
Bounded empathy:	Showing warmth, compassion and concern to people who access services; awareness of the need for emotional boundaries to avoid personal discomfort arising from their negative experiences.	> Reflective supervision > Mindfulness > Cognitive behavioural strategies > Emotional writing
Prioritising self-care and practising self-compassion:	Being as understanding and tolerant of oneself as to others; acknowledging personal vulnerabilities as inevitable rather than a sign of weakness.	> Reflective supervision > Mindfulness > Peer support / coaching
Social resources:	Building a community of support; self-confidence to interact with people from different backgrounds and value systems.	> Time management/personal organisation > Peer support/ coaching
Reflective ability:	Reflecting on actions, decision-making and emotional reactions to practice; communicating self-reflections with others and adjusting working practices accordingly.	> Reflective supervision > Mindfulness
Coping flexibility:	Possessing a variety of coping strategies (problem-focused and emotion-focused) and selecting those appropriate to the situational demands.	> Self knowledge / stress appraisal skills > Cognitive behavioural strategies > Emotional writing
Work-life balance:	Setting clear boundaries between work and personal life to ensure opportunities to recover from work demands.	> Mindfulness > Time management / personal organisation > Peer support / coaching

Table 1: Key resilience-building qualities and strategies

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1. More information on these approaches can be found in Grant and Kinman (2014) that provides in-depth guidance on developing a toolbox of strategies to help social workers build their resilience and protect their wellbeing.

As well as developing the personal resources associated with resilience (e.g. emotional literacy, bounded empathy, self-compassion and reflective ability) research with social workers has found that these interventions can protect their mental health at different stages of their career (see Grant et al., 2014; Kinman & Grant, 2017; Kinman et al., 2019a).

It is important to note that employers have a legal and moral duty of care to protect the wellbeing of their employees and there is also a strong business case to do so (see Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2011). While practitioners should be sufficiently resilient to meet the emotional demands of their work without burning out, individually focused strategies will not in themselves be enough to support wellbeing. Even the most resilient practitioner will be unable to cope with toxic working conditions. Workers must be supported by organisational policies and practices that enable them to flourish and do good quality work. Multi-level, systemic interventions are therefore needed at the team and organisational level to support the development of personal resilience.

Building resilience: team-based approaches

Team resilience has been defined as 'a dynamic psychosocial process that protects a team from the potential negative effects of the disturbances they collectively encounter' (Morgan et al., 2013, p. 552). Disturbances can be external or internal factors that have the potential to threaten team functioning. These might include a dramatic increase in referrals, rising case complexity, changes in team or organisational leadership, as well as everyday difficulties such as absenteeism and high turnover. The COVID-19 pandemic also has the potential to destabilise the functioning of teams and the mutual support they provide.

Building team resilience is crucial as it goes beyond the collective personal resilience of its members. A resilient team is one whose members use their individual and collective resources to adapt positively to maintain wellbeing and performance and to achieve common goals or purposes. Optimal collective functioning is particularly important in complex and uncertain environments such as social care, where effective collaboration within and between teams is vital.

These characteristics of team resilience expand upon the qualities of resilient individuals highlighted above. Some examples are:

Resourcefulness: employing members' personal strengths and resources to foster a culture of continuous improvement; developing processes that enable a clear focus on priorities.	**_Robustness:_** having a sense of collective purpose, meaning and goals; adapting to change successfully and addressing issues proactively.	**_Perseverance:_** maintaining a solution rather than a problem focus; persisting when faced with obstacles to success.	**_Self-care:_** managing stress effectively and being aware of signs of overload and distress in other team members; prioritising work-life balance at the individual and collective level.
Capability: seeking feedback to identify what works well; building capacity through professional networks and other sources of support.	**_Connectedness:_** being mutually cooperative and supportive; encouraging a secure base, a sense of belonging among team members and group identity.	**_Alignment:_** coming together to meet desired goals; monitoring progress towards goal achievement; celebrating success but putting any 'failure' in perspective.	

Although generic frameworks for building resilience can be useful, it is important to consider the requirements of people that do different types of work. The following qualities expand on those shown above to highlight the characteristics of a resilient team of social care practitioners:

Sense of purpose:

there is a shared mission, vision and purpose; and a desire to work together to support people who access services.

Collective sense of responsibility:

there is recognition that everyone in the team has a key role to play and people should share the load; networks are used to find solutions to problems.

Appreciation not blame:

success is recognised and celebrated; when mistakes occur, there is a genuine desire to learn from them rather than jump to conclusions or seek to attribute blame.

Conditions for reflection and challenge:

supervision is reflective and supportive and not merely task-oriented; opportunities for reflection and growth are encouraged for all team members.

Positive mind-set:

setbacks and crises are seen as temporary and opportunities for the team to come together and use a solution-focused approach to facilitate change.

Caring and inclusive leadership:

workers feel cared for and that their wellbeing is important; leaders prioritise their own wellbeing and a healthy work-life balance; leaders their workers as individuals and use their emotional intelligence to show them care and respect.

Building organisational resilience

Definitions of organisational resilience from the business world draw on the individual and team-based approaches outlined above. Typically, they describe an organisation's ability to recover and return to 'normal' functioning after facing a disturbing or unexpected event by having strategies in place to manage such a situation. Although this is a crucial aspect of resilience across all fields of social care practice, a more nuanced understanding is needed of the conditions required to support workers in managing, recovering and learning from a traumatic or challenging event – for example, following the death of a person who uses services, the suicide of someone using mental health services, or indeed the aftermath of a global pandemic.

As well as supporting workers through distressing situations, organisational resilience is more commonly characterised by helping them manage everyday demands. Although some characteristics of resilient organisations will be relevant to all types of job (such as manageable demands, adequate training and understanding of role), it is important to develop frameworks that meet the requirements of different sectors and are congruent with the needs and expectations of workers.

Introducing a systemic approach

Grant and Kinman's research with social workers, highlighted above, supports the view that resilience is contextual, multi-dimensional and systemic. A resilient organisation seeks to understand how resilience can be fostered at individual, team and leadership levels to develop a working culture that supports wellbeing and good practice. What makes an organisation strong is not only the ability to respond to shocks, difficulties and setbacks, but also to implement initiatives that enable individuals and teams to do good quality work. Examples of ways to enhance organisational resilience include ensuring leadership is fit-for-purpose, improving job content and the working environment, enhancing autonomy, enriching support networks, building a culture that prioritises self-care, and sharing good practice. It is also crucial to respond to issues that pose a serious threat to the stability of organisations; these may be acute or long-term, such as the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In line with this systemic approach, initiatives at a public policy level play an important role in improving workforce wellbeing. Recommended strategies include national workload management initiatives, effective recruitment and retention strategies, and risk assessments and 'pulse checks' to monitor workforce wellbeing over time (see Kinman & Grant, 2016). Guidance on using the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards approach to preventing work-related stress in organisations can be found in the Key Foundational Principle (KFP5) Wellbeing section later in the workbook. Introducing an evidence-informed 'emotional curriculum' to support resilience and wellbeing in social care workers from recruitment to retirement is also a priority. The workbook provides organisations and educators with guidance to inform such a curriculum.

Clearly, stressors should be eliminated or reduced at source wherever possible, but a resilient organisation also requires strategies at collective and individual levels. The multi-level systemic approach shown in Figure 3 involves developing emotionally literate and ethical leaders, as well as resilient teams and resilient individuals. This can have a wide-reaching impact on the wellbeing and effectiveness of the social care workforce.

Organisational resilience

Emotionally literate leaders

Resilient teams

Resilient individuals

Figure 3: A multi-level systemic approach to building organisational resilience

The emotionally literate and ethical leader

Leaders are in a unique position to develop psychologically healthy workplace cultures as they have the power and authority to implement change. They therefore play an important role in managing work-related stress by:

Prevention:	*Training and development:*	*Support:*
identifying signs of stress in workers at an early stage; supporting risk assessments (for home-workers as well as those who are on-site); working with teams, occupational health and human resources to develop appropriate interventions and make reasonable adjustments to improve working conditions.	enabling workers to access appropriate training to reduce stress at individual and team levels.	being aware of the different ways that stress can manifest itself and that support should be targeted according to individual needs and circumstances.

Research findings indicate that resilience can "crossover" from leaders to followers and help alleviate their burnout and promote organisational citizenship behaviours (Fan et al., 2020). There are particularly strong links between the behaviour of leaders and the wellbeing, satisfaction and effectiveness of workers. The Health and Safety Executive (in collaboration with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and Investors in People) has developed a useful framework to help leaders assess whether they have the behaviours found to be effective for preventing and reducing work-related stress in their workers. (For more information, see the KFP5 Wellbeing section of this workbook.) Nonetheless, leadership is a quality that is required at all levels of the organisation, and every worker has a responsibility to develop the behaviours that can help prevent and reduce stress in others.

Ethical leaders are those who adhere to a set of principles and values underpinned by respect for the dignity and rights of others and for the common good. They set the example for the rest of the organisation, transmitting moral identity, acting as role models for appropriate behaviour and decision-making and supporting their workers to grow as independent practitioners. Crucially, ethical leaders prioritise the health and safety of workers and cultivate a sense of resilience in their organisation. Ethical leadership also fosters positive emotions in workers, as helping people achieve their goals and praising them for good performance can build their psychological capital (i.e. resilience, optimism, hope and confidence), enhance their job commitment, satisfaction and performance, increase their readiness for change, and protect them against burnout (see Kelloway et al., 2013; Metwally et al., 2019).

Emotional intelligence, or literacy, is a particularly important quality in leaders (Lopes, 2016). Characteristics of emotionally literate organisational leaders include:

Understanding self and emotions:	*Understanding and relating to others:*	*Communicating effectively:*
awareness of one's emotional state; insight into how emotions can influence thinking and decision-making; the ability to attend to and 'repair' unhelpful emotional states.	appreciation of how other people (might) think; awareness of their impact on others; knowing how to get the best out of people using a 'tailored' approach; the ability to evoke positive emotions in workers; knowing how to develop cohesive teams.	the ability to create the conditions required for effective communication; knowing how to instigate difficult conversations, and to mediate, negotiate and manage conflict directly.

Clearly, these characteristics need to be encouraged in leaders and translated into action. Strategies to help leaders develop these skills are provided throughout the workbook.

Key Foundational Principles (KFP) table

KFP	Definition	Core Strategies						Additional Strategies	Quick Wins
Secure Base	Building a culture of psychological safety and mutual trust and support; protecting wellbeing and encouraging emotional literacy and improved practice	Enhancing psychological safety and trust: Conducting a psychological safety audit; Making your organisation psychologically safe; Building trust	Supporting emotional literacy and modelling emotional regulation: assessing emotional literacy; taming your 'inner chimp'	Enhancing support: Improving accessibility and responsiveness	Flexible and agile working: Supporting healthy and sustainable homeworking and hybrid working arrangements	Enhancing belonging: fostering a sense of belonging; Taking action on inclusion; Becoming an active bystander	Enhancing team resilience: Building a secure base through Teams	Listening mindfully Using Appreciative Enquiry Appreciating workers as individuals: one-page profiles Cognitive management skills Enhancing support using peer coaching Using World Café approaches and focus groups to inform change Using 360 degree feedback	Managing and resolving conflict: building conflict resolution skills Breathing exercise for reducing stress Being accessible: open door policies Keeping in touch using technology Making hot-desking work Building social connectedness using Fika
Sense of Appreciation	Fostering a sense of appreciation at work and ensuring that workers feel listened to and valued as individuals	Walking the floor	Listening mindfully	Using Appreciative Inquiry to implement change : Discovering, dreaming, strategising and implementing; Using the Tree of Life exercise	Appreciating workers as individuals: Using one-page profiles	Recognising and celebrating success: Sparkling moments	Being grateful	Fostering a sense of belonging Building social connectedness using Fika Learning from what goes well: Serious Success Reviews; Unlocking potential for service improvement: Working with strengths	Give SMART feedback Celebrating success in team meetings Ways to show your gratitude
Learning Organisation	Ensuring that leaders, teams and individuals have opportunities to reflect and learn from experience and can raise concerns	Supporting reflective leadership and practice	Learning from what goes well: Serious Success Reviews; Learning from critical incidents and best practice	Enhancing support using Schwartz rounds and peer coaching	Unlocking potential for service improvement: Working with strengths	Increasing flexibility and tolerance of uncertainty: Doing things differently; Reframing uncertainty	Group learning and improving communication: Using Action Learning Sets; Seven-minute briefings	Recognising and celebrating success: Sparkling moments Using Appreciative Inquiry to implement change Tell me exercise	Using your support networks: creating your own Personal Board of Directors Strengths-spotting Identifying character strengths in meetings and to improve relationships
Mission and Vision	Communicating and maintaining a sense of purpose, translating values into action and managing change effectively	Shaping change through co-production; Avoiding change fatigue	Identifying challenges and shaping responses: The circle of control, influence and concern	Succession planning	Enhancing self-awareness: Paying attention to your shadow side. Using 360 degree feedback	Culturally competent leadership; Ensuring a sense of fairness, justice and equity	Staying on track: Maintaining a sense of purposeful goal direction and avoiding procrastination	Building social connectedness using Fika Appreciative Enquiry Listening mindfully Fostering a sense of belonging Managing and resolving conflict Increasing flexibility and tolerance of uncertainty	Achieving effective change Seeing the wider picture: Pay attention to the fish tank not just the fish Using the World Café approach 'Tell me' exercise 'I did' lists Kanban
Well-being	Ensuring a deep commitment to worker wellbeing and adopting a multi-level, systemic approach to support this	Formulating stress/wellbeing policies and multi-level interventions; Managing psychosocial risks ; Enhancing management competencies for preventing or reducing stress	Using Appreciative Inquiry approaches and work stress frameworks to co-produce wellbeing interventions	Enhancing managers' stress competencies; Spotting signs of struggle; Having conversations about stress; Building conflict resolution skills	Promoting a healthy working environment: Mental Health First Aid; Wellbeing Champions; Wellness Action Plans; Recognising moral injury; Tackling presenteeism	Supporting conditions for work-life balance and effective flexible working; Managing online meetings and email	Developing an individual self-care toolbox for wellbeing, i.e. self-compassion; mindfulness; cognitive behavioural strategies; Identifying and challenging thinking errors; The importance of self-care for leaders	Appreciative Enquiry Building social connectedness using Fika Recognising and celebrating success: Sparkling moments Enhancing support using peer coaching	Six steps to manage conflict Tips to improve self-care and work-life balance How to be 'e-resilient' Using expressive writing How to be mindful

research in practice

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SWORD workbook:

Secure base

🏠 KFP 1: Secure Base

Making sure social care workers have a secure base from which to operate is critical to organisational resilience and is the first Key Foundational Principle. A secure base provides:

> A sense of containment (protection, belonging, safety and being cared for) and fosters a culture of mutual support.

> Opportunities for workers to explore fears and threats and to raise constructive challenge to practice and organisational change.

> A 'safe space' for workers to gain support, providing them with renewed energy and resources.

Psychological safety is a shared belief that the organisation is safe. It is the foundation of a healthy and productive organisational culture, and workers need to feel psychologically safe at an individual, team and organisational level. Several studies have found that nurturing psychological safety is crucial for effective teams and organisations (Dollard & Bakker, 2010; Frazier et al., 2017; Kessel et al., 2012).

In psychologically safe organisations, members feel accepted and respected, able to express their emotions openly, and empowered to share knowledge freely. They believe they will not be penalised for making a mistake, and errors provide opportunities for learning, creativity and growth. Such organisations recognise that workers need a secure base that offers constructive yet supportive challenge, enabling them to develop and thrive in their roles.

Alexander (2019) found that organisational restructure motivated by cost improvement and streamlining of services could lose focus on the working context of employees. Participants reported experiencing fragmented teams, loss of connection and increased isolation from imposed organisational change. Key to professionals feeling equipped and supported to fulfil their roles was their sense of situational connection; a working context in which collegiate relationship-base practice was valued and facilitated. Situationally connected organisations recognise the value of relationships between colleagues in creating a secure base, the role of teams in providing containment for individuals and the need for teams to feel anchored within the organisational structure to provide psychological safety. Remote working can present challenges for peer support and the functioning of the team as a secure base, reducing opportunities for members to share experiences and feeling understood by others (Cook et al., 2020). This issue is considered in KFP5 Wellbeing.

Box 1.1 provides some examples of questions that you could use in a psychological safety audit in your organisation.

Box 1.1: Conducting a psychological safety audit

The following questions can help you gain insight into the extent to which people feel psychologically safe in your organisation. It can also be used at the team level.

If you make a mistake in this team, will it be held against you?

Do people in this organisation feel able to bring up problems and tough issues?

Do people in this organisation sometimes reject others for being different?

Is it safe to take a risk in this organisation?

Box 1.2 describes ways to enhance psychological safety in your organisation. Psychological safety also links to KFP3 Learning Organisation and KFP5 Wellbeing and illustrates their interconnectedness: strategies that are effective for one KFP can also be used to support others.

Box 1.2: How to make your organisation psychologically safe

Lead by example and use self-disclosure:

Leaders are role models and what they do sets standards for behaviour across the organisation. Ask people for feedback on what you are doing well and not so well; acknowledge your mistakes openly. Be receptive to different opinions; be approachable and encourage people to ask you questions.

Encourage active listening:

This lets people know their opinions matter to you. Make meetings 'phone free' so people can give their full attention to the matter in hand. Demonstrate understanding by repeating what has been said; make sure everyone has a chance to speak, especially those who are more reticent. The section on mindful listening in KFP2 Sense of Appreciation provides in-depth guidance on improving listening skills.

Create a safe environment:

Make sure people feel comfortable voicing their opinions and can speak their mind without being embarrassed or punished. Work alongside employees to develop ground rules for personal interactions – e.g. no interruptions, all ideas are accepted equally, never blame or judge.

Keep an open mind:

Trying to see things from a different perspective can provide solutions to seemingly intractable problems. Encourage teams to share feedback widely and help them respond to input from others without defensiveness; encourage individuals and teams to view feedback as a way of strengthening and expanding their ideas and processes, rather than criticism.

Distinguish between psychological safety and accountability:

Acknowledging personal fallibility and dealing with errors and failure openly and productively are key to a psychologically safe workplace. Nonetheless, it is important to be constructively supportive rather than offer a 'crutch', as organisations that are too psychologically safe can stifle creativity and sanction poor performance.

Biggart and colleagues (2017) used Schofield and Beek's (2014) Secure Base model to provide insight into how social care organisations can develop a 'safe haven' in which workers feel supported and able to flourish. They identified five key dimensions for a secure base at the team level: availability, sensitivity, acceptance, co-operation and team membership (see Figure 1.1).

Workers who feel secure believe:

There are people they can turn to within the team	Their team is emotionally containing	Their team provides an opportunity to help them manage negative feelings caused by stress.

Although this work was based on research at the team level, it can also be applied at the organisational level. A secure base has been found to be particularly important for social care workers when working remotely and this will be discussed further later in this section.

Figure 1.1: Key dimensions for developing the team as a secure base (Biggart et al,. 2017)
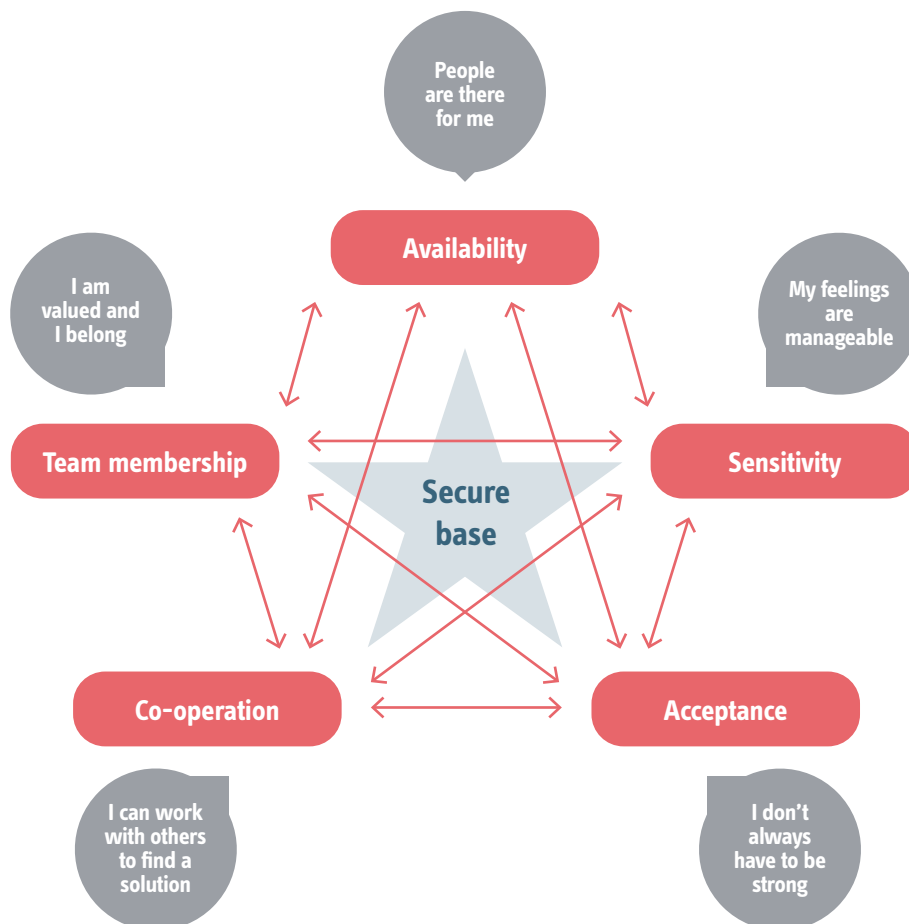
Trust is one of the golden threads that helps build a resilient organisation. Trust is a critical component of a secure base and crucial for psychological safety, but it can be complex and fragile. There are three different kinds of trust:

Strategic: trust in leaders to make the right decisions, allocate resources effectively, fulfil the organisation's mission and help the organisation succeed.

Personal: the trust people have in their own managers, the extent to which they treat workers fairly and consider their needs when making decisions.

Organisational: the trust people have in the organisation itself, e.g. that processes are well designed and consistently and fairly applied

These three kinds of trust are distinct but interconnected: for example, if a manager breaches the personal trust of their employees, their trust in the organisation will also be compromised. Trust is particularly important during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and all three types will help people feel safe, remain mentally healthy and able to support people accessing services effectively. The foundations of trust are behaviours such as consistency, clear communication, and a willingness to tackle difficult issues. It is also crucial to be aware of the 'enemies' of trust; the factors that can destabilise trust in an organisation. Some examples are:

Inconsistent messages, such as telling people what they want to hear rather than carefully considering priorities and how they should be articulated clearly and honestly.

Inconsistent standards, where some employees may get preferential treatment or be allowed to 'bend' the rules.

Misplaced benevolence, where incompetence or inappropriate behaviour is tolerated or even ignored.

False feedback, where not being honest about some employees' shortcomings will devalue praise given to others for genuinely good performance.

Failure to trust others, characterised by a reluctance to delegate and help others develop professionally

The elephant in the room, where ignoring difficult situations creates assumptions that something is being concealed and, in turn, fuels rumours and gossip.

Rebuilding damaged trust can be a long and arduous process but the following actions can be useful:

Identify what happened, what occurred and whose trust was violated.	**Assess the damage, ensuring that you adapt your response to the needs of different groups within the organisation affected by the breach of trust.**
Own up quickly, by letting people know that you are aware of the situation and committed to taking remedial action. Make a firm commitment to act within a particular timeframe and provide regular updates on progress.	**Identify the remedial actions required, define what repaired trust would look like and focus on the changes needed to organisational systems, people and culture. Then make the changes planned.**

See **here** for more information.

Also see guidance on ensuring a sense of fairness, justice and equity in KFP4 Mission and Vision.

Knowing yourself: enhancing emotional literacy as a leadership trait

To create a secure base, leaders should recognise the importance of managing their own emotions and responding effectively to those of others. Emotionally literate (or emotionally intelligent) leadership is one of the golden threads that underpin organisational resilience. Every leader would like to think of themselves as emotionally literate, but we can all succumb to focusing on process and targets at the expense of relationships and humane response to people's work pressures and personal difficulties. Emotional literacy is a capacity that can be developed, however. Self-awareness is a key step in developing and consolidating emotional literacy: a helpful quick quiz that provides you with feedback on how emotionally literate you are as a leader can be found **here**. Use the reflective checklist in Box 1.3 to help you assess your emotionally intelligent leadership skills and highlight any areas for development. More information on measuring emotional intelligence can be found **here**.

Box 1.3: How emotionally intelligent am I?

Is my style participatory?

Do I make sure I get 'buy-in' from workers for new ideas and change? Do I engage with people in a truly participatory manner to inform decision-making processes?

Do I put people at ease?

Do people find me easy to engage with? Am I culturally competent in understanding that I may need to adjust my communication style for different people?

Am I self-aware?

Am I aware of my strengths and limitations, and do I share this information with others, showing that it is OK not to be good at everything and to have 'off days'? Do I ensure there are people around me who are better at things I am not so good at? If not, do I know where to seek help?

Do I model good work-life balance?

Do I make sure people notice that I take time out for myself? This shows I appreciate the importance of self-care and that I can manage my work in a healthy and sustainable way.

Am I able to remain composed?

If I make a mistake, do I remain calm, recover, stay optimistic and learn from the experience?

Can I build and mend relationships?

Am I able to negotiate work-related difficulties without alienating people? Can I agree to differ and respect other people's views, or do I hold a grudge?

Do I show tenacity?

When faced with obstacles, do I take responsibility for leading a plan, while also taking on the views of others?

Am I decisive?

When needed, can I make a decision and stick to it? Am I able to review the effectiveness of my decisions and adapt them if required?

Do I confront difficulties with workers?

Am I able to act with authority if required, without being authoritarian? Do I treat people fairly, even when they disagree with a course of action I endorse?

Can I manage change and uncertainty effectively?

Can I implement change initiatives, reduce anxiety and overcome resistance?

Assessing how employees rate your emotional literacy by using 360-degree feedback is also helpful in assessing self-awareness and key factors such as relationship management, stress tolerance and adaptability, interpersonal sensitivity and empathy, and communication skills and identifying areas for development. A 360-degree tool for social care workers is available **here** which could be adapted for different contexts. 360-degree feedback is also discussed in KFP4 Mission and Vision.

Supporting and modelling emotion regulation: check your 'inner chimp'

Dr Steve Peters, author of the best-selling book *The Chimp Paradox* (2012), helps us understand why, even as emotionally intelligent human beings, we are sometimes prone to think or respond in an overly emotional or irrational way. For example:

Jumping to conclusions, or thinking in 'black and white' terms	Paranoid thinking	Experiencing a sense of inner turmoil that makes us overreact if we feel threatened or undermined.

Peters distinguishes between the 'human brain' (which enables us to be compassionate and to react calmly by using both emotions and rational thinking) and the 'chimp brain' (where we react without thinking, say things we do not mean, sulk or 'lose it' when faced with opposition). Our chimp is ever-present and reacts five times faster than the human brain, but we can train ourselves to be aware when it is making an appearance. The aim is not to kill your chimp but to tame it – being able to calm the chimp and use logic to reassure it makes us emotionally literate leaders and professionals.

Box 1.4: Learning to tame your 'inner chimp'

We can only regulate our emotions if we also have an opportunity to express them; this can help us process socially inappropriate feelings such as frustration, anger and disgust. So, it is important to vent to allow your inner chimp to have its voice in a safe space. Find people (within and outside the workplace) that you can vent to safely. The section on your Personal Board of Directors (see KFP3 Learning Organisation) will help you with this.

We can then begin to address our emotional reaction calmly and allow the human part of our brain to determine a more rational reaction to the situation.

Remember, being angry is perfectly natural and a logical response to some situations, but not always proportional or functional. Quick Win 1.1 offers some tips on how to manage conflict more effectively.

When we need to divert our inner chimp, it helps to count to ten or to use a breathing technique (see Quick Win 1.2) before we voice our reactions.

Cognitive behavioural techniques (see the KFP5 Wellbeing section) can also be useful in calming our inner chimp. Strategies to help manage inter-personal conflict are also discussed in KFP4 Mission and Vision.

Encouraging practitioners to find an appropriate person to vent to (and recognising their need to do so) is important – although, as a leader, remember that you may not be the appropriate sounding board.

Quick Win 1.1: Managing and resolving conflict

Ask yourself the following questions:

Do I need to get angry about this?

Trying to avoid being angry does not mean suppressing your feelings, as this can result in shame, depression and potentially more anger. Instead, try to change your outlook and ask yourself whether what has just happened is something you need to be angry about.

How does anger affect you?

Think back to previous situations when you have been angry at work and ask yourself how it affects aspects of your life, both good and bad. Identify the impact on you, your relationships with colleagues, your job performance, your wellbeing and energy, how you feel outside work, and your relationships with family and friends.

Was anger an appropriate response?

Did your anger arise from an accurate or logical reading of the situation, or your own interpretation of it? Talk the situation through with somebody you trust who is neutral to the situation (see your Personal Board of Directors in KFP3 Learning Organisation).

Is your anger out of proportion?

Minor things can trigger significant anger. Acknowledging that anger is often a response to something else (e.g. being tired, hungry or angry with someone about something else) can help you contain your feelings.

Am I taking this personally?

We often become stressed and angry in situations that tap into deep-seated feelings of not being good enough or having failed in some way. Be aware of your emotional triggers and challenge your initial reactions.

How can I frame the problem more clearly?

Jot down the relevant details, including the points you and the other person/people made during the encounter, and any misunderstandings you think might have occurred. Read it aloud to try to see the situation more objectively.

How did I feel and what did I want?

How were you feeling before and during the situation? Was your anger triggered by unmet needs? Did you project your anger onto other people because they misinterpreted what it was you wanted?

Identify your objective

What do you want from this situation? Define your goal in a way that other people can understand. Do you wish to resolve it directly, or tackle an underlying problem?

Quick Win 1.1: Managing anger

Be realistic

Having unrealistic expectations of others can set them up to fail, whereas unrealistic expectations of yourself can lead to self-blame and self-punishment.

How can I move on?

Shift your focus from what was done to you to what you can do to fix it. Sometimes the best response is just to chalk it up to experience and let it go. This does not mean you have 'lost' a battle.

Acknowledge and respect differences

Trying to take another person's perspective helps you see issues in a different light.

Get moving

Physical activity can help deal with anger, so take time out by going for a brisk walk away from the working environment.

Quick win 1.2: A breathing exercise for reducing feelings of stress

Paying attention to your breathing is an effective way of calming yourself at times of stress. It only takes a few minutes and can be done anywhere, without other people noticing. Practising this technique regularly will help you get the most out of it, so try to build it into your daily routine.

As you are likely to be doing this at work, it is best to practise by sitting in a chair that supports your back. Make yourself as comfortable as you can with your feet flat, roughly a hip-width apart so you feel grounded.

Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable without forcing it. Try breathing in gently through your nose and out through your mouth. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from 1 to 5. You may not be able to reach 5 at first.

Then, without pausing or holding your breath, let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again, if you find this helpful.

Keep doing this for 3 to 5 minutes.

Based on NHS advice (full details can be found **here**).

Availability of support

As discussed earlier in this workbook, feeling supported provides workers with a secure base and is an important component of organisational resilience. An effective leader is available to offer support and encourage open, reflective communication, feedback and discussion. Nonetheless, making yourself available at any time to discuss any topic is clearly not feasible. Quick Win 1.3 outlines how a 'boundaried' open-door policy can help workers feel more supported and enhance their sense of security.

Quick Win 1.3: Making open-door policies work

An 'open-door policy' implies that leaders encourage workers to come into their office at any time to discuss any issues or concerns. This can be effective, as the leader will be seen as accessible and an open flow of communication will be encouraged. You will also be more aware of day-to-day problems and able to resolve minor issues before they escalate. Nonetheless, an open-door policy must be well defined, otherwise you may spend a lot of your time listening to concerns without people reaching solutions autonomously. Without boundaries and guidelines, you may also unwittingly develop a culture of dependency, where workers are reluctant to solve problems themselves. Alternatively, they may be reluctant to bother you with their problems – especially if they think you are busy. The steps provided below should help you reap the benefits of open communication while minimising the disadvantages:

Set boundaries by managing expectations of your availability:

For example, an open door means people are free to drop in, a closed door means you are unavailable. Before they come to you with a problem, you could ask people to work through some preliminary issues. For example: a) How would they express the problem in a few sentences? b) Does it affect only them, or others too? c) Can they think of two or three options that might solve the problem?

Listen carefully:

Let people speak without being interrupted by phones, email or others dropping in. Use mindful listening techniques (see KFP2 Sense of Appreciation). To make sure you have fully understood the problem, summarise what you think the worker has said. Drive the conversation from a problem focus to a solution that is generated by the employee themselves (see c above); if necessary, schedule a follow-up meeting rather than a vague request to 'stop by at any time'.

Be aware of time:

If possible, try to solve any issue the first time to avoid affecting your own productivity. More complex problems, and those involving other people, will probably need you to schedule a meeting.

Flexible and 'agile' working

'Agile' working has become common in some areas of social care. People may work at home, in public areas such as libraries and coffee shops, or even in their car. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant proportion of the UK population were forced to work at home with little preparation or support. Remote working is popular but, although it has benefits such as increased flexibility for workers and financial savings for organisations, not having a physical 'base' or having to share a workspace (e.g. hot-desking) can threaten psychological safety and a sense of belonging to the team and the organisation. It can even increase the risk of work-related stress and burnout (Stone et al., 2018). While most organisations recognise the need to provide remote workers with guidance on ergonomic and technical issues, most do not offer support to help them manage the psychosocial risks of agile working, or even recognise the need to do so (McDowall & Kinman, 2017).

As restrictions eased, many organisations continued with homeworking, with a 'hybrid' approach that alternates between working remotely and on site being particularly popular. Leaders are advised to think carefully about the downside as well as the advantages of introducing new working patterns for the wellbeing of the workforce and consider how they will provide support. When developing policies and practices for homeworking, the implications for the team as well as individuals should be considered and ways to support collective as well as individual wellbeing and productivity identified.

There is little research on the implications of agile working for social care workers, but a study by Jeyasingham (2018) used several data sources (diaries, photographs and interviews) to explore practitioners' experiences when working away from office spaces. The findings highlighted a sense of ambivalence: while agile working offered practitioners a 'superficial' sense of control, concerns were raised about data security, the risks of working in public spaces, and a lack of opportunity to interact with others. As discussed earlier in the workbook, research has highlighted the creative methods that social care workers have used to engage remotely with people who access services during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pink et al., 2021). The authors conclude that social care work is likely to remain a 'hybrid digital practice' with benefits for workers and families but argue that it is crucial to identify optimum ways of using technologies to support workers' practice and judgements. This ongoing research focuses on the role played by digital social work practices in child protection work during the COVID-19 pandemic. More information can be found **here**. Other research that has examined the impact of the pandemic has highlighted the need to consult people who access services about their experiences of virtual social care practice to guide future policies and practices (Cook & Zschomler, 2020).

When introducing flexible working, it is crucial to ensure that practitioners have opportunities to communicate with managers and engage with colleagues on a regular basis – whether this is face to face or online. All too often, insufficient attention is given to what happens at the end of the working day, when people are unable to return to a physical base or may come back to the office to find there is no one to check in with. Social care workers need a sense of community and as highlighted above, value the secure base provided by their team, particularly during stressful times. They may need an opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, debrief or just have a chat before finishing work for the day, which can be an effective way to maintain boundaries between work and personal life. Informal as well as formal opportunities for communication are also needed. Quick Win 1.4 offers guidance on how to use technology to 'check in' with colleagues when working remotely.

Quick win 1.4: Keeping in touch using technology

'Checking in' is a challenge when people are working remotely, so using technology to create opportunities to interact online can be helpful. For example, 'virtual coffee breaks' using Zoom, Teams or similar applications can work well. The 'Fika' approach (see below) and other techniques such as Schwartz rounds (see KFP5 Wellbeing) can also be adapted for online use to help people feel connected.

It is important to schedule the break, as colleagues are not going to bump into each other accidentally. A strong internet connection and a quiet background (or a headset) will help you hear each other. Bringing your own coffee is essential. And consider the creative use of icebreakers to help get conversations started. But remember, the use of virtual technology for communication is most effective if people have previously met face to face. Many people started new jobs during the pandemic and may not have met their fellow team members face to face for some considerable time. Leaders should ensure that systems are in place to ensure they are well integrated into the team and receive appropriate emotional (as well as informational) support. Guidance on signs of struggle for people who are working remotely can be found in KFP5 Wellbeing).

Although working at home can be beneficial, it can be a challenge for both organisations and employees. Employers have the same health and safety responsibilities for home workers as for any other workers, so risks should be recognised, assessed, and managed. The following issues should be considered:

Which roles can and cannot be done remotely?	Who may or may not want to work remotely? How would this impact on other team members and people who are being supported?
What work activities will they be doing (and for how long)?	Can these activities be done safely (paying particular attention to psychosocial risks)?
How will any concerns be identified and managed?	How will leaders keep in touch with workers?
Are any groups of people at greater risk of the negative effects of homeworking?	Do you need to put control measures in place to protect them?

Box 1.5 sets out tips for supporting the mental health and wellbeing of people working at home. More guidance on this issue can be found in a resource to help leaders in social care organisations support homeworking recently published by Research in Practice **Supporting wellbeing remotely: Leaders' Briefing (2021)**.

Box 1.5: Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of homeworkers

Organisations should:

Promote safe and healthy working practices.

Manage stress and mental health, identifying specific risk factors.

Provide support and regular check-ins.

Encourage routine and structure.

Review and, if necessary, revise goals and targets; involve employees in this process.

Trust employees and avoid excessive monitoring and measuring of productivity such as remote tracking.

Be aware of 'Zoom fatigue' and place limitations on online meetings where possible.

Promote informal support mechanisms, such as virtual coffee mornings, book clubs, etc.

Provide guidance on setting physical and psychological boundaries between 'work' and 'home'.

Discourage 'e-presenteeism', as the pressure to be 'present' can be greater when working at home.

Role model healthy behaviours, such as switching off from technology and avoiding presenteeism.

A range of useful resources is available to help organisations support the wellbeing of homeworkers. A **toolkit** provided by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) offers guidance on key issues such as stress and mental health and lone working without supervision, the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) provides a questionnaire and **guide** to help support people to continue working from home. The HSE Management Standards **framework** and associated '**Talking Toolkit**' can also help employers assess the psychosocial risks of homeworking relating to key issues, such as demands, support, control and role, and inform interventions. Wellness Action Plans are discussed in KFP5 Wellbeing, but one is available **here** to help identify the individual behaviours, thoughts and actions that may affect the wellbeing of homeworkers and the support that their manager and colleagues can put in place. Further guidance on homeworking for leaders and employees can be found **here**.

Hot-desking is a form of agile working but can be a major source of dissatisfaction for employees. A survey of more than 2,400 social workers (Stevenson, 2019) found more than eight out of ten (86%) felt hot-desking was not compatible with the work they do. More than six out of ten who were currently hot-desking said their experience was 'entirely' or 'largely' negative. Most also said they had not been properly equipped or supported to hot desk and 45% indicated that it had a negative impact on their enjoyment of their jobs and their effectiveness.

As highlighted above, leaders may be considering introducing hot-desking as part of a hybrid work model, where people may work at home for part of the week and share office space for the rest of the time. At the time of writing this resource, organisations are advised to avoid the use of hot-desking wherever possible (CIPD, 2021) but, if this practice continues, steps must be taken to ensure that desks are COVID secure. More generally, hot-desking can be effective if managed carefully, but losing a familiar workspace and being separated from team members can make people feel isolated and demotivated, and their wellbeing and performance can suffer (Ayoko & Ashkanasy, 2019; Morrison & Macky, 2017; Webber, 2019). So, introducing hot-desking requires more than simply providing workers with laptops and asking them to share desks. Quick Win 1.5 addresses issues that should be considered before you introduce hot-desking. In organisations that are already using hot-desking, Quick Win 1.5 can be used to check that conditions are optimal.

Quick Win 1.5: How to make hot-desking work in your organisation

Planning:

Consider carefully how long it will take to move to hot-desking, the resources you need and the budget you have. Identify your desired outcome and how you will measure its success or failure. Ensure you assess the impact at the team level, as well as the individual level.

Enhance buy-in:

Involve workers in developing your hot-desking policy from the start. Asking for feedback and ideas will increase acceptability and minimise resistance. A steering group can provide creative ideas to inform hot-desking policy and help you monitor progress over time.

Manage the change:

Explain the reasons for introducing hot-desking. Highlight the benefits but acknowledge potential disadvantages. Listen to concerns – e.g. about how hot-desking might impact on working relationships, workforce wellbeing and job performance. Consider how it may impact on people's sense of belonging and commitment and how this might be addressed.

Expect disruption:

Even if people have been working remotely, hot-desking will be a major change, and will take a while to bed in. Policies may need to be revisited and adapted.

Confidentiality:

Emphasise the need for privacy of data by never leaving computers unattended when email or confidential documents are open.

Hot-desking in practice:

Ensure you have the appropriate technology and sufficient workspaces. People can waste precious time searching for a workstation or getting to grips with unfamiliar or unreliable technology (this can also be a source of anxiety). Decide whether desks will be allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis, through an informal desk-sharing system, or via apps to formally book desks and rooms.

Quick Win 1.5: How to make hot-desking work in your organisation

Try zoning:

Consider providing larger office space where team members can hot-desk alongside their leaders (rather than in undesignated areas). This will encourage discussion of work issues and enable leaders to provide updates and offer support.

Inclusivity:

Chairs and computer monitors need to be easily adjustable to accommodate people's individual needs and preferences. Consider the needs of those who require specialised equipment, such as adapted keyboards and chairs.

Create a variety of spaces:

Wherever possible, offer workspaces for different tasks, such as breakout rooms, cubicles for one-to-one meetings or private phone calls, and quiet areas to facilitate deep concentration.

Personalising space:

Studies show that an inability to personalise our working areas with things that define our identity can be stressful. Think of ways to provide people with a sense of ownership by encouraging them to add personal touches to their workspace. They could bring personal items that are small and portable, vote on a choice of pictures for the walls, or put personal photographs on a noticeboard.

Clean desk policy:

Workspaces and computers should be kept free of personal or confidential material. People may be less inclined to keep shared desks clean and tidy than their own personal workspaces. As mentioned above, COVID-19 safety procedures must be strictly enforced. Provide wipes for them to clean up at the end of the day and a shared space where they can eat lunch away from their desk.

Accept that hot-desking may not work:

People often gravitate to the same spaces and some workers may stake out their territory by 'adopting' a desk as 'theirs'. As well as causing resentment, this means that a hot-desking space can easily revert to the traditional arrangement of employees having permanent desks.

Some guidance on introducing flexible working practices is provided **here**.

There is also evidence that working remotely can threaten employees' work-life balance, by extending working hours and allowing the job to 'invade' their home environments (Kelliher et al., 2019). Guidance on how to support work-life balance for remote workers as well as people on-site is provided in KFP5 Wellbeing. People working with traumatic material (such as traumatising conversations, images and written or auditory testimony) may experience particular difficulties working at home. **Guidance** is available to help employers assess the risks and fulfil their duty of care.

Fostering a sense of belonging

Feeling that we belong at work is essential to our sense of security and commitment to an organisation, so creating a sense of belonging among workers is crucial to building a resilient organisational culture. It is especially important to encourage a sense of belonging among newly recruited colleagues, those who have changed teams, and those who have returned to work after sickness, a career break, or parental leave. People who have been working remotely during the COVID-19 crisis, especially those who have started a new job or joined a new team, may have particular difficulties in generating a sense of belonging to their team and to the organisation in general. Letting new people know about work etiquette and 'how we do things around here' in an open and kindly way encourages a sense of belonging. As a leader, consider assigning a 'buddy' to new recruits to advise them on basic issues, such as where to get lunch or where the loo is, as overlooking these simple things can cause anxiety. For new starters who are working remotely, introducing virtual mentoring and shadowing can offer opportunities for the incidental learning that is often overlooked when people are not on site.

As social care workers, our professional identity protects our wellbeing and resilience, even during times of stress and trauma. Feeling we belong helps maintain identity, as well as helping us feel psychologically safe and engaged. Box 1.6 uses findings from research (adapted for social work) to identify factors that can help build a culture of belonging in the workplace.

Box 1.6: How to foster a sense of belonging

Check out how people feel about working in your organisation

As a leader, it is tempting to believe everyone loves working under your leadership or to become defensive if indicators suggest otherwise. But being open to listening about people's experiences of work is crucial to making them feel heard and understood. The SWORD Tool will provide insight into the extent to which people feel that they belong in your organisation and will help you identify priorities for change. It is important to remember, however, that listening without taking action can alienate people, which is the antithesis of fostering a culture of belonging.

Getting employees to speak freely can be a challenge. They may be wary of authority figures or may tell you what they think you want to hear. So, to learn what people really think, begin by identifying issues that seem to cause silence, then invite employees to lunch or other informal settings to discuss them in a neutral space. You might also consider using employment engagement surveys to identify the feelings of different groups of employees, particularly those that are under-represented.

Develop trusting work-based relationships

The importance of trust in developing a secure base is highlighted earlier in this section. To develop trust, people need to feel truly appreciated for what they bring to an organisation; KFP2 Sense of Appreciation has tips on how to achieve this. Simply put, if people are to feel that they belong then they must believe that their abilities and contribution are recognised and valued. An employer who invests in employees' professional development will be repaid by increased commitment and loyalty, as well as improved performance. Workers who have a trusting relationship with a mentor are better able to take advantage of critical feedback and learning from their practice. KFP3 Learning Organisation outlines the features of a peer coaching/mentoring scheme that can be used to develop relationships characterised by trust, with minimal cost and set-up time, to encourage a solution focus to workplace issues.

Box 1.6: How to foster a sense of belonging

Take action on inclusion

Studies in different occupational settings show that retention is enhanced by ensuring that people feel valued for who they are. When workers see leaders and co-workers who 'look like them', they are more likely to feel they fit in. It is therefore important to ensure your workplace represents the community you serve. Excluding people may be unintentional but can profoundly undermine a sense of belonging. Being culturally competent is an important leadership capability. Guidance on enhancing culturally competent leadership is in KFP4 Mission and Vision.

A sense of belonging is underpinned by encouraging everyone in the organisation to have a voice and being aware that there are people who may be reluctant to come forward with ideas. Actively encouraging inclusion is more than inviting people to meetings to share their views; it means sharing documents beforehand and providing opportunities for people to contribute, even if this takes more time and effort. Writing down ideas on Post-it notes, for example, can encourage contributions from people

Tailored listening

Another way to show employees that their contributions are valued is simply to listen, respectfully and attentively (Heathfield, 2019). How this is done should be tailored to a team member's personality: quieter people prefer someone who 'pauses, listens and creates a space', while those who are more outspoken value the opportunity to bring their thoughts to the here and now.

Encourage people to bring their 'whole selves' to work

For someone to feel they belong, they must be their authentic self at work. This means accepting that social care practitioners (like all human beings) are vulnerable and will need extra support and compassion from time to time. The importance of leaders 'role modelling' self-care and self-compassion is outlined in the KFP5 Wellbeing. It also helps if leaders can role-model humility and ask for help when required.

A shared vision makes all the difference

If employees find their work meaningful and have a collective sense of purpose, they will feel they belong. Ensuring that the organisation's mission and vision and shared values and behaviours are discussed during the induction of new employees is emphasised in KFP3. Helping more experienced workers reconnect with why they came into social care work in the first place, and how their own values match those of the organisation, can be developed through exercises in Appreciative Inquiry, which are outlined in KFP2 Sense of Appreciation.

One way to foster a sense of belongingness, psychological safety and security in organisations is to encourage people to become active bystanders. Box 1.7 below provides some guidance on how this can be accomplished.

Box 1.7: Becoming an Active Bystander

There is a growing movement that encourages us all to be active bystanders. Originating from work in preventing sexual violence, it is now widely used to urge us all to not sit back but to call out inappropriate behaviour to ensure we all feel safe and secure in our workplace.

In organisations we are all bystanders; situations unfold around us and it is often easy to let things pass us by, even if they make us feel uncomfortable or uneasy. The occasional unacceptable comment can subsequently become normalised and before we know it a culture where people feel excluded or unsafe is established.

Becoming an active bystander (as a leader, a colleague or a member of the communities we live in) means not letting something that has made us feel uneasy pass us by without taking action. By doing so we can create a culture where unacceptable behaviour or attitudes are challenged and a safer more inclusive structure is encouraged.

To become an active bystander means that we need to safely intervene. This can involve actions such as not laughing at a sexist or inappropriate joke, pointing out that while a person's behaviour was not intentional it was experienced as being a micro-aggression, and talking to colleagues about how their behaviour impacts on others.

Quick Win 1.6: Building social connectedness using Fika

Fika, or sharing coffee and sweet treats with colleagues, is an important everyday activity in Sweden that encourages team building, peer-to-peer support and develops the capacities that underpin emotional resilience. It is a retreat from the stress of the day and an opportunity to bond with colleagues (Uusimaki, 2020).

Evidence suggests that developing a working culture that acknowledges the importance of regular breaks away from the desk can make a real difference to wellbeing and performance (Trougakos & Hideg, 2009). So, work with employees to identify opportunities to bring groups together for a Fika break. If coffee and cake are not appropriate, a group walk would also embody the spirit of Fika. The important thing is to enable people to connect and refrain from talking about work. All you need is a space where people feel comfortable to gather and chat. Fika can be done online as well as face to face; tips can be found **here**.

Remember work is not just what we do behind our desks: problem-solving, reflective conversations and peer-to-peer learning can all be gained from informal conversations about something completely different. This is likely to happen during a Fika break.

Building a secure base by enhancing team resilience

Building an effective network of teams helps to consolidate organisational resilience. When individuals can openly discuss their strengths and concerns, collective resilience is strengthened and team members also feel empowered to share emotionally distressing experiences.

Take stock of the main sources of workplace pressure

Where is the stress / burnout risks?

Where is the positive energy coming from?

What is the impact of your own style?

What is the impact of personal resilience?

What actions can be taken to strengthen team resilience?

Confidence Collective confidence in leaders and team

Purpose Shared sense of purpose and values

Adaptability Team as a unit equipped to respond in an adaptable way

Social support Mutual giving and receiving of social support with the team

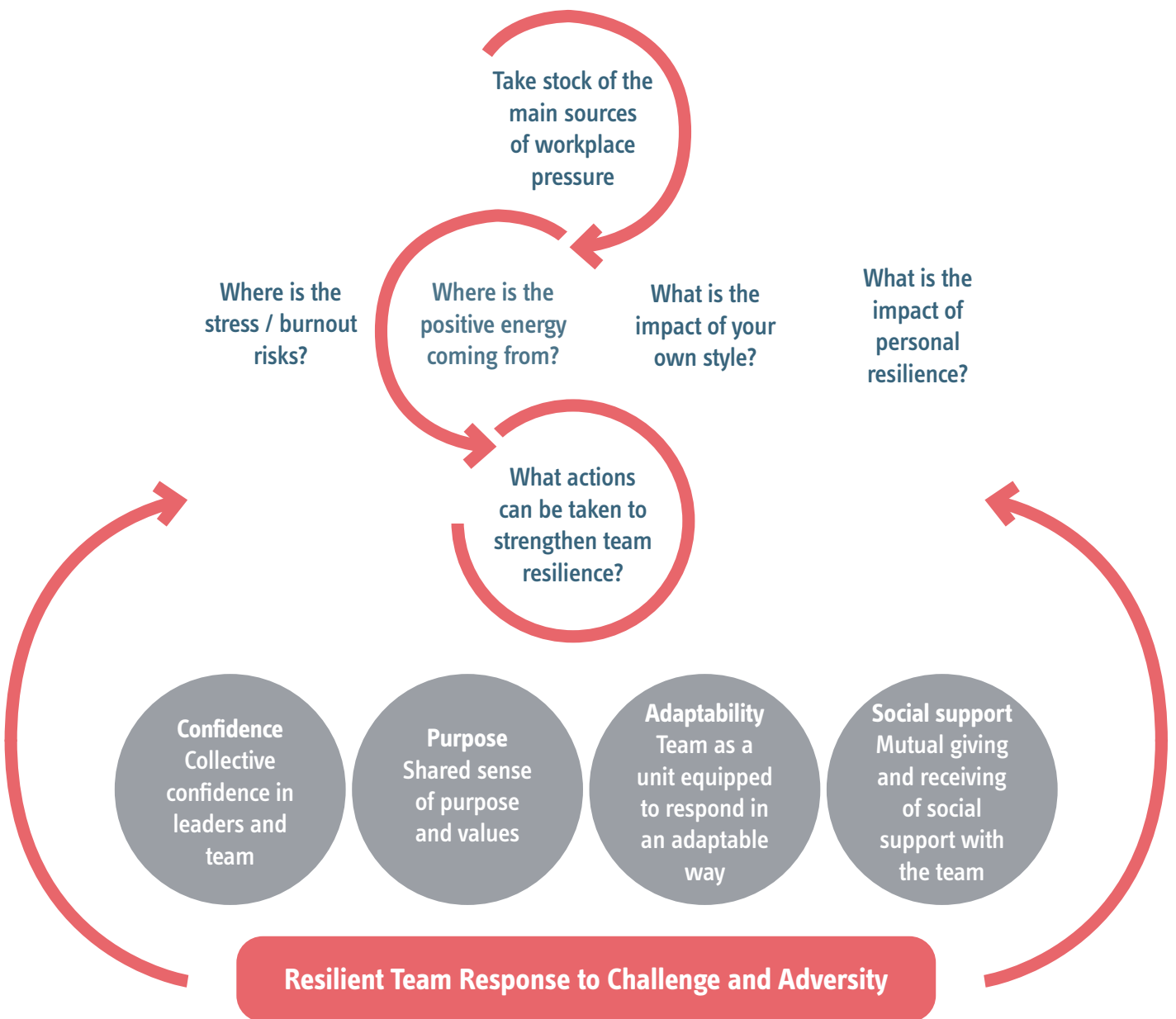**Resilient Team Response to Challenge and Adversity**

Figure 1.2: Enhancing team resilience

The characteristics of a resilient team are discussed in the section on understanding resilience earlier in the workbook. Figure 1.2 shows a helpful framework for building team resilience which was developed by Cooper and colleagues (2013). The in-depth strategies and Quick Wins included throughout this workbook will help you apply this framework to your own organisation. To use it effectively, it is important to consider the following questions:

Where are the stressors / burnout risks in my organisation?

While a formal wellbeing audit can identify the key psychosocial stressors in an organisation (see KFP5 Wellbeing for further information), research suggests that for social care workers, high workloads, low control and support, and bureaucracy are much more stressful than the type of work that is done (See Grant and Kinman, 2014). As a leader, it is crucial to identify ways to minimise these hazards as, over the long term, they will drastically increase the risk of health problems, sickness absence and poor retention among your workforce. Providing support, security and a sense of purpose can help workers manage demands and remain healthy and motivated.

What is the impact of my leadership style?

Flexibility is a key aspect of resilience and leaders should develop a flexible leadership style. Remember that it is possible to overuse your strengths: for example, as leaders are powerful role models for expected behaviour in an organisation, being overly conscientious and working long hours may encourage others to do the same. Similarly, being excessively sympathetic to everyone may encourage employees to see you as a 'soft touch'. Coaching and 360 Degree Feedback (see KFP4 Mission and Vision) can help you gain insight into your leadership style and reflect on how it could be developed.

What is the impact of personal resilience on team resilience?

Helping people to enhance their individual resilience can increase the resilience of the team and the whole organisation. KFP5 Wellbeing offers some ideas for how you can improve the personal resilience of those with whom you work.

Some further guidance on how to build effective teams to provide a sense of security is set out in Box 1.8.

Box 1.8: Building a secure base through teams

How do we build a sense of trust within a team? How will we know trust exists within that team?

The importance of trust and how it can be destabilised and rebuilt was highlighted earlier in this section. The collective learning that can be gained from when people make a mistake and when they are successful should be considered and shared. Trust is evident when people readily ask for help, admit to errors and skill gaps, and are prepared to disagree with the views of others. You will know trust when you see it: people will help each other proactively, be prepared to show vulnerability and support each other spontaneously when there are temporary spikes in workload. They will also provide mutual support during organisational and personal crises.

How do we build commitment?

For teams to work effectively, people should be aware of how their role contributes to the mission and vision of the wider organisation (see KFP4 Mission and Vision). In other words, they must be able to identify where their contribution fits into the wider endeavour. So, leaders at the team level should – preferably with the input of their team – develop a strategy, with goals and objectives that is linked explicitly to that wider enterprise.

How do we build a culture of shared responsibilities?

Stress is often triggered when people have a lot of responsibility but feel they lack autonomy over how they do their work. Responsibility without authority is an acknowledged source of stress, so engaging the team in considering how problems can be shared and resolved collaboratively can enhance a sense of autonomy. Opportunities to increase autonomy can be explored using Appreciative Inquiry and World Café approaches (see KFP2 Sense of Appreciation, KFP4 Mission and Vision and KFP5 Wellbeing).

How do we build a team that recognises individual strengths?

To be effective, a team needs a wide range of skills and experience. Building a culture in which people ask for a second opinion or for someone to help them with a piece of work will ensure that people are recognised for their individual skills and strengths, while increasing the expertise and resilience of the team as a whole.

research in practice

University of Bedfordshire

Birkbeck
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

SWORD workbook:

Sense of appreciation

Dartington

KFP 2: Sense of Appreciation

Promoting a culture in which your workforce feel appreciated is the second Key Foundational Principle for organisational resilience. This is when:

People feel valued and that their individual talents and skills are noticed and appreciated.	Leaders are approachable, genuinely interested in workers and trust them to do a good job.
Leaders understand the pressures of the work and the need to support people to prioritise self-care and ensure a healthy work-life balance.	Leaders listen and engage with workers and provide constructive feedback.

Strategies for fostering a sense of appreciation

Feeling appreciated at work, especially if you have gone 'above and beyond' what is expected in your role, is extremely motivating and offers protection from stress and burnout. Without this recognition, workers can see themselves as just a 'cog in the wheel' and feel taken for granted. This in turn can affect performance and the extent to which workers can meet the needs of people accessing services.

Feeling unappreciated when doing emotionally demanding work can generate feelings of resentment that can over time lead to burnout. The cycle of emotional exhaustion, cynicism/compassion fatigue and lack of personal accomplishment that characterises burnout can impair practitioners' wellbeing, personal relationships and effectiveness at work. There are also major implications for retention of the workforce. Feeling undervalued or unappreciated is one of the most common reasons for social care workers leaving their job (Department for Education, 2021). It is therefore crucial to show appreciation for work well done. Feedback should be authentic and evidenced-based, not tokenistic. Just saying 'thank you' is not enough as it does not demonstrate genuine regard for the individual and their talents. To be effective, praise should be sincere and recognise someone's unique contribution or skills. This helps people feel that the work they do is noticed and appreciated.

To provide authentic feedback, leaders need insight into the everyday working lives of individuals and teams. One way of doing this is to 'walk the floor' on a regular basis and listen to what people are saying about their successes and challenges at work (see Box 2.1). The learning gained will help ensure that your expressions of appreciation and feedback are sincere, personalised and well timed (see Quick Win 2.1). Walking the floor can also help develop other aspects of organisational resilience; it will be particularly useful in building and communicating a shared mission and vision and facilitating a learning environment, as well as enhancing cultural competence and an appreciation of the diversity of the workforce (see KFP4 Mission and Vision). It may also help you spot signs of distress where individuals may need additional support (see KFP5 Wellbeing).

Box 2.1: Walking the floor

Managing via email and formal meetings is the norm in many organisations. Workforce surveys often indicate that leaders are not sufficiently visible and this can be a strong source of dissatisfaction for workers. KFP1 Secure Base provides tips on introducing an effective open-door policy, but another way to encourage spontaneous questions and feedback is to walk the floor. Put simply, this is the habit of stopping to talk to people face to face. Research for Community Care (Schraer, 2014) found social workers would value more opportunities to engage in open dialogue with leaders. Walking the floor helps leaders be more visible, connect with their employees, share ideas, and invite suggestions for how things could be improved. It also allows them to express their appreciation to people in a personalised way.

Make walking the floor part of your routine:

If possible, ring-fence some time in your diary each day to drop in on people for an informal chat. This need not take long: even 30 minutes will do, and you can visit different teams on a rotating basis. It is best to schedule your walkabouts at different times of the day to avoid them becoming too predictable.

Do it alone:

Walking the floor works best when it involves one-to-one conversations. It is often better to give praise to workers individually to stop them becoming self-conscious and embarrassed.

Visit everybody:

Only dropping in on some people may be considered favouritism and can generate gossip and resentment. Try to spend roughly the same amount of time with each person.

Listen more than you talk:

Ask about their accomplishments; say something positive and offer praise.

Take the rough with the smooth:

As well as providing feedback and praise, be open to criticism from the workforce. The Community Care survey found that social work leaders needed to 'dig deep' to establish how people really feel about working for the organisation.

Be persistent:

During your first walkabouts, you may find that people feel awkward and do not communicate freely. Do not be discouraged, as repeated visits will eventually pay off. When done well, simple gestures of appreciation can be hugely motivating and replenishing for employees (see below), increasing morale and enhancing workers' ability to manage setbacks.

Go beyond work:

Knowing people as individuals does not mean only being aware of their strengths in relation to the job they do. Leaders need insight into employees' personal circumstances and any challenges they face (while ensuring their privacy is not invaded). When handled sensitively and in confidence, this can help people feel understood and appreciated and any necessary accommodations can be put in place.

Walking the virtual floor

Managing a workforce that is dispersed means that leaders must walk around virtually rather than physically, using technology to engage people. The guidance provided above will be useful, but virtual meetings will need to be planned – and will therefore be less spontaneous. One-to-one meetings are recommended but visiting online team meetings on a rotating basis will help leaders remain visible and provide opportunities to connect with the workforce, share ideas and express appreciation.

Providing clear and authentic feedback is vital in fostering a sense of appreciation. This will highlight workers' strengths and achievements and identify areas for development. Quick Win 2.1 provides some tips for giving effective feedback.

Quick Win 2.1: Tips for giving SMART feedback

Be direct

Make sure the feedback you provide is clear.

Be specific:

Focus on what you have noticed that people have done well, or what they could improve on. If any improvement is required, let them know that it is linked to a specific issue not their general performance.

Be real and be realistic:

Your authenticity will ensure that feedback is well received, so avoid giving feedback unless you really believe it is necessary or deserved. Make sure you give concrete and constructive feedback that is realistic and will help people achieve a goal.

Timely:

Feedback should be provided at the right time. If you wait too long, it may seem random or ill considered. Moreover, praising every small action can appear overly ingratiating and superficial.

Leaders also need to develop an organisational culture that promotes good practice regarding self-care. Showing appreciation also means ensuring that people who have worked additional hours have time to recuperate and that nobody (yourself included) works 'out of hours' too often. This means that you need to notice the extra hours worked and build in mechanisms to ensure that people can maintain a healthy work-life balance. KFP5 Wellbeing has guidance on supporting work-life balance for you and your employees.

Listening mindfully

Effective communication is essential in fostering a culture in which people feel valued and that their individual talents and skills are appreciated. It has been estimated that the average person remembers only around a quarter of what somebody has said directly after the conversation (Shafir, 2003). Mindful listening underpins effective communication; it helps people retain information by reducing the 'noise' of their own thoughts so they can really hear what other people have to say. Because listening mindfully means listening without judgement, criticism or interruption, this also helps the speaker feel understood.

Box 2.2: Tips to help you listen more mindfully

Be fully present:

Focus on the person you are listening to without any disturbance. During remote meetings it is easy to slip into the habit of multitasking but be as present and focused as possible and avoid any distractions. Before you start the meeting, take a few moments to clear your mind to make room for the other person's point of view. You could practise a few relaxation techniques to help you 'focus on the moment' during the forthcoming conversation (e.g. try the breathing exercise suggested in KFP1 Secure Base or a 'mindful pause' described in KFP5 Wellbeing).

Cultivate empathy:

We tend to see the world through the lens of our own experiences, beliefs and personality. So, try to understand the situation from the other person's perspective. You do not have to agree with them but validate their perspective by acknowledging their views.

Actively listen

This is important for all meetings, whether face-to-face or online. Active listening can be more challenging in online meetings as we do not have the usual visual cues that help us identify other people's emotions and reactions. This means we can lose conversational threads and 'miss the point'.

Consider doing a mindfulness course:

Research with social workers (Kinman & Grant, 2019) found that mindfulness training can improve their listening skills and their ability to determine what people are really saying. Mindfulness also had many positive consequences for personal wellbeing and job performance.

Listen to your own cues:

Be aware of the thoughts, feelings and physical reactions that you experience during a conversation and how they can divert your attention from the other person. Several things – such as our past experiences, our motives, our preconceptions, and negative self-talk – can make us focus more on ourselves than who we are talking to. Feeling impatient or frustrated (particularly if our 'inner chimp' makes an appearance – see KFP1 Secure Base) can make us interrupt or dominate the conversation. Thinking about what we are going to say next can also prevent us listening carefully and attentively. Switching off your self-view during online meetings can increase focus and avoid self-consciousness.

Using Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strengths-based, positive approach to leadership development and organisational change. Developed by Whitney and Cooperrider (2012), AI is a framework that helps implement positive systemic change from a position of respect and mutuality, enabling individuals and organisations create a shared vision for where they wish to be. AI differs from the more commonly used deficit approach (i.e. what is going wrong and what can be improved), as it offers a strengths-based, optimistic strategy that 'appreciates' what has gone well and envisions what could be developed in the future.

AI is a particularly appropriate method for fostering a sense of appreciation in organisations. Its flexibility will also help enhance the other KFPs that underpin a resilient organisation. AI can also be a useful framework for supervision.

The AI model involves a four-stage process:

1.	**What is currently going well?**

2.	**'Dream' about how things could be improved**

3.	**Design a strategy for how these dreams could be realised**

4.	**Consider ways of delivering the change**

AI can be used at an individual, team or organisational level. Its premise is that harnessing people's experience and skills provides a stimulus for change. AI also helps build positive relationships within organisations by encouraging a shared understanding of members' contributions and how they can shape change.

Based on a resource developed by The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and NHS Education for Scotland (2016) (which can be found **here**), Box 2.3 outlines how organisations can use AI to inform organisational change. Moving away from a problem focus to one that acknowledges and builds on success is likely to be useful for social care leaders, who are often tasked with implementing change initiatives. A constant change of direction that overlooks what has worked well in the past is unsettling and demotivating. AI techniques will be particularly helpful during times of crisis and uncertainty and can help shape post-COVID regeneration to 'build back better'.

Box 2.3: Using Appreciative Inquiry to implement change

This approach to planning change involves engaging with people to consider how to build on good work. It may seem a simple exercise, but AI can be a powerful tool in helping people move from being 'stuck in a rut' to a position where a new future can be imagined and realised.

The approach involves working in pairs initially to discover strengths. These are then shared and small groups begin to imagine and plan for the future of an organisation. The four key steps to using AI are outlined using the example below:

1. Discovery

What has been your best experience of social care work? Think of a time when you felt:

> Most engaged, alive and enthused by your work

> That it worked well for people who access services.

Now think:

> What made this possible?

> What did 'good' look like?

> What was important to its success?

2. Dream for the future

Imagine it is a year from now, and your team or service is working very well. It may have achieved formal recognition for its work – e.g. best teamwork, partnerships with families, or enablement-based practice with adults.

> What are you doing differently that enabled this change?

> What is it like to work in this team?

> What does 'good' look like?

3. Strategising

To move from dreaming about the future to a more concrete strategy and plan, you should now consider the steps you need to take to achieve this goal. These need to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound).

> What is going to make this possible?

> What will you have to do differently to make this work?

> Who do you need to help you to get there?

> What else might you need to pay attention to?

> What might be the signs that you are moving in the right direction?

4. Implementation

> How are you going to implement these plans?

> How are you going to communicate your plans to others?

> How will you know if you are continuing to move in the right direction – how will you measure success?

The principles of AI can also be used as a framework to guide a more narrative approach. The Tree of Life exercise (Box 2.4) is a playful and creative tool that can be used by teams and individuals to help people communicate what they appreciate about their work, their colleagues (in their own team and beyond) and their organisation. When conducting the initial research was effective in helping individuals identify their contribution to the wider vision and mission of their organisation (see KFP4 Mission and Vision for more information), and to refocus on what drives them to continue working there. Many of the research participants have subsequently used the exercise in their own organisation with considerable success. More resources on AI can be found **here**.
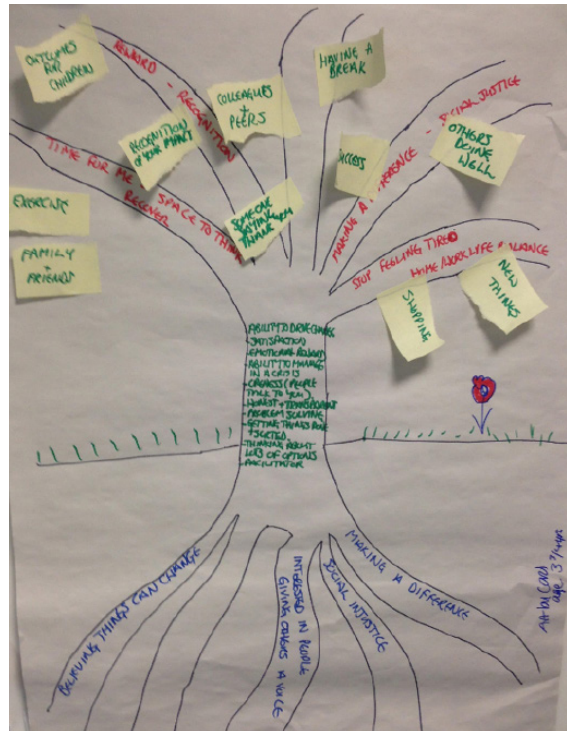
Box 2.4: The Tree of Life exercise

The Tree of Life is a narrative therapy tool that was designed by Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough (for more information see **here**) for young people with HIV. It aimed to encourage the children to believe in their own abilities, acknowledge their dreams and stand in a safer place from where they could talk about their difficult experiences in ways that were not re-traumatising, thereby enabling them to feel stronger in themselves.

The Tree of Life has since been adapted to various settings to help individuals and organisations recognise their strengths and create co-produced knowledge about how to respond to new opportunities. Here, it is used as an exercise to help workers reconnect with their professional identity and appreciate their values, strengths and resilience. It also helps people explore how strengths can be used to overcome potential difficulties, or storms in their career.

The exercise may appear simple, but it can be a very powerful tool. It can take several hours to do well or can be simplified if less time is available. Figure 2.1 shows examples of completed trees from social work leaders.

Figure 2.1: Examples of completed trees using the Tree of Life exercise

Box 2.4: The Tree of Life exercise

Materials needed:

All you need are brightly coloured felt-tip pens, Post-it notes and flipchart paper. Experience suggests that any initial reluctance to 'play' tends to be overcome quickly, and even senior leaders will soon be actively creating amazing and meaningful visual images to stimulate discussion.

Instructions:

Explain that participants should draw a tree – step by step – to represent themselves, their team, or their organisation. This can be done individually, in pairs or in a group. Encourage participants to be as elaborate as they wish. Let them know that they can share as little or as much as they want to in their drawing (but the content should be anonymised when sharing later). They should begin by drawing the roots of the tree, then the ground, the trunk, the branches, and finally the leaves. Below are some questions to guide their drawing (these should be adapted for group work). Let participants know when to move from section to section (allowing about 10 minutes for each section).

Aim:

The aim of the exercise is to help people appreciate that understanding individual and collective strengths can enable us to build a sense of individual, team and organisational resilience. This will also foster a sense of appreciation for our individual and collective skills, values, and professional hopes and dreams.

Roots

> What shaped your life and your decision to work in health and social care?

> What brought you into the work? Who influenced and inspired you?

> What aspects of your past influenced who you are today? What keeps you grounded?

Trunk

> What are your skills and values?

> What drives you in what you do?

> What are the 'non-negotiable' codes that guide the way you act?

> What values have you learned, or what do you appreciate from those who have influenced you?

Branches

> What are your hopes, dreams and wishes for your career, your service and your organisation?

> Throughout your time in this type of work, what have you contributed that has made you proud?

> What do you want to achieve for your organisation?

Leaves

> What brings you energy in your work?

> Who and what helps keep you going when things get tough?

> What brings you energy outside of work and are good things to focus on?

Feedback

Once people have done this individually or in their small groups, ask them to share and discuss with the wider group. Asking people to put their trees on the walls around the room can be particularly effective. Describe this as a forest; remind people than an individual tree is more susceptible to storms, while a forest is far more resilient.

Storms and challenges ahead

Invite the group to think about the challenges or storms that are on the horizon:

> What storms and hazards do you face?

> What is the likely impact of the storms?

> Are there ways of weathering the storms that will allow you to hold onto your values?

> How can we use our collective strengths, visualised by the trees, to weather the storms?

Appreciating workers as individuals: using one-page profiles

KFP1 Secure Base recognises the importance of workers feeling appreciated as individuals if they are to feel that they truly belong in an organisation. Nonetheless, leaders often find it challenging to learn more about their employees; some people prefer to keep their personal lives private, while others are all too happy to share details. One-page profiles are often used by social care professionals to underpin person-centred care, but they can also be a useful team-building exercise and a way of getting to know employees as individuals. These brief profiles allow people to understand each other better and to appreciate their skills and talents. One-page profiles can also be used to gain insight into people's preferences, likes and dislikes — from simple issues to more complex ones.

One-page profiles offer several potential benefits:

Profiles can help us see people as rounded individuals, rather than just an employee who does a particular job. This can help us recognise and celebrate each other's unique gifts and talents.

Knowing people's preferences means we are better able to support each other, so teams will work more effectively.

Understanding potential barriers in communication can improve relationships between individuals and teams.

Profiles enable better matching of colleagues to mentors to support the development of their skills and wellbeing.

People can feel better understood; this, in turn, helps them feel they belong in that environment.

Figure 2.2 shows an example of what a one-page profile could look like, although they can be customised for your own purposes. Profile templates that are co-produced by team members are likely to be particularly effective. These could be completed by pairs of colleagues, in supervision, in team meetings, or in longer workshops.

More information on one-page profiles can be found **here**. Also see Wellness Action Plans in KFP5 Wellbeing.

Figure 2.2: Example of a one-page profile

My one page profile

My name	My photo
....	
....	
....	

What people appreciate about me

....
....
....
....
....
....

How to support me

....
....
....
....
....

What is important to me

....
....
....
....
....

Recognising and celebrating success: sparkling moments

As outlined in KFP1 Secure Base, a psychologically safe organisation encourages people to discuss their errors openly to consider how practice might be improved. It is also crucial to recognise and learn from what we do well and spot and celebrate success. Sharing success stories not only helps others solve similar problems but can also inspire them to excel. Showing respect for another person's achievement will also boost their self-esteem and engagement and strengthen working relationships.

Nonetheless, while people are often open about their perceived failures, they can be reluctant to disclose their achievements for fear of appearing arrogant or boastful. They can find it difficult to share their accomplishments and may struggle to celebrate their successes. This can lead people to focus only on things that have gone wrong, rather than those that have gone well. This is not only demotivating, but means we are restricted to learning from errors rather than success.

'Sparkling' (or 'peak') moments is a technique that helps people share their success stories.

Sparkling Moments

Sparkling moments have been described as the cracks in the doom and gloom when the sun shines through. They are the times when you felt your best self; you may have achieved something at work that you thought made things better for someone and enabled progress. Identifying sparkling moments is a very effective way to recognise the individual skills and strengths that underpin such achievements and how these can be used to improve outcomes for people who access services in the future.

The Sparkling Moments technique is described in Box 2.5.

Box 2.5: Celebrating success: The sparkling moments technique

One person (A) asks the other person (B) a series of questions:

> What did you do when you were you 'at your best'?

> What skills, knowledge and attributes did you use?

> How did you feel?

Person A listens carefully and notes down the skills, knowledge and attributes that Person B describes, as well as any key themes or behaviours that emerge from their description.

When Person B has finished speaking, Person A should provide feedback on the specific skills and attributes that have emerged. They then ask Person B:

> What have you learnt about your key skills?

> How could you use these to manage a problem you are experiencing right now?

> What steps could you take to maximise the opportunity for more experiences like this?

Participants then swap roles, and Person B asks the same questions of Person A.

The 'sparkling moments' technique has been used extensively in training sessions with social care practitioners to identify times when they have shone. It can be particularly effective when used in peer coaching (see KFP3 Learning Organisation). The technique can also be useful in team and one-to-one meetings to encourage people to talk about their strengths and resources and how these can be applied to meet new challenges. Quick Win 2.2 highlights another strategy that can be used to celebrate success in team meetings. KFP3 Learning Organisation considers how Serious Success Reviews can help recognise achievement at an organisational level. The appraisal process also provides opportunities for conveying a sense of appreciation and letting people know that their achievements have been noticed.

Quick win 2.2: Celebrating success in team meetings

It is important to ensure that positive feedback is shared with colleagues. Sharing personal success stories in team meetings (whether face-to-face or online) is a good way to celebrate achievements and embed the learning gained. To do this successfully, it can be helpful to ask employees to send details of their achievements to team leaders in advance, as people are often reluctant to speak up in public – especially about their successes. Asking team members to record examples of inspirational practice that they have observed in their teams can also motivate others and encourage learning and personal growth. In time, celebrating achievements should become embedded in the team culture. It is also worth considering celebrating non-work achievements as this can also help people feel valued.

Being grateful

Practising gratitude means appreciating the good things that other people bring to our everyday lives. Gratitude has a positive impact on wellbeing – it can reduce stress, enhance physical and mental health, improve sleep and increase vitality (Wood et al., 2010). Grateful people also tend to be more empathic, optimistic and emotionally resilient and are better able to meet personal and professional goals. It is therefore important to build gratitude into our daily life to improve our own wellbeing and that of the people around us. Gratitude is also beneficial at the collective level; organisational cultures that are built on a foundation of gratitude are not only more satisfying to work in, but also more efficient and creative (Fehr et al., 2017; Waters, 2012).

As emphasised throughout this workbook, it is crucial for leaders to express their appreciation for the contributions made by workers to make them feel valued. A culture of gratitude will strengthen relationships between individuals and build trust and respect. It is important to adapt your style of recognition, however, as some people may find a public display of gratitude embarrassing and prefer to be acknowledged privately. Expressions of gratitude from colleagues are especially effective, so consider introducing recognition programmes that allow people to appreciate peers. Remember, however, that such schemes can misfire and reduce commitment and productivity in employees who believe their hard work is unnoticed and unappreciated. Some guidance on setting up employee recognition schemes can be found **here**.

There is evidence that keeping a gratitude journal (where people write down the positive things in their lives) or focusing on things for which they are grateful before going to sleep, can have wide-ranging benefits (Emmons et al., 2019; O'Connell et al., 2017. Some templates, ideas and apps for keeping a gratitude journal can be found **here**. Learning about employees as individuals (for example, through an open-door policy and walking the floor) can help build a gratitude-rich culture. Quick Win 2.3 outlines several ways to show your gratitude to workers.

Quick win 2.3: Ways to show your gratitude

Here are some ideas that can encourage a culture of gratitude to develop in your organisation. It is important to recognise that what is rewarding for one team may not necessarily be so for another, so teams should be encouraged to set up their own 'menu' of ways to express their gratitude and celebrate achievements. Remember that ideas that are imposed from above can seem inauthentic or patronising.

> A simple 'thank you' from a line manager can boost feelings of self-worth and self-efficacy in workers. A hand-written note of thanks or a card can demonstrate genuine regard and make a big difference. When expressing gratitude, always make sure you are clear what you are saying thank you for.

> A box of chocolates (or even a home-made trophy) for somebody who needs cheering up or who has done something well can be effective.

> One option is to use a Jar of Joys (as suggested by Catherine Watkins for **Community Care**) where team members write down their small successes on slips of paper and put them into a jar. Eventually the good work that people do will fill up the jar. People working remotely can use a 'virtual' jar of joys and take it in turns to read success stories out during team meetings.

> Celebrate birthdays but recognise that this may cause discomfort for some people. For example, buying cakes for the whole team can be expensive and excluding.

> End the week with a team gathering or celebration (or a Fika session – see KFP1 Secure Base). Make sure these events are inclusive, so avoid visits to the pub or 'get togethers' at the end of the day that may exclude people with caring responsibilities.

One practitioner attending a training session run by the authors reported that their local authority celebrates newly qualified social workers successfully completing their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment by presenting them with a personalised mug (see below). This is an example of a simple, low-cost initiative that can foster a culture of expressing appreciation and celebrating success and achievement, helping early career workers feel they belong in the organisation.

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SWORD workbook:

Learning organisation

Dartington

KFP 3: Learning Organisation

To be resilient, an organisation must ensure that learning and development is at the heart of everything that they do. Developing a learning organisation is the third Key Foundational Principle. A learning organisation is one in which:

There is a system of shared beliefs, goals and objectives that are communicated clearly.

Individuals, teams and the organisation itself can reflect and learn from experience.

There is an evidence-informed approach to improving practice and managing change, with input from the workforce actively encouraged.

Challenges provide opportunities for learning rather than blame and individual scapegoating.

People have the freedom to speak up to raise concerns without feeling compromised, blamed or victimised.

Learning from experience and adapting to new challenges and opportunities underpin healthy and successful organisations. A learning organisation is defined as:

... a place where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole (reality) together. (Senge, 1992)

Figure 3.1: Dimensions of a learning organisation

Personal mastery

Team learning

System thinking

Shared vision

Mental models
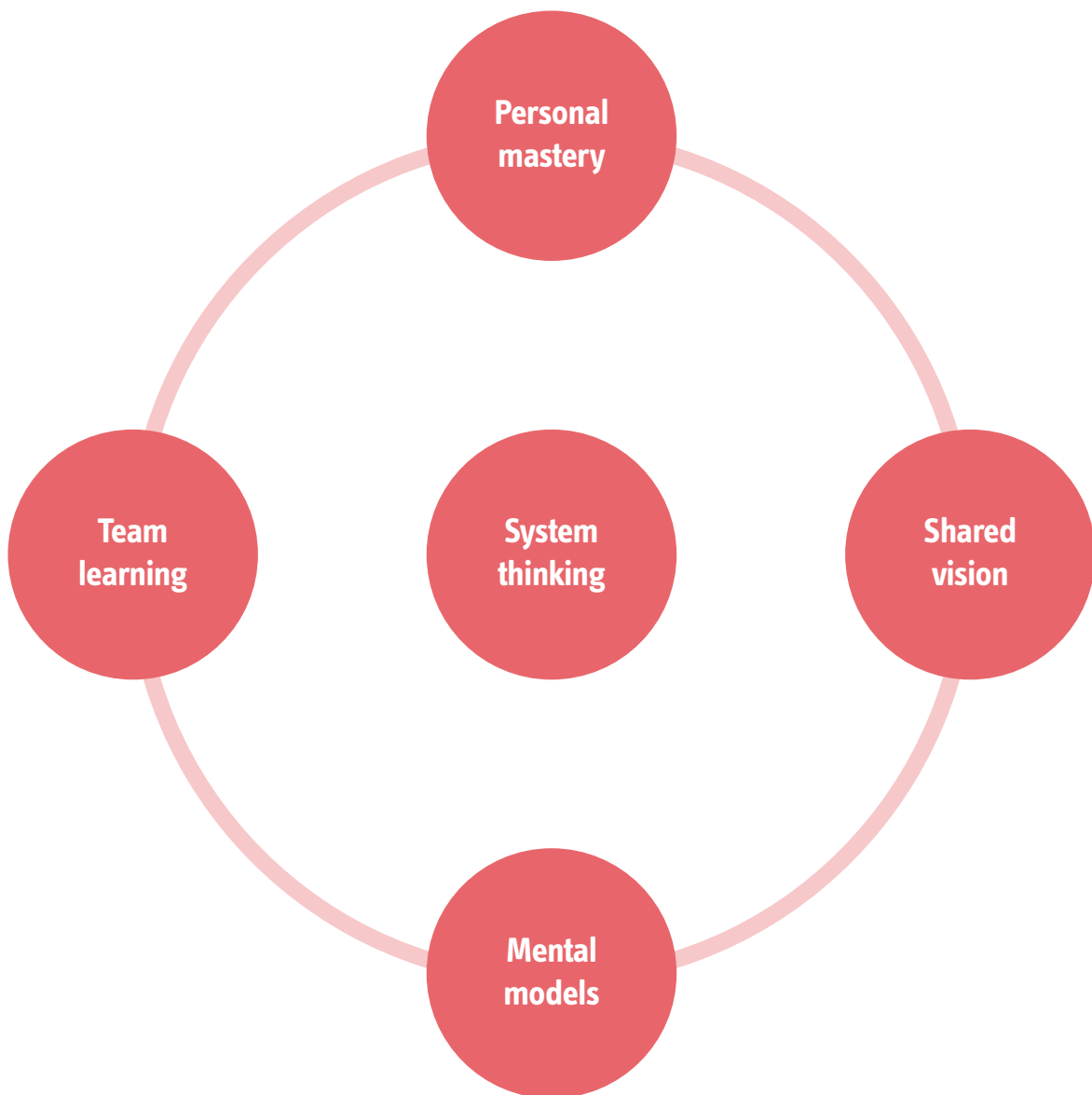
According to Senge, learning organisations have five inter-related dimensions (see Figure 3.1).

1. *Systems thinking: seeing the forest as well as the trees*

People see the 'big picture' rather than its individual components. Awareness of the complexity of the organisation means they can identify patterns of cause and effect. People are then able to work towards long-term solutions to problems by addressing the underlying causes rather than implementing quick fixes.

2. *Personal mastery: an orientation towards personal growth and learning*

People have a strong sense of purpose that underpins their personal goals. They work with change not against it and feel they influence the change process. People feel connected to others rather than alienated from them and engage in a continual cycle of reflection and learning.

3. *Mental models: revealing our hidden assumptions and beliefs*

People are reflective and their thinking is not fixed or embedded in entrenched beliefs and assumptions. Conversely, people are sufficiently flexible to adapt their mental model through current experience, learning and reflection.

4. *Building a shared vision: being bound together by a shared aspiration.*

People have a common vision that underpins the organisation's focus and energy for learning. Creating a shared vision and ensuring that their own vision is aligned with that of others is a key aspect of leaders' work.

5. *Team learning: working in synchrony*

Although team learning stems from personal mastery, people use their individual talents, knowledge and experiences to work together towards a common goal. Knowledge is shared, communication is open and honest and there is a free flow of ideas, even when some may be in conflict.

Although these five dimensions highlight some of the features of a learning organisation, remember that one size does not fit all. The optimum environment for reflection and learning is one that is precisely aligned to the organisation's goals, but sufficiently flexible to accommodate change. The Social Care Institute for Excellence has produced a self-assessment resource pack for organisations to assess the extent to which they are a learning organisation (SCIE, 2008); it can be accessed **here**.

Reflective leadership: making time to talk and space to listen

Reflective learning is fundamental to how any learning organisation operates but is particularly important in social care. Although leaders may believe they provide opportunities for people to reflect on their work, all too often these discussions are driven by task management and an agenda focused on compliance. There is evidence that the supervision social workers receive is of variable quality and does not consistently or adequately meet their emotional needs (Wilkins et al., 2017). Truly reflective organisations recognise the importance of critical thinking, learning and growth, and they provide opportunities for people to unpack the complex emotional demands of social work practice and learning.

Social care workers often attempt to cope with anxiety engendered by complex practice by focusing on tasks and targets, rather than exploring their emotional reactions. It is crucial to create 'reflective spaces' where people can discuss the emotional demands placed upon them and how best to cope with this key aspect of the work. Where support is lacking, the emotional demands of social care work can have wide-ranging, negative implications; decision-making abilities can be impaired, motivation and job satisfaction inhibited and compassion fatigue and emotional exhaustion heightened, all of which can have a negative impact on people accessing services (Grant & Kinman, 2014; Kinman & Grant, 2020b). A lack of opportunity for reflection can also encourage a false sense of security: for example, a worker may be tempted to 'cover their back' before leaving for the weekend by sending a flurry of emails highlighting the tasks they have accomplished, rather than expressing an underlying concern about a person who is accessing services.

Reflective learning must be deeply embedded in social care organisations and leaders should ensure it is happening in practice, not just in theory. Opportunities for reflective learning will be enhanced in a culture where the value of learning is emphasised, blaming and scapegoating are avoided, and there is an appreciation that mistakes, near misses, and unsuccessful practice are opportunities for learning.

Reflective leadership is crucial for building resilience in social care organisations. Leaders should model reflective practice personally, as well as encourage it through supervision and conversations with workers. Only reflective leaders can foster a learning organisation, as they will draw upon the collective expertise of the teams around them to make decisions. Reflective leaders:

Are flexible.

Regularly step out of their routine and familiar environment to think, explore and learn.

Question others for alternative points of view and ensure they consider a wide range of options before acting (see the section on 'walking the floor' in KFP2 Sense of Appreciation).

You may be thinking: 'This describes me very well; I am just like that.' But we can easily become defensive or reluctant to consider different perspectives that can make us stuck or fixated on a decision or pattern of behaviour. The iceberg model (Box 3.1) is a useful analogy to help you think through why you have come to a particular decision and to check out what might 'lie beneath'.

Box 3.1: 'Using the iceberg model to support reflective leadership and practice'

Do you ever wonder why you (or others) have reached a standpoint on a key issue and become stuck? When colleagues are intransigent do you see them as inflexible or stubborn, or do you seek to understand the reasons underpinning their thought processes and behaviour? The iceberg model can help an individual or group uncover the 'mental models' and patterns of behaviour that underlie a particular interpretation of an event.

Drawing on Freud's theory of the human mind, this model recognises that the greater part of what we believe is hidden under the surface, but this is what helps us understand ourselves and those we work with more effectively. Just like an iceberg, what we see on the surface is only an event or behaviour. Identifying what lies beneath can only be accomplished when practitioners feel safe and leaders have the emotional literacy to engage in honest, reflective conversations.

> words
> behaviours
> gestures

> experiences
> beliefs
> values
> biases
> prejudices
> fears

Research in Practice has an excellent range of resources, and a summary of research evidence, to support critical thinking and reflective analysis in both group and one-to-one supervision sessions. These will help practitioners explore beneath the surface and help develop organisational, team and individual resilience. The tools are available **here**.

Reflection is often seen as an individual activity, but Intervision (Staempfli & Fairclough, 2019) is a peer-led method of reflection in which participants follow a specified process to discuss professional practice issues. This technique, which encourages a learning organisational culture, is rarely found in the UK but widely used by social workers in other European countries. There is some evidence that Intervision is supportive, can enhance professional development and can also offer opportunities for emotional containment (Staempfli & Fairtlough, 2019). For more information on Intervision see **here**. The **Practice Supervisor Development Programme** (PSDP) led by Research in Practice developed a tool to support Intervision available **here**.

As a leader, you must also ensure that you have reflective space for yourself. Leadership can be isolating, so it is crucial to create opportunities for support that meets your needs. Quick Win 3.1 describes how creating a Personal Board of Directors can enable you, as a leader, to get the support you need to create an environment for personal reflection and learning.

Quick Win 3.1: Using your support networks: creating your own Personal Board of Directors (PBOD)

A successful organisation will have an effective Board of Directors, usually comprising people from different walks of life with a range of skills and talents. They not only offer committed and ongoing support for the organisation, but also provide a critique and different perspectives on problems.

Being a leader can be lonely and opportunities for support can be limited. So, creating your own Personal Board of Directors (PBOD) can help – this is a group of individuals (from in and outside the workplace) who can act as a sounding board and help you when you face a dilemma, when you need affirmation, or to challenge you.

Your PBOD will typically need to include people with one or more of the following qualities:

Someone who is a major support for you personally and professionally	Someone who can help you be creative	Someone who is good at coming up with practical solutions	Someone who has years of experience and accumulated wisdom
Someone who you can accept criticism from	Someone who knows you better than you know yourself	Someone with relevant skills and expertise	Someone who is a role model for you.

Remember this is an honorary, unpaid role so you will need to find ways of reciprocating or showing thanks to the members of your PBOD.

Learning from what goes well: Serious Success Reviews

Learning from errors is crucial to enhancing practice and implementing change. Nonetheless, while it is natural to wish to hide any embarrassment or anxiety associated with failure, mistakes can be a stepping-stone to progress. Serious Case Reviews, Safeguarding Adults Reviews, independent investigations into homicides (mental health homicide reviews) and inquests following suicide are key mechanisms for learning how to improve social care practice, both individually and collectively. Reflective leadership is crucial to this process. Leaders must recognise that mistakes are both inevitable and a learning opportunity and should try not to react defensively or by attributing blame.

Social care work can become overly focused on what has gone wrong rather than right but developing a learning culture is not just about learning from errors. The knowledge gained from what went well also enables better outcomes for people accessing services. Organisations are more effective when they can recognise, learn from and build on good practice – see Box 3.2. We need to identify what 'good looks like' so it can guide us when things go wrong.

Box 3.2: Serious Success Reviews: Using positive outcomes to reflect on practice

Research by Forrester and colleagues (2019) explored the relationship between key social work skills and outcomes in child and family work. They asked social workers how they recognise what 'good' looks like. Responses highlighted the importance of effective authority and relationship-building skills, as well as having the space to reflect on how they might be enhanced.

Similarly, social work with adults is increasingly moving toward a strengths-based approach, which has a focus on relationship-building. Practitioners work in a person-centred way to engage people with care and support needs in identifying their personal skills and assets, which can inform the way in which care is accessed. Good practice is collaborative and facilitates maximum independence for people receiving care and support (Department of Health and Social Care, 2017). Practitioners work in a person-centred way to help people identify their individual skills and assets that can inform the way in which care is accessed.

Bexley Council have introduced the idea of Serious Success Reviews to identify the features of good social work practice (as well as what works less well) – see Stevenson (2017) available **here**. This approach is likely to be more effective in ensuring fitness for purpose than simply 'tweaking' an existing process or procedure. Social work leaders and managers could use Appreciative Inquiry (see KFP2 Sense of Appreciation) and other consultative approaches to explore what constitutes good practice in their organisation.

Sharing experiences, thoughts and feelings to improve wellbeing and practice: Schwartz Rounds

Schwartz Rounds are named after Kenneth Schwartz, an American lawyer who recognised the importance of compassionate care and acts of kindness while undergoing treatment for cancer. His experiences inspired the introduction of Schwartz Rounds, which provide an opportunity for healthcare practitioners to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings on issues arising from patients' individual cases. This not only helps practitioners improve the quality of their personal connections, with both patients and colleagues, but also to gain more insight into their own responses and feelings. For practitioners, identified benefits include improved personal relationships, wellbeing and job performance (Maben et al., 2021; Robert et al., 2017). Participation in Schwartz Rounds has also been found to aid reflection, compassion and collaboration, and to increase trust, reduce isolation and foster a sense of shared purpose (Reed et al., 2015).

Schwartz Rounds are now running in many acute and community-based healthcare organisations in several countries. There is some evidence that they can be effective for social care workers by reducing the risk of stress, isolation and burnout (Minford et al. 2020). A recently published evaluation of Schwartz Rounds in children's social care services in England found some evidence that participation can reduce work-related stress and improve wellbeing, with benefits for collegiate relationships and the quality of work with children and families (Wilkins et al. 2021). Schwartz rounds can also help build a learning organisation by providing a structured forum for multi-disciplinary groups to discuss the emotional and social aspects of their work. More information on Schwartz Rounds, including resources, can be found on The Point of Care Foundation's website **here**.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, an online team-based reflective practice known as TeamTime (which is based on Schwartz Rounds) was made available to support people who are working remotely; see **here**.

Learning from critical incidents and best practice

As highlighted earlier in this workbook, the pandemic has had a major impact on the mental health and wellbeing of workers that is likely to continue for some time (De Kock et al., 2021). But while pandemics are rare, critical incidents are not uncommon in social care organisations and they can have serious implications for workers' wellbeing and practice. However good we are at managing and learning from critical incidents, a crisis can sometimes send shock waves through an organisation. This can lead to a 'perfect storm': a combination of events or circumstances that has the potential to bring adversity to an organisation.

If not managed effectively, such situations can cause widespread damage – to individuals, the organisation and the social care sector as a whole. An organisation's initial response to shock may be paralysis or panic, neither of which is helpful. Nor will such responses help people working directly with patients or families to continue in their work. According to Mellor:

> *Staff at all levels can feel bewildered and overwhelmed by a genuine sense of loss, fear of change and potential loss of job security. When a shock event happens, leaders need to be able to access emergency support that provides calm and expert advice on dealing with the practicalities and emotional impact of the immediate situation and those most closely affected by it.* (Mellor, undated)

Moreover, statutory and legal processes and investigations may continue for some time, possibly years. So organisational shocks may continue and it is important to acknowledge that the impact will vary. For some, the stress may be long lasting.

Leaders should be aware that, like any personally upsetting event, an organisation's reaction to a critical incident may be one, or all, of the following:

shock

fear

anger

shame and guilt

a sense of injustice.

Initially, communicating the news clearly internally and externally and making space for managing the crisis is crucial. Mellor identifies three stages for managing a major event (more information can be found **here**):

response

resolution

recovery.

Organisations that disregard the impact of a difficult or traumatic event and try to carry on as normal are often working on an adrenaline-fuelled stress response, instead of considering the need for an alternative approach or re-grouping. Under the *Health and Social Care Act 2008*, organisations have a duty of candour to provide specific information when things go wrong. They should have mechanisms in place to help them recognise what has happened, how to respond, how to resolve the issue, and how to ensure there is space for recovery. Treisman (2018) provides useful guidance and practical tips on helping organisations become more 'culturally, adversity and trauma-informed', and warns against the risks of tokenistic initiatives to promote trauma-informed and responsive practice; for more information, see **here**. Guidance on how to recognise and manage secondary trauma among practitioners is also available **here**. Research in Practice have resources to support trauma informed approaches in organisations such as the strategic briefing for Children's social care **Embedding a trauma-informed approach to support staff wellbeing in children's social care (2021)** and the Adult social care Frontline Briefing **Embedding trauma-informed approaches in adult social care: (2019)**. There is also a topic page with more resources on Trauma **here**.

Emotionally literate leadership is crucial for a considered and effective response to a shock or crisis, so leaders must be able to recognise and manage their own emotions. There are several useful frameworks that can help leaders process and articulate their feelings. For example, the following questions (derived from Linsley & Horner, 2011) will be a useful starting point for planning a response to a crisis:

Here is what we are facing (assessment)

Here is what I think we should do (option appraisal)

Here is why (evidence base).

Box 3.3 provides a framework that can be used when analysing critical incidents to enable learning and reflection.

Box 3.3: Critical incident technique

Critical incident analysis is a structured form of learning and reflection. It involves:

Describing a difficult or serious incident that was particularly challenging.

Suggesting an explanation, given the immediate context.

Asking questions to find different explanations for the dilemma, exploring theories, values, assumptions and defensive mechanisms and biases.

Considering the implication for future practice.

(adapted from Tripp, 2011)

Enhancing support: peer coaching

Social support is essential for maintaining wellbeing and can protect people from the negative impact of stressful work on mental health (Peters et al., 2018). Studies show that support from peers is particularly beneficial (Chang, 2018). Setting up a peer-coaching initiative is an effective and low-cost way to help organisations move from a problem-focused culture to a strengths-based and solution-focused orientation. Peer coaching is a relationship between two people of equal status that facilitates the achievement of specific goals. It can also be a source of professional development more generally and used to share ideas, develop skills and improve support.

Peer coaching aims to:

Provide a structured approach to helping.

Enable someone to generate specific, measurable goals that are realistic but stretching.

Help them identify how they are going to achieve those goals.

Provide objective, non-evaluative feedback about how they are progressing.

Offer support and encouragement when they need it.

Box 3.4: How does peer coaching work?

Peer coaching is a relationship where colleagues pair up as coach and 'coachee' (i.e., the person being coached). This is usually reciprocal.

It draws on intrinsic values and beliefs.

It uses the GROW model as a framework:

> The coachee identifies the GOAL they wish to achieve.

> The coach helps them reflect on how REALISTIC the goal is, based on their commitments and the time and resources available.

> Both parties work together to help the coachee generate a range of creative OPTIONS for meeting the goal.

> The coachee develops the WILL to meet the goal by making an action plan and a commitment to making changes or taking action.

It utilises SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely).

It provides non-evaluative, specific feedback based on an objective observation, or 'reflecting back' what is heard. This gives the coachee the encouragement to move forward.

Box 3.4: How does peer coaching work? (continued)

There are some practical considerations that must be considered when setting up a peer coaching relationship:

Trust between partners is essential as the process requires self-disclosure.

Partners should be well matched in their working styles and expectations.

Peer coaching can be done face to face, online, or by phone. But regular and formal contact (by any of these methods) is essential to ensure the coachee maintains focus on their goals.

Venting is important, but the coach should help the coachee move beyond this to enable them to find solutions.

The coach needs to keep the conversation on track; it is easy to drift.

Active listening and open/probing questions are required.

The benefits of solution-focused coaching include enhanced goal setting and stress management skills, as well as improved wellbeing and job satisfaction (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2006). There is also evidence that peer coaching protects mental health during times of high stress (Short et al., 2010). Being a peer coach can help develop key interpersonal skills such as active listening, building rapport, trust, empathy, reflection and awareness raising, all of which can be used to enhance workers' relationships with people who access services. There is also evidence that peer coaching can improve emotional literacy and leadership development (Szeles, 2015). Peer coaching techniques can also be used effectively in supervision.

Guidance on how to move from focusing only on problems to focusing on solutions is set out in Box 3.5. This technique can also be used as an exercise, working in pairs.

Box 3.5: Moving from a problem-focus to a solution-focus in a peer coaching session

Being problem-focused	*Being solution-focused*
Use the questions below to talk (for about five minutes) about a recent situation that has caused you difficulty. Person A (the coachee) describes the situation. Person B (the coach) directs the conversation with the following questions.	The coach should spend about five minutes supporting the coachee to discuss a problem that they have. When using a solution-focused approach, it is essential to help the coachee 'reframe' their 'intractable' problem into a more manageable one. Use the following questions:
'So, what is the problem?'	'So, how would you like the situation to be?'
'What happened?'	'What will it take to get what you want?'
'What do you think is the cause of the problem?	'What resources do you need?'
'Who is to blame?'	'What resources do you already have?'
'What have you tried in order to fix it?'	'What two small steps could you take to help fix the situation?'
'Why is this still a problem?'	
'How can you stop this happening again?'	'How far have you come already? Are there times when the solution is present, at least partly?'

Sparkling moments (see KFP2 Sense of Appreciation) can also be used in a peer-coaching situation very effectively. This technique can help people move to a generally more positive mindset and identify external and personal resources (such as support and skills) that can help reach a solution.

Peer coaching can also be used to generate options and goals for improving wellbeing, by managing stress more effectively and enhancing work-life balance. It is important to remember, however, that while peer coaching can be effective, it is not counselling. If a coachee has deep-seated personal problems, professional help will be required. For more information on setting up a peer coaching initiative in social work organisations, see Baker and Jones (2014) and Kinman et al. (2020a).

Unlocking potential for service improvement: working with strengths

When trying to resolve problems, we often focus on our weaknesses and think of ways to address them, which can be stressful and draining. A learning organisation will be aware of the strengths of individual workers and how they can best be used. As social care professionals, we know that working with strengths identifies the things people do well, that energise them, and that they find enjoyable. Nonetheless, we do not always apply these ideas to ourselves, focusing instead on our limitations and areas for improvement rather than the assets we have at our disposal.

Strengths are often confused with skills that people can perform well, but skills are learned behaviours that can become ingrained and automatic over time. It is easy to mistake skills for strengths, but they do not energise or engage people in the same way. Strengths are not static: a person can build, grow, adapt and develop their strengths to help themselves in different situations. People who use their strengths are more likely to achieve their goals, experience less stress, and have more self-esteem and confidence; they also tend to be happier and more resilient.

Being aware of strengths

When developing organisational resilience, it is crucial to work with strengths. As role models, leaders should be aware of their own strengths and those of other people. Three Quick Wins (3.2, 3.3 and 3.4) provide some techniques to raise awareness of personal strengths in the self and in others. As well as role-modelling 'strengths-spotting', share these exercises widely in your organisation. They can be used in various settings such as meetings and supervision.

Quick Win 3.2: Strengths-spotting

Spotting your personal strengths

Ask yourself the following questions:

Deep roots: What do you still do now that you did as a child?

Motivation: What activities do you do just because you love doing them?

Voice: When does the tone of your voice indicate enjoyment and energy?

Energy: What activities do you do that give you energy?

Rapid learning: What things do you pick up effortlessly and quickly?

Authenticity: When do you feel like 'the real me'?

Attention: Where do you naturally pay attention?

Ease: What activities come easily to you?

Spotting the strengths of others

Build a language of character strengths:
Develop an understanding of the range of personal strengths to improve your ability to spot them in others; see the list of character strengths **here**.

Develop your observation and listening skills:
Enhance your awareness of what strengths look like in action based on: a) verbal cues (listen for a more assertive voice, improved vocabulary and clarity of speech, and use of specific strengths words); and b) nonverbal cues (look for improved posture and eye contact, smiling and laughing, and greater use of gestures signifying excitement and passion).

Label and explain character-strength behaviours:
Show people that you notice when they show their strengths by a) identifying the specific strength demonstrated; b) explaining how you spotted it; c) showing that this strength is appreciated.

Make strengths-spotting a habit: Build your skills by practising observing character strengths in people in different situations.

Quick win 3.3: Spotting character strengths in meetings

Go into meetings wearing your 'strengths goggles': a mindset that identifies strengths as they occur. After you spot strengths in people, point out what you observed, tell them the reason for your observation and show your appreciation.

Quick win 3.4: Using character strengths to improve relationships

Spotting character strengths can help us improve relationships with people who we find challenging. Focusing on things that irritate us about others can blind us to their strong points. Looking for the strengths in other people enhances feelings of empathy, enabling us to respect diversity and value and appreciate their talents.

The MORE model developed by Roarty and Toogood (2014) provides a strengths focused approach to leadership that provides strategies to identify and develop your own strengths and those of the people in your organisation. More involves:

Myself: identifying personal strengths managing weaknesses and aligning goals and objectives with strength.

Other's strengths: introducing a strengths focus to others, identifying and developing their strengths and supporting them to manage their weaknesses.

Regular Conversations: applying a strengths focus to everyday conversations, during meetings and providing strengths-focused coaching (see peer coaching in KFP Wellbeing).

Employee processes: implementing strengths focused recruitment processes, performance appraisals and development discussions.

Increasing flexibility: doing things differently

Flexibility is a key characteristic of learning organisations and those that lead them. Psychological flexibility means adapting successfully to changing situational demands; it can help people adjust their mental resources and behaviours in response to change. People who are flexible are better able to balance competing needs and life domains, while remaining committed to their goals and values. Research has established that social workers who are more flexible tend to be more resilient and, in turn protects them from work-related stress and burnout (Kinman et al., 2020b). Flexibility also enables people to think about problems and tasks in more creative ways. Our habits can undermine our ability to meet new challenges, whereas changing unproductive behaviours can help us feel less stressed, happier and more in control (Fletcher & Pine, 2012).

Although everyone has a toolkit of useful behaviours, we tend to over-use the same tools regardless of whether they are appropriate for the situation. Small actions can break habits and lead to changes in behaviour; maintaining these changes can give you the confidence to take on new challenges. Changing something about your work routine and reflecting on the outcomes can be effective. For example, eat your lunch somewhere different and see if your mind is clearer. Box 3.6 provides some examples of small actions in your personal life that can lead to behaviour changes. Also, keeping a list of things that you have accomplished through the day (and encouraging those you manage to do so too) can be particularly helpful in highlighting how you use your time and taking steps to make lasting change. KFP4 Mission and Vision offers some guidance on making 'I did' lists and how these (and other techniques) can be used to improve your productivity.

Box 3.6: Do something differently

Small actions in your work and personal life can break habits and lead to changes in behaviour, encouraging a more flexible outlook. Maintaining these changes can give you the confidence to take on new challenges. When deciding on a new course of action in your personal life, remember that using a different skill set to what you use at work will be particularly effective and will help replenish your mental and physical resources.

Do a course on something unrelated to your work.

Start a blog.

Join a choir.

Change the furniture around in your office or your home.

Learn another language.

Try a new sport.

Learn a musical instrument or create something artistic.

Join a book club.

Plant a garden.

Write a short story or a poem.

Learn a new craft.

Building tolerance to uncertainty

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant uncertainty among the public about almost every aspect of daily life. Organisations are also operating in a climate of unpredictability with little time for consolidation and stability – this is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Although some uncertainty is unavoidable in life, it can be damaging when we find it difficult to decide how to act or make decisions, increasing the risk of confusion, frustration and distress.

Most people are uncomfortable with uncertainty, but some find it more challenging than others. People with perfectionist tendencies (see KFP5 Wellbeing) are likely to find uncertainty particularly difficult, as there is no clear-cut 'right' or 'wrong' action. This can be a profound source of stress and self-doubt and make people feel overwhelmed. Intolerance of uncertainty refers to a tendency to react negatively on emotional, cognitive and behavioural levels to uncertain situations and events (Buhr & Dugas, 2009, p. 216). People who are find it hard to tolerate uncertainty may behave in the following ways:

Be fixated on structure

Have a need for constant reassurance and affirmation

Struggle to hold a firm opinion on things

Be risk averse

Procrastinate, obtaining multiple opinions on a decision or course of action

Do extensive research and information gathering

Make multiple lists

Worry about negative events happening, even if they are very unlikely.

To prepare for the unexpected and to thrive in ambiguous circumstances are vital skills for leaders. While we cannot control the future, we can become more resilient to future uncertainties. Work by Mason (1993) describes the importance of developing a position of 'safe uncertainty'. He argues that:

> *For useful change to happen we sometimes need to become less certain of the positions we hold. When we become less certain of the positions we hold, we are more likely to become receptive to other possibilities, other meanings we might put to events. If we can become more open to the possible influence of other perspectives, we open up space for other views to be stated and heard.* (Mason, 1993, p. 195)

Those who lead social care organisations are facing considerable uncertainty but are nonetheless tasked with formulating policies and practices to operate effectively in a post-COVID world. Tolerance of uncertainty is the ability to accept situations that are unclear, uncertain, or novel and to work effectively in an ambiguous environment. Becoming more tolerant of uncertainty will protect leaders from being overwhelmed by change and increase their sense of control. Tolerance of uncertainty can be enhanced in several ways:

Redefining the way you see uncertainty:

this will improve your ability to tolerate it. You do not have to see uncertainty as desirable but viewing ambiguous situations as threatening or potentially dangerous will reinforce your belief that you are unable to cope with them. It is also helpful to try to remain calm if you are unable to follow routine or habits.

Creating a healthy relationship with threat:

to determine the likelihood of an event occurring, you must use your rational mind rather than your anxious mind. Remind yourself that these are challenging times, and we are all operating in a crisis, so a degree of anxiety is natural. Adopting an optimistic (but realistic) attributional style and seeing difficult situations as temporary and situational and not permanent and pervasive, will help you put uncertainty into perspective.

Fostering ambivalence:

try to hold both positive and negative feelings towards a future outcome. This involves becoming comfortable with feelings of doubt and excitement when making decisions and ensures we have a broad vision of possible futures.

Think flexibly and embrace complexity:

allow information that you know to be accurate to shift your thinking and positively influence your behaviour. Viewing situations as spectrums not dichotomies (i.e. varying across a continuum rather than good/bad, right/ wrong etc.) will open new possibilities for change.

Take control

being passive and avoiding action puts you in a position of powerlessness. Make suggestions even if you do not have all the answers and use your judgement although you are unsure of the outcome. This will help you to gain a sense of mastery, competence and self-efficacy, even when circumstances are changing rapidly. At times, however, it may be more appropriate to wait a while for information and circumstances to become clearer before making decisions.

Adopt a future time perspective:

dwelling on mistakes or missed opportunities can make us fearful of change, blind us to future opportunities and discourage creativity and risk taking. More generally, people with a future orientation tend to engage in behaviours such as planning and goal setting (Henry et al. 2017).

Gather information strategically:

choose when to collect information and from where to obtain it. Consider whether information gathering is useful, or merely another way of procrastinating or seeking reassurance.

Problem solve:

when you formulate a plan, use your rational mind not your anxious mind. If you decide on a course of action when you are feeling anxious, make sure to review it before implementation.

Avoid over-relying on plans and goals:

Excessive rigidity means that we are likely to reject uncertainty or ambiguity automatically. The situation is changing rapidly and the goals that you have set yourself (or have been set by others) may not be achievable in the anticipated timeline, or in the way that was expected.

Break actions down into smaller steps

Trying out ideas on a smaller scale helps you evaluate the risks, while minimising any potential negative impact. This can reduce fear of the unknown. Test theories quickly and rigorously, evaluate the outcomes and then pursue or reject that course of action.

Embrace the inevitable

things rarely go the way we think they will. When you prepare for the worst, you are better able to deal with disaster should it arise. Negative visualisation (also known as a 'pre-mortem') can help you avoid emotional instability during stressful situations. Spending some time contemplating the worst plausible outcome will help you to identify what you are afraid of and to anticipate and navigate setbacks.

Scenario planning:

examining how they would fare under a variety of possible futures can help broaden long-term horizons and build organisations that are resilient to uncertainty.

More information can be found **here**, **here** and **here**.

Group learning: using Action Learning Sets

Action learning is an approach to the development of people in organisations which takes the task as the vehicle for learning. It is based on the premise that there is no learning without action and no sober and deliberate action without learning. (Pedler, 1991)

Action Learning Sets are opportunities for workers and leaders to meet regularly to explore solutions to problems and decide on the action they wish to take. They are particularly useful for helping people consider complex problems where there is no simple answer. If structured properly (see Boxes 3.7 and 3.8), an Action Learning Set will promote curiosity, inquiry, reflection and – ultimately – learning, which can be applied to action planning (as outlined in Figure 3.2; this will be familiar as it draws on the reflective learning cycle).

Figure 3.2: The action learning cycle
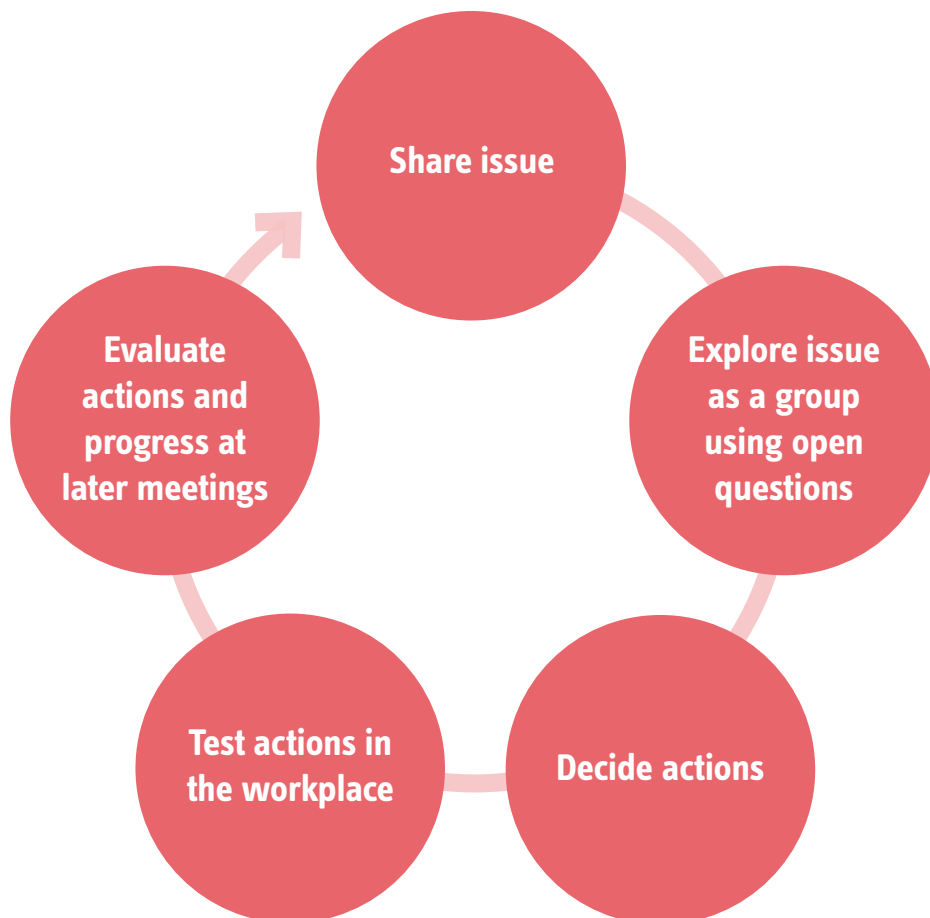
Box 3.7: An Action Learning Set in action

An Action Learning Set usually comprises 6-8 participants committed to meeting on a regular basis to learn from each other in a safe reflective space. The more diverse the participants are in terms of their background and experience, the better.

Participants take it in turns to be the presenter. This involves describing a situation or problem they face (around 5 minutes).

A period of open reflective questioning follows (around 5-10 minutes) in which the presenter answers openly, honestly and reflectively; no advice is given at this stage.

The group then spends some time discussing the problem, as they see it, with the presenter merely listening – as if they were a 'fly on the wall' (around 5-10 minutes).

Next, the presenter reflects on the insights gained and the ideas for implementation that have been generated (around 10 minutes).

For the final stage, the whole group discusses the learning gained and helps the presenter to action plan, if required (around 5-10 minutes). Actions are then tried out in the workplace and the group discusses the learning gained next time they meet, with the process repeated.

Box 3.8: Useful questions for action learning

Using reflective open questions is crucial to running a successful Action Learning Set. Here are some examples of questions that can encourage learning.

Questions to identify the issue and the desired outcome

> What are you hoping to achieve?

> What is the difference between how you see things now and how you would like them to be in future?

> Who might help you accomplish change?

> What obstacles do you anticipate?

Questions to explore below the surface

> What happened? Can you provide an example?

> How did you feel about that?

> What assumptions might you be making?

> What do you think might happen in future?

> How might this decision affect others?

Questions to encourage learning

> What opportunities are there in the situation?

> What would success look like?

> What metaphor could you use to describe the situation?

> What have you tried in the past? Why did/didn't it work?

> Who could you approach for advice and support?

Questions to explore options

> What if ...?

> What do you think about ...?

> How do you feel about ...?

> What would happen if you did nothing?

Questions to identify next steps

> How do you plan to move this forward?

> Where could you get more information?

> What actions are you going to take before the next meeting?

> How can we help you make progress?

Further questions can be found here.

Seven-minute briefings – communicating key information clearly and concisely

Leaders are often required to impart complex information in ways that set out important issues but are quick and easy to read and digest. Research suggests that seven minutes is the optimum time span to hold our attention, enabling us to concentrate and learn. Seven-minute briefings are based on a technique used by the FBI, but they can be a particularly helpful tool to enable managers to deliver a short briefing to employees on key issues. They can also form the basis for reflective discussions.

Seven-minute briefings can have a flexible format, but usually have seven points that might include the following:

1.	Background information

2.	Why the issue matters

3. – 5.	Key points of information

6.	Things to note and remember

7.	What to do

Why not send out a seven-minute briefing next time you have a new strategy to share? People are likely to find it more engaging than a dry and boring email. More information about the use of seven minute briefings can be found **here** and an example of how they can be used to promote professional curiosity is **here**.

research in practice

University of Bedfordshire

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SWORD workbook:

Mission and vision

Dartington

KFP 4: Mission and Vision

A resilient organisation knows the direction in which it is travelling. Its mission and vision are clearly defined and communicated to the workforce, generating a sense of collective ownership and belonging. A mission defines an organisation's aims and objectives and how it approaches them, while a vision sets out the organisation's desired future. Co-producing and communicating a clear mission and vision is the fourth Key Foundational Principle; this is where:

Leaders are committed to a clear mission and vision for the organisation and use their communication skills to consult with and motivate others.	Leaders are optimistic but realistic and focus on continuous improvement, inspiring workers to identify what 'good' looks like and how this can be achieved.	Change is managed constructively, especially during times of uncertainty.	There is a sense of purpose and values are translated into action.

Leaders of social care organisations should be able to communicate what their organisation hopes to achieve and why. The mission may seem obvious, but everyday 'busyness' means a sense of purpose can easily become lost or overlooked. A clear mission helps employees understand how their individual contributions fit into the organisation's objectives, whereas a clear vision articulates the long-term goals and aspirations. A well-defined mission and vision will inspire and motivate workers and enable leaders to feel confident that their planned strategies and actions align well with the organisation's goals. A resilient organisation should also be able to convey its aspirations for the future in terms of the people's lives that it touches: for example, its hopes for young people in care, how it plans to support older people, or how it aims to engage communities around enhancing health and well-being.

Mission and vision statements must be constructed carefully, with input from stakeholders. Avoid statements that are generic and vague and those that aim to achieve 'excellence' or be 'the best'. If mission and vision are expressed in lofty and idealistic terms, workers will typically respond with cynicism and distrust, whereas identifying an aspirational but achievable goal can inspire people to work together to meet it. Working with teams to co-produce an organisation's vision and communicating this clearly and consistently alongside emotionally literate change management, is a critical foundation for resilient organisations.

The only thing that is constant is change. (Heraclitis, 500 BC)

Having experienced extensive change over the last few years – in response to political, economic, social and environmental imperatives – social care workers will recognise the truth in this statement. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the pace of change in social care organisations and compounded the challenges experienced by the sector. Although some degree of change is essential to avoid stagnation and ensure improvement, people also need predictability and order. The Labour Force Survey (Health and Safety Executive, 2020) highlights change as a major source of work-related stress. A body of research has recognised the risks of organisational change for a wide range of negative outcomes such as mental and physical health and sickness absence (Bamberger et al., 2021; Gronstad et al., 2019). People often react to change with feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and fear, and their motivation and engagement can be reduced (Oreg et al., 2011). Managing and communicating proposals for change effectively is therefore integral to a resilient organisation.

Leaders may be familiar with Kotter's 8-Step Change Model (see Figure 4.1), which sets out key principles for the effective management of change; more information on its use can be found **here**. It should be recognised, however, that Kotter's approach may not fully capture the complexities of managing change in social care organisations, where several change processes may be occurring simultaneously.

Figure 4.1: The 8-Step Change Model

1. Create a sense of urgency
2. Build a guiding coalition
3. Form a strategic vision & initiatives
4. Enlist a volunteer army
5. Enable action by removing barriers
6. Generate short-term wins
7. Sustain acceleration
8. Institute change

The Big Opportunity

As outlined in Quick Win 4.1, for any change initiative to succeed it is crucial to manage the whole organisational system. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides guidance to help organisations manage and communicate change, which is summarised below:

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 sufficient opportunities for employees to influence proposals.

Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their job. If necessary, they are given training to support this.

Employees are aware of timetables for change.

Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

See **here** for more information.

The HSE's approach to managing work-related stress recognises the importance of assessing workers' perceptions of the effectiveness of change management and having conversations about the impact. They also provide guidance on the competencies that leaders need to manage change successfully (see KFP5 Wellbeing for more information).

Although the HSE guidance can help leaders implement organisational change effectively, it is important to consider the specific needs of different types of organisations. Leaders of social care organisations may find the tips in Quick Win 4.1 (adapted from a resource provided by the Scottish Social Services Council, 2016) particularly useful when planning change initiatives.

Quick Win 4.1: Achieving effective change

Develop a communication strategy to support workers understanding of why the change is necessary and how it will benefit teams and services.

Communicate clearly and transparently the motivation for change and inspire commitment to the reasons and potential benefits of the change.

Identify how others may receive the change; carefully consider the impact of feelings of loss, uncertainty and anxiety, and manage this in an emotionally sensitive but constructive way.

Focus on sustaining personal resilience in the face of anxiety, conflict or hostility from others.

Be self-reflective when reacting to the concerns of others, tolerating uncertainty while supporting innovative and creative thinking.

Ensure that the organisation retains a clear focus on meeting the needs of people accessing services, while adapting to the change agenda.

Build communication channels that enable people to provide feedback on the change and its impact.

Identify potential risks posed by the change and mitigate any that are likely to have a negative impact on people who access services.

For more information see **here**.

The pace of change in social care can seem relentless, particularly in the aftermath of a pandemic. When managed well, change can have enormous benefits, but leaders should be aware of the risk of change fatigue (see below) and how to manage the fallout from poor change initiatives. Change can be managed effectively by applying the principles set out above, but the following tips may also be useful.

✓ Recognise your own biases and assumptions. Is the change important for the service or just for yourself? Be aware that employees will be able to spot a vanity project.

✓ Make sure that the change project is adequately resourced.

✓ Take time to consider the consequences of the change and how it might disrupt the service. Being able to evaluate the potential risks and ensure that the impact of the change will be beneficial will encourage you and your employees to persevere during times of difficulty, or when you are faced with resistance.

✓ Communicate the difference. People can feel overwhelmed with a change agenda and unable to see how it will benefit them or the work that they do. Filter the information you provide; make it specific to each area of the organisation.

The need for leaders to consider the whole environment when planning organisational change is considered in Quick Win 4.2.

Quick Win 4.2: Seeing the wider picture: pay attention to the fish tank, not just the fish

Tate (2013) argues that it is important to consider an organisation's health as a whole system rather than look only at its constituent parts (i.e. workers and leaders from different areas). An organisation is an integrated system, so we need to understand the 'glue' that binds people together and makes them want to work there. Any plans for change must, therefore, consider the whole environment and not focus on a single action or event.

Using the metaphor of a fish tank, Tate observes that many organisations just focus on putting a new leader (or fish) into an environment that is toxic. They may then look after the health of individuals (or fish) without paying attention to the system (or fish tank) in which they live. This means nobody can thrive.

It is crucial to understand the organisation (the fish tank) as an ecological system and cleaning the tank should be prioritised. Systemic leaders can recognise negative working practices (or toxins) in the environment (or tank) and provide appropriate nutrients to enable people to thrive. Having a clear mission and vision helps people understand what is expected of them. But without systemic leadership and an organisational culture that is open, reflective and committed to the whole system, success cannot be achieved.

More information on managing leadership systemically can be found **here**.

Change fatigue

The ability to adapt and implement change will be a key driver of recovery and success in the post-COVID world. Nonetheless, organisations should be aware of the risks of change fatigue, which typically presents as a general sense of apathy or passive resignation towards organisational changes. The pandemic has already caused major disruptions to people's lives and many face uncertainties about the economy, their job security and concerns about their own and their family's health. Responding to fluctuating risks and government guidelines has also required regular adjustments and readjustments to behaviour. When too many changes occur simultaneously, employees may find it difficult to accommodate the change and can experience a strong sense of powerlessness (Kinman, 2017). They may then resist, reject or even sabotage the change process to regain a sense of control and stability.

There are several reasons why change fatigue can disrupt attempts to build a resilient organisational culture. It can impair the wellbeing of workers by increasing the risk of stress and burnout, reducing job satisfaction and encouraging absenteeism and thoughts of leaving (McMillan & Perron, 2013). Change fatigue can also reduce motivation and engagement and compromise performance by depleting energy levels and feelings of self-efficacy. The cynicism that is synonymous with change fatigue can also foster a general atmosphere of negativity within an organisation that can spread rapidly.

Managing the organisational change process collaboratively and compassionately will reduce the risk of change fatigue. In turn, this will increase employees' acceptance of change and will support wellbeing and effectiveness during the change process. See Box 4.1 for guidance on how to spot and manage change fatigue.

Box 4.1: How to prevent or respond to change fatigue in your organisation

Ensure that change management policies include supporting mental health and wellbeing.

Communicate the reasons for change and provide regular updates on progress.

Formulate and communicate long-term strategic plans, not short-term reactive solutions.

Raise awareness of previous change initiatives that have led to improvements.

Consider the unintended consequences of any changes that may be introduced.

Accept that a deterioration in performance may be inevitable in the short term, as change is disruptive.

Involve employees in planning change, as their opinions may be more realistic and acceptable.

Listen to employees' concerns and take them seriously.

Train line managers on how to support people through the process of change.

Remember that it may take a while for change to be accepted, or to reap any benefits.

Evaluate the effectiveness of any change by consulting workers at all levels.

Adapted from Kinman (2017)

Co-producing and communicating organisational direction

This workbook does not offer a step-by-step guide on how to generate a clear mission and vision, but it does set out some key principles to help leaders ensure that any strategy is co-created. It is recognised that co-production with people who access services will help to improve social care provision. It can also be used to bring stakeholders together to decide future direction or improve performance. Co-production involves drawing on the knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences of people at all levels in the organisation. A fundamental principle is having respect for all opinions and the equality of ideas. If people can contribute ideas through a process of genuine collaboration, they will feel more invested in the resulting mission, vision and strategy. If not, they may feel policies have been imposed by leaders and see them as tokenistic or lacking in integrity.

Appreciative Inquiry is highlighted in KFP2 Sense of Appreciation as an effective approach to co-produce change initiatives and other interventions. The use of focus groups in generating knowledge from teams to inform change is discussed in KFP5 Wellbeing. World Café is another way to generate creative ideas to address problem areas and inform change (see Box 4.2). It is a technique that can be used in any area where co-produced solutions would be helpful.

Box 4.2: The World Café approach

This approach is based on the premise that people have good ideas that can be used to generate options for change and help deliver strategic goals. The World Café method encourages diverse perspectives enabling the generation and exploration of ideas that may not have been considered previously.

The World Café format is flexible and can be adapted to different contexts. Set up a room with café-style tables and paper tablecloths that can be written on (or use Postpost-it notes) to capture ideas. Coloured pens should also be provided. A facilitator (or host) is needed for each table to guide the process and record the findings. Participants spend a specified amount of time (say 15-20 minutes) at each table having a conversation about a key issue (this is known as a 'round') before moving on to the next table.

The following steps will help you create a productive World Café:

✓ The environment should feel conducive to learning and the facilitators must be committed to using the ideas and information generated.

✓ There should be no more than four or five chairs at each table.

✓ Make sure that people understand why they have been brought together and the aim of the exercise.

✓ Articulate the context clearly and identify the broad themes that you want people to address.

✓ For each table, create a list of questions that capture real-life concerns facing the organisation.

✓ Table hosts should welcome each group, guide the first round and then summarise the contributions from previous rounds to each new group.

✓ Ensure everyone has a chance to articulate their views either in writing or verbally.

Make sure you have a way of capturing the ideas and themes emerging from the rounds. Schedule time at the end of your World Café to synthesise ideas and feed back to the group about how they will be used in any service improvement or change process.

See Clements et al. (2021) for an example of a research study that used a World Café approach to identify wellbeing challenges and solutions in an organisational setting. More information on the World Café approach can be found here. World Cafés can be conducted online as well as face-to-face; see here for guidance.

The circle of control, influence and concern

This is an effective tool that you can use with individuals on a one-to-one basis and teams to consider the challenges they are facing and how they can respond to them.

Circle of Concern

Circle of Influence
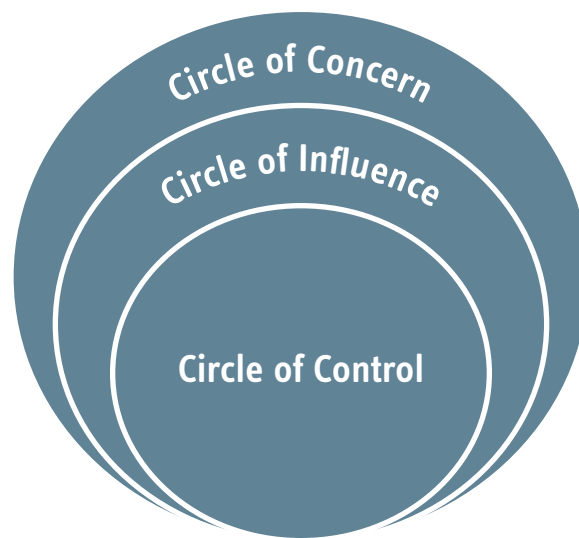
Circle of Control

The circle of control

helps teams and individuals identify the elements of challenge that they can control. Start by identifying the issues or aspects of the situation that people feel they can control and make a list of ways to do this. The list can then form an action plan that can be discussed with line managers.

The circle of influence

helps teams and individuals identify the elements of challenge that they cannot control but can influence. Make another list of these aspects of the situation. Remember that even when we cannot control our circumstances, we still may be able to influence them by being able to access help or advice.

The circle of concern

helps teams and individuals identify the aspects of challenge they can neither control nor influence, but that they are concerned about and need to adapt to. Discuss how aspects of the challenge that cannot be controlled can be accepted or accommodated. We may not be able to change the situation, but we still have the power to change our response to it.

(Covey, 1989).

The importance of clear communication

Effective communication should avoid buzzwords and 'management speak'. People working in social care are likely to be sceptical of terms borrowed from the corporate world and will want to see social care-driven values and ethics at the forefront of any change process. So, talk of swim lanes, bandwidth, drilling down, getting our ducks in a row, deliverables, or mission critical are more likely to meet with suspicion or cynicism than respect and approval. It is also crucial that leaders commit to regular updates; often, leaders involve people in the change process and keep them informed about progress early on, but communication falters over time.

As emphasised above, helping practitioners and teams to see how they can contribute to the change process will increase their commitment to the organisation's mission and vision and ensure that goals are met. The 'Tell Me' exercise in Quick Win 4.3 can help teams identify their common values and skills and consider how they could be used more effectively.

Quick Win 4.3: 'Tell Me' exercise

The goal of this exercise is to use guided conversation to define a common set of values and aims for a team or an organisation. 'Tell Me' can help develop working agreements, resolve hidden conflicts, or be used as a team-building activity to enhance mutual understanding. The exercise is suitable for groups of between 8 and 16 people. Some initial planning is needed, as you need to divide the group into pairs.

Each pair spends three minutes talking about their skills in turn (as teller and listener) and what they feel the team or organisation could improve upon. It is important that listeners realise this is not a conversation but an opportunity to pay attention to what tellers are saying.

A diligent timekeeper is needed to ensure that people swap to the next pairing at the end of each six-minute period (i.e. after each pair has had a turn at being teller and listener).

Listeners' questions should be simple and specific. Listeners do not need to say anything else other than 'thank you' after the teller's response. For example:

'Tell me a skill you have that you think the team can benefit from?'	'Tell me one core thing we need to improve on to develop excellent practice?'	'Tell me how you think we could be working together more effectively to achieve the goal?'

At the end of all the rounds, feedback on themes and skills should be shared with the whole group.

Succession planning

Improving the retention of high-quality workers helps organisations achieve their mission and vision. As discussed earlier in this workbook, retention is currently a problem in social care that may deteriorate further over time. Low turnover is a feature of a resilient organisation, and resilient organisations in turn encourage loyalty among their employees. Both workers and leaders are likely to flourish in a stable community where learning is developed and sustained through interaction and peer support. People who access services also suffer when practitioner turnover is high, as high turnover thwarts continuity of care and support and impairs relationship-based practice (Buckley et al., 2008). Research has identified qualitative differences between the casework of experienced and novice social workers (Forrester, 2000), with experienced practitioners delivering better social work practice. There are many good reasons, therefore, to retain experienced workers and build talent from within.

An organisation that offers clear career development pathways is more likely to retain experienced practitioners (Burns, 2010) and enable succession planning. Having only one tier of competent, skilled leaders is a risky strategy for any organisation; they may leave, or you may be reluctant to promote them because of the adverse impact on the rest of the organisation. Developing a talent pipeline requires a shift from reactive recruiting to proactively future proofing your organisation. So leaders should be spotting talent and implementing specific, targeted support to nurture and develop people throughout their professional journey.

Succession planning has many benefits: it saves on recruitment costs, shows that the organisation is committed to professional development, and indicates that it is worth staying as there are opportunities for promotion. Moreover, people who are promoted internally are already clear about the organisation's mission and vision and can quickly start implementing plans for successful strategic delivery of its priorities. If people are to be successful in their career aspirations, however, they must be supported and trained appropriately and there should be adequate opportunities for mentoring and shadowing existing workers.

Box 4.3 provides some tips to help you develop an effective succession plan.

Box 4.3: Effective succession planning

✓ **Know your organisation**

Where are the key risks? Are there people who would create a hole in the organisational fabric if they left? How could you future-proof this part of the service?

✓ **Look for talent**

With careful planning, supervision and appraisal you can identify people with skills and potential who can be nurtured and developed. Performance reviews can also feed into this process.

✓ **Create a development plan**

Investing in your workforce is an important component of organisational resilience. Looking at your overall strategic direction, what key skills are missing in the workforce and how could these gaps be filled?

✓ **Review**

Make sure you are sensitive to potential changes in the organisation and think about how talent can be grown at all levels. Manage the fears of others who may be concerned you are developing people to 'take over' their roles.

More information on succession planning is available from the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) **here**.

Culturally competent leadership

Equality is being invited into the room, diversity is getting a seat at the table, inclusion is sharing your views and being heard. Inclusive leadership enables all of this to happen.
(Sweeney & Bothwick, 2016)

Establishing culturally sensitive leadership is one of the 'golden threads' of organisational resilience. Encouraging different voices and perspectives is crucial, not only to ensure equity but also for organisational learning. According to Kohli and colleagues:

Cultural competence engages the development of abilities and skills to respect differences and effectively interact with individuals from different backgrounds. This involves awareness of one's biases or prejudices and is rooted in respect, validation, and openness toward differences among people. Cultural competence begins with an awareness of one's own cultural beliefs and practices, and the recognition that others believe in different truths/realities than one's own. It also implies that there is more than one way of doing the same thing in a right manner.
(Kohli et al., 2010, p. 257)

As leaders, we must recognise unconscious bias in our practice and reflect on our approach to recruitment, appraisal, promotion and discipline to ensure we deal fairly and considerately with people from different backgrounds. People working in social care can experience racism, discrimination, exclusion, homophobia and stereotyping (in their practice and their team) and such experiences will compound the stress of the job and threaten their resilience. (Cultural sensitivity is a key element of organisational justice, which is explored later in KFP4.) The pandemic has also had a disproportional impact on marginalised groups with serious implications for their wellbeing and effectiveness (Kinman, 2021).

Research findings suggest bullying is all too common in social care (Cassie & Crank, 2018; Whitaker, 2012). The risk of bullying is increased when job demands are high, resources are low and work is insecure (van den Broeck et al., 2011). All employers should have policies in place to tackle bullying, harassment and discrimination, and a zero-tolerance approach is essential. Social care workers from minority backgrounds are also more likely to report bullying and discrimination (Kinman et al., 2020b; Turner, 2020). See **guidelines** for tackling racial harassment and bullying. When devising and implementing policies to tackle discrimination, leaders should enable workers who have experienced discrimination to have a voice. Emotionally literate leadership also requires leaders to recognise that workers may express distress, and signal their need for support, in different ways.

Box 4.4: Tips for becoming a culturally competent leader

Spend time getting to know your workforce and colleagues. Do not rush through meetings. Consider how you can engage people who are different from you more effectively.	Check your biases. Acknowledge institutional and structural inequalities and bias (conscious and unconscious) and how it impacts on behaviour and decision-making. Become comfortable with conversations about inequality: nearly six out of ten employees feel that their employers are uncomfortable talking about race (Gov UK, 2017). **Guidance** is available.
Listen to people. Remember that they are experts in their own lives and experience, so be ready to listen and learn.	Practise self-awareness: remember your own values and beliefs may not be shared with others. Check that you are not 'norm referencing' your own cultural experiences or background.
Do not make assumptions about people who come from a similar background to you.	Take an inclusive approach to celebrations, holidays, and festivals.
Think about the power you hold and the language you use. Language can empower people or leave them feeling hurt; this may not be intentional, but it can have a damaging effect.	Review your HR processes and policies for bias or favouritism, as this is often at the heart of inequality in organisations.

More information on the role of cultural competence in promoting leadership and organisational change can be found **here**. Guidance on managing diversity at work is available **here**.

The Health and Safety Executive Indicator Tool (see KFP5 Wellbeing) includes questions on bullying and harassment. Other organisations provide guidance to help employers and leaders tackle discrimination in the workplace (for more information see **here**), including tackling bullying and harassment. Some tips for leaders are set out in Box 4.4.

Pay attention to your shadow side

> *Unfortunately, there can be no doubt that man is, on the whole, less good than he imagines himself or wants to be. Everyone carries a shadow, and the less [aware of it he is], the blacker and denser it is.*
> (Carl Jung)

In *The Leadership Shadow*, de Haan and Kasozi (2014) observe that 21st-century leaders are often expected to be single-minded in their pursuit of improvement and driving a vision. This may encourage some leaders to be always open to new ideas, but a narrow focus can also lead to stubbornness, inflexibility and an inability to communicate effectively. We may read that description and think: 'That doesn't describe me, but it does describe someone I worked with in the past.' The reality is that most of us will go to considerable effort to protect our self-image from anything unflattering or that puts us in a bad light. We are often reluctant to acknowledge aspects of ourselves we are not proud of, or that we have thoughts we do not want others to know about and feelings we try to hide.

Leaders of social care organisations aim to give their very best. They want to use their strengths and skills in a positive way and to ensure people accessing services feel respected and cared for. Nonetheless, we all have a 'shadow side': a darker aspect of our personality that we do not want to admit to. This shadow side primarily consists of instinctual and negative emotions (like selfishness, greed and envy) but also contains anything about us that we deny or disown because we think it unacceptable, inferior or unpleasant. Unfortunately, this means we often repress (or cut ourselves off entirely from) many of our good qualities and they become part of the shadow self.

Discovering our shadow self can be challenging, but it can also lead to greater authenticity, energy and creativity. Try the simple exercise below in Box 4.5 to discover your shadow self.

Box 4.5: Discover your shadow side

Write down the leadership strengths that you hope your colleagues see you as having (i.e. the good and positive stuff). Then consider how others could perceive those same characteristics less favourably (the less good and negative stuff) – in other words, your shadow (how you might be seen by others).

The Shadow I Cast / How I am Seen / My Impression? (the good / positive stuff)	The Shadow I Cast / How I am Seen / My Impression? (the less good / negative stuff)
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

What impact might this have on others around me, and what might I want to change about this?

Here is a completed example

Box 4.5: Discover your shadow side

Write down the leadership strengths that you hope your colleagues see you as having (i.e. the good and positive stuff). Then consider how others could perceive those same characteristics less favourably (the less good and negative stuff) – in other words, your shadow (how you might be seen by others).

The Shadow I Cast / How I am Seen / My Impression? (the good / positive stuff)	The Shadow I Cast / How I am Seen / My Impression? (the less good / negative stuff)
1. Totally committed to improving outcomes for people who access services. Conscientious and hardworking.	1. Works late; impatient for improvement; does not always delegate or trust others.

What impact might this have on others around me, and what might I want to change about this?

Always stays late and preaches about work-life balance, but then does not go home on time, or have lunch breaks. Others might think that I am encouraging a culture that expects people to overwork, and that I think I am the only person who will do things properly.

What I need to change

- ✓ Be more patient and allow change to occur.
- ✓ Delegate more, so people can see I trust them.
- ✓ Practise better work-life balance: do not just tell everyone around me to go home on time, do so myself.
- ✓ Take a lunch break and use this as an opportunity to get to know my workforce.

More information on discovering and managing your shadow side can be found **here**.

If we remain unaware of our shadow side, it will not only impact on ourselves but those around us. So, we need to be able to reflect on why we behave as we do and how other people may perceive our actions. A helpful technique is to consider the last time you became defensive: what led to this? Was it your attempt to keep your shadow side at bay? de Haan and Kasozi (2014) provide guidance on different personal leadership profiles and the shadow side that can derail them. They also offer the following advice to avoid your shadow side being what other people see most of the time.

Be open to upwards feedback, however painful this may be.

Be open to feedback from your own shadow side, although this will sometimes be painful.

Nurture positive, honest relationships.

Do not just lead in the abstract or indirectly, but in the here and now.

Engage in active and honest (self-) reflection.

360 Degree Feedback

Even the most reflective person needs honest feedback from others to boost their self-understanding and gain insight into their blind spots. Your Personal Board of Directors (see KFP3 Learning Organisation) can provide a candid assessment of your personal traits and behaviours, which will help you become aware of your shadow side. Another useful technique is 360 Degree Feedback, where people receive anonymous observations about their behaviour from those who interact with them regularly (e.g. line manager, co-workers and direct reports). This can increase self-awareness, enhance skill development and foster a collaborative organisational culture (Richardson, 2010). It can be particularly helpful in providing insight into how individuals are fulfilling their organisation's mission and vision and living its values.

The 360-degree tool can be used in various ways, such as assessing other people's views of our emotional literacy (see KFP Secure Base). This approach can also be integrated into a wider performance management system and help to identify priorities for personal development. It is crucial, however, to ensure that the process is carefully aligned with the strategic aims of the organisation and the competencies required. Training is also needed to help people understand their feedback and develop action plans for improvement. The CIPD has produced a factsheet on 360 Degree Feedback; see **here**.

Ensuring a sense of fairness, justice and equity.

Organisational justice refers to the extent to which people consider that their organisation allocates resources, makes decisions and distributes rewards and punishments fairly (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2005). Its roots are in equity theory, whereby employees expect a fair balance between what they believe they contribute (the input) and what they get in return (the output). Inputs include hard work, skills and motivation, while outputs encompass respect and recognition as well as more tangible rewards such as salary and promotion opportunities. Making sure that employees perceive their workplace as fair will help to build a strong, collective sense of mission and vision.

Box 4.6: Employees' perceptions of organisational justice

Employees' perceptions of justice generally fall into one of three categories:

Distributive justice:

where outcomes are in proportion to inputs. For example, salary, promotion and career opportunities should be relative to people's training, experience and effort and not awarded through favouritism.

Procedural justice:

where processes that lead to outcomes are transparent. For example, workers have opportunities to contribute to decision-making. Activities outlined in this workbook (e.g. open-door policies, 'walking the floor' and Appreciative Inquiry) can all help to ensure that employees feel they have a voice. Another important aspect of procedural justice is that decisions and resource allocations are made consistently, neutrally, accurately and ethically.

Interactional justice:

where interpersonal interactions and treatment are perceived to be equitable. For example, the degree to which people in an organisation are treated with respect when procedures are implemented. Leaders should ensure information is presented:

> truthfully (realistically, accurately and openly)

> respectfully (workers should be treated with dignity and courtesy), and

> with propriety (without prejudice such as racism or sexism).

Involving workers in shaping communications and gaining feedback before distributing more widely will help increase a sense of interactional justice in an organisation.

People who feel a stronger sense of organisational justice and fairness will be more satisfied, committed and trusting (Colquitt et al., 2001), and those who see their organisation as equitable also tend to be healthier and have a better work-life balance (Robbins et al., 2012). Research has found strong links between perceptions of organisational justice and employees' mental health; a sense of workplace equity was found to help workers manage anxiety and reduce the negative effect of long-term role stress (Ndjaboue et al., 2012). Conversely, injustice is a major source of work-related stress and burnout. A sense of unfairness can also be highly contagious, with serious implications for wellbeing and performance throughout the organisation. Feelings of injustice can also encourage 'retaliation' against the organisation such as gossip, bullying, reduced effort and minor theft (Robbins et al., 2012).

Although fairness and equity are central to social care work, there has been little research on organisational justice in this context. Studies in other countries suggest feelings of injustice can reduce social care workers' job satisfaction and organisational commitment and can encourage thoughts of leaving (Kim et al., 2012; Lambert et al., 2005). Based on interviews with social workers in two Scottish local authorities, Engstrom (2013) identified some ways to promote a sense of organisational justice, such as a better recognition of roles and responsibilities, more appreciation of the skills required for the job and the high risk of stress and burnout. She also emphasised the need for workers to feel respected and valued, have an input into decisions relevant to their role and, more generally, for organisations to have an open and transparent culture. Positive relationships with peers, the availability of emotional support (formal and informal) and feeling trusted by leaders were commonly seen as characteristics of a 'just' organisation.

Employee voice

It is clearly important for social care leaders to be vigilant for signs of injustice in their organisation and encourage people to report any violations. Policies and procedures should be reviewed regularly to ensure they are equitable and do not disadvantage any groups or individuals. If a perceived injustice has occurred, providing justification (an explanation or apology) at an early stage can reduce or eliminate any anger or frustration generated. Providing employees with an accessible, responsive and non-adversarial way to gain support and resolution is also crucial. The importance of employee 'voice' is highlighted in KFP2 Sense of Appreciation (and throughout this workbook), so making sure people have opportunities to suggest ways to promote organisational justice will be particularly beneficial. This might involve incorporating their views into performance appraisal systems, disciplinary procedures, conflict resolution processes, and selection and promotion criteria, as well any plans for organisational change. KFP5 Wellbeing also considers ways to work with groups of employees to identify sources of reward that can offset the demands they experience.

For helpful guidance from the CIPD on the benefits of 'employee voice' and influence can bring to an organisation, see **here**.

Staying on track: maintaining a sense of purposeful goal direction

As a leader, you will probably have a never-ending 'to do' list – it goes with the territory. This can be demoralising and may make you feel you are making little progress towards achieving your goals. So, it is crucial to stay on track and avoid task paralysis. Although 'to do' lists help set priorities and ensure important tasks are not forgotten, people rarely achieve their optimistic ambitions and new tasks are usually added throughout the day. An 'I did' list, on the other hand, highlights your achievements. This not only encourages a more positive outlook, but also enhances feelings of self-efficacy. Greer (2016) suggests a process and structure for maintaining an 'I did' list (Quick Win 4.4).

Quick win 4.4: Keep an 'I did' list

At the end of the working day, put aside some time to focus on your key achievements and answer the following questions:

What did I do?	What was this action in response to?
Was this action planned or unplanned?	What did the action achieve today?
How has the action contributed to more substantial or longer-term goals?	How do I feel about achieving this goal?

A table, such as the one shown below, could help.

What I did	What did the action achieve?	How has this contributed to the overall strategic goal I am working towards?

The 'I did' technique can help you identify what you have been doing and whether those tasks are the best use of your time and energy. It can also offer insight into how much you are able to anticipate and control your work. To what extent were your actions planned or unplanned? Focusing on the unplanned entries can allow you to pre-empt tasks in the future and manage your time more effectively. Moreover, after a challenging day when you may believe you have not accomplished anything worthwhile, keeping a record of what you have completed, and the steps you are taking towards achieving a larger task, will help you feel more productive.

Avoiding procrastination

Another common reason why people fail to make progress with key tasks is because they procrastinate. This often involves ignoring an unpleasant (usually important) task in favour of one that is low priority but more enjoyable. Procrastination may also mean delaying a decision that needs to be made. Typical procrastination behaviours are leaving items on to-do lists for a long time, starting high-priority tasks and then moving on to other things, or waiting until you feel in the 'right mood' to do something. Checking emails is a common procrastination technique and can give the illusion of productivity while swallowing up hours of your time each day. Procrastination is damaging as people not only fail to meet their goals, but feel unproductive, guilty and ashamed.

The first step in avoiding procrastination is to recognise that you are doing it and find out why. One of the most common reasons is that the task seems daunting, or we fear we will fail. People also use procrastination unconsciously as a form of rebellion, or a way of 'getting back' at others. To overcome procrastination, it is important to set simple and achievable goals (rather than vague plans) and, wherever possible, to eliminate distractions. Quick Win 4.5 shows how the Japanese technique of Kanban can help you do this.

Quick win 4.5: Using Kanban

Kanban, a Japanese term meaning billboard or signboard, is a production management system that aims to minimise waste and maximise efficiency. Benson and DeMaria Barry (2011) have translated Kanban into a personal scheduling system that restricts work-in-progress to enhance productivity and avoid burnout.

Put simply, Kanban involves limiting (say, to three or four) the number of tasks you are working on at any one time. When you have completed one task, you can introduce another – and so on.

Use Post-it notes and a whiteboard with three columns – 'To do', 'Doing', 'Done' – and move each task along as it progresses. You can also add a 'Waiting' column for future tasks (or, if urgent, allocate them to other people). Larger tasks can be broken down into manageable chunks. Ideally, finishing one task before completing another will become a habit.

For more information, see here. Kanban boards can also be set up online, see here.

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SWORD workbook:

Wellbeing

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👓 KFP 5: Wellbeing

A resilient organisation prioritises the wellbeing of its workforce and takes a systemic approach to reducing stress and enhancing job satisfaction. The KFP Wellbeing is defined as where:

> Workers perceive a deep commitment to their wellbeing; wherever possible, stress is reduced at source and working conditions improved.

> Reasonable adjustments are made to support people to work in ways that suit their preferences and circumstances.

> Workers feel able to thrive in a job that is rewarding and manageable and make a difference to people who access services.

The term 'wellbeing' covers a range of issues, such as how satisfied people are with their lives and whether they feel what they do is worthwhile, their everyday emotional experiences and the state of their general mental and physical health. A sense of wellbeing also depends on whether people feel in control of important areas in their life and supported by others. Work is a major source of wellbeing and satisfaction for many, but it can also be highly stressful and a major threat to health. As highlighted earlier in this workbook, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented demands on the social care workforce and the potential for stress and burnout has increased.

Under the law, all employers have a duty of care to their employees, which means they must take reasonable steps to ensure their health, safety and wellbeing. This is particularly important in social care work where the risk of stress and burnout is high. A recently published narrative review that examined the effectiveness of interventions for the wellbeing and retention of child and family social workers found that organisational-level interventions such as supervision and support from colleagues, were particularly effective (Turley et al., 2020). This workbook highlights the need for interventions that are evidence-informed and systemic to support the wellbeing of workers. This final section describes a range of initiatives to tackle stress in your organisation and make it a happier and healthier place to work.

Stress/wellbeing policies

Making sure you have a safety policy that directly addresses stress or wellbeing in the workplace is the first step. The policy should be clear and accessible and developed after consultation between workers, management and trade unions, preferably through a process of co-production (see sections on Appreciative Inquiry (KFP2 Sense of Appreciation), World Café (KFP4 Mission and Vision), and Focus Groups (later in this section). A policy should begin with a statement of intent and responsibility, setting out the organisation's commitment to developing a working environment that supports the health and wellbeing of workers. Guidance from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on formulating a stress policy, or checking that an existing policy is fit for purpose, can be found **here** and an example policy **here**.

An effective stress policy should emphasise commitment to managing stress at three levels (Figure 5.1):

1. Removing or minimising stress at source (primary management – i.e. preventative)	2. Improving employees' responses to stress (secondary management – i.e. proactive)	3. Addressing the symptoms and consequences of stress (tertiary management – i.e. reactive).

Figure 5.1 Multi-level approaches to managing stress
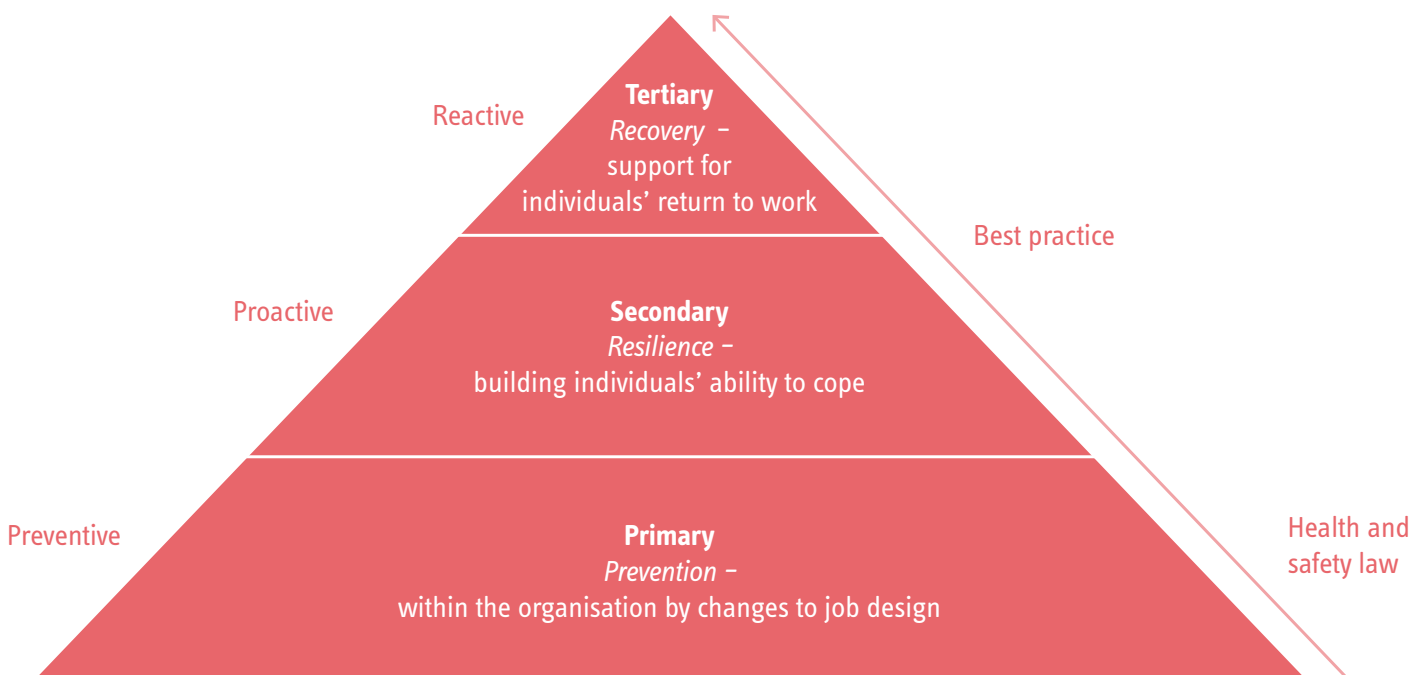
A three-tier approach to managing work related stress

A stress policy will not be effective unless it includes a clear action plan that sets out the strategies that have been (or will be) implemented and ensures there are mechanisms built in for evaluation. A toolkit developed in partnership between Public Health England and the NHS (but relevant to other sectors) is also available to help employers develop and evaluate workplace wellbeing interventions – see **here**. The framework in Figure 5.1 will also enable leaders social care organisations to plan multi-level interventions and this section provides examples of initiatives to help them accomplish this.

Firstly, we provide guidance on conducting psychosocial risk assessments to diagnose and manage the sources of stress.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has developed a risk-assessment process, with a set of accompanying resources, to help employers manage work-related wellbeing in their organisation. This approach is centred on a set of benchmarks – known as the HSE Management Standards – for measuring good practice across six key areas of work that, if not properly controlled, can lead to poor health, lower productivity, higher rates of sickness absence and retention problems.

The six key areas (see Figure 5.2 and Box 5.1) – demands, control, social support (from leaders and peers), interpersonal relationships, clarity of role, and involvement in organisational change – represent potential psychosocial hazards for the workforce.

Figure 5.2: The six areas covered by the HSE Management Standards
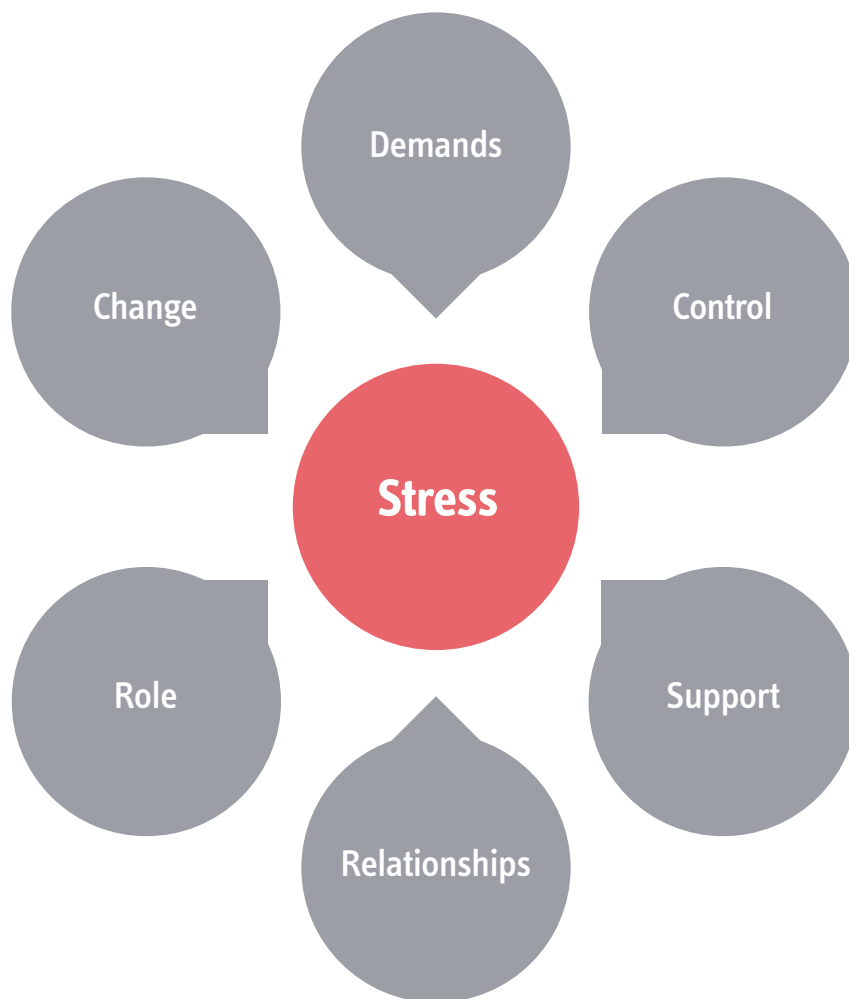
The HSE framework is a widely used and effective way to identify the most stressful aspects of work for different organisations or sectors. For social care organisations in particular, the approach has strong potential to help manage workforce stress and build a culture that supports resilience. It helps employers to assess how well they are managing each potential 'hazard' and to target interventions more precisely. The process, which is illustrated in Figure 5.3, involves:

1.   Identifying risk factors

Identify the risk factors using the **HSE's Management Standards Indicator Tool** i.e. the questionnaire – see Box 5.1); this is usually administered via an online survey. Care must be taken to assure people of anonymity and confidentiality.

2.   Who can be harmed and how?

Analyse the data using the HSE's **Analysis Tool** and **Indicator Tool User Manual**. A 'traffic light' system is used to identify priority areas for attention (e.g. demands, control or support, or change management).

3.   Evaluate the risks

Identify whether any groups of employees (e.g. job type, sex or mode of employment) are at greater or lesser risk than others.

4.   Develop and implement interventions

A comprehensive **workbook** developed by the HSE provides guidance on how to shape interventions to address each of the hazards.

5.   Monitor and review

Re-administer the survey to assess the effectiveness of the interventions.

The full range of resources and tools developed by the HSE as part of its Management Standards approach can be found **here**.

Figure 5.3: The HSE risk assessment process

Every type of job has its own stressors, so the HSE approach can be supplemented with questions that are particularly relevant to specific working contexts. Research findings show, for example, that the emotional demands of social care can be a particular source of stress, as is working within a 'blame culture' (Ravalier, 2018; Travis et al., 2016). Setting up a steering group can enable leaders to identify the job-specific sources of stress experienced by workers, which might otherwise be overlooked when using a more generic approach. Steering groups and/or focus groups that are chaired by an independent facilitator in an informal environment are particularly effective in encouraging people to contribute. The HSE resources include advice on setting up a wellbeing **focus group** or **steering group**.

Box 5.1: Identifying psychosocial risk factors using the HSE Indicator Tool

HSE has developed a self-report questionnaire – the **HSE Indicator Tool** – to help employers measure levels of risk across each of the six key work areas or potential hazards.

The questionnaire comprises 35 statements (e.g. 'I have unachievable deadlines'); workers are asked to tick one of five options to indicate the extent to which each statement applies to them. The work areas, or hazards, are:

1. **Demands:**

workload, pace of work and working hours

2. **Control:**

levels of autonomy over working methods, pacing and timing

3. **Support:**

Peer support: assistance and respect received from colleagues

Managerial support: supportive behaviours from line managers and the organisation itself, including encouragement and the availability of feedback

4. **Relationships:**

conflict at work, including bullying and harassment

5. **Role:**

role clarity and the belief that work fits into the organisation's aims

6. **Change:**

how well organisational changes are managed and communicated.

Box 5.2: Co-producing interventions with the workforce

Interventions developed with input from employees can be especially effective in improving wellbeing. The HSE resources include a series of **case studies** highlighting the benefits of co-produced solutions. For example:

Earlier reporting of stress, due to increased awareness of the signs and symptoms	Reduced sickness absence
Greater ownership of change	Improved communication, particularly between leaders and workers
Increased recognition of the need to encourage peer support	Better understanding among leaders of the importance of listening without judgement.

Box 5.3 provides guidance on using an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach in focus groups, drawing on key frameworks of work-related stress to generate solutions. As AI is an iterative process, several meetings will be needed to identify options for interventions and evaluate their success.

Box 5.3: Using AI approaches to develop stress management interventions

KFP2 Sense of Appreciation describes the features of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and highlights its potential to create options for self-determined change. The four stages of AI could be used in focus groups to identify simple, low-cost but effective strategies to reduce stress and improve wellbeing. That process might involve:

Finding examples of current activities that work well (Discovering)	Using them as a basis for envisioning possibilities for change (Dreaming)
Identifying potential interventions (Designing), and	Implementing those interventions (Delivering).

Mechanisms for evaluation are also required.

Work-related stress is often perceived as an 'imbalance' between key aspects of the working environment and individual capacities and needs. The three models of stress described below provide useful frameworks to help the workforce generate options for change.

1.   The Job Demands-Resources model

(Demerouti et al., 2001) recognises the importance of resources in helping employees to meet the demands of their work and remain healthy. *Demands* are aspects of the job – such as workload pressure, interpersonal conflict and insecurity – that require physical or mental effort and so have the potential to drain energy. *Resources* are factors that: a) help people meet their work goals; b) reduce demands and the associated costs to wellbeing; c) enable personal growth. Key resources include the availability of support, control and feedback at work, as well as personal resilience-building attributes, such as self-efficacy and optimism. This simple model could be used via AI techniques to identify resources that may help practitioners meet the demands of their work more effectively and enhance their personal development.

2.   The Conservation of Resources model

(Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000) also recognises the value of resources in protecting workers against the negative effects of job demands. It is based on the premise that people are motivated to gain and protect things they value; stress occurs when they are threatened with resource loss or fail to gain resources despite investing considerable effort. The model specifies four types of resource:

a)   objects (physical entities such as work equipment)

b)   conditions (social circumstances such as status and respect)

c)   personal (skills and attributes such as self-efficacy)

d)   energies (such as knowledge).

People use their existing resources to help them manage stress currently and to develop additional resources to sustain them in future. Those with more resources are less vulnerable to resource loss and more capable of resource gain. This model could be used in focus groups to identify resources that might help to buffer the effects of stress and create individual and collective 'resource reservoirs' (such as resilience) to offset the risks of future resource loss and build collective strength.

3.   The Effort-Reward Imbalance model

(Siegrist, 2002) maintains that strain (such as mental and physical health problems) stems from an imbalance between the amount of effort that people believe they put into their work and the rewards they perceive they gain. Efforts are things that make work more demanding, such as heavy workload and frequent interruptions, whereas rewards are obtained from three potential sources: a) money (salary); b) esteem (respect and support) and c) security/career opportunities (promotion prospects and job security). This framework could help people generate options for change by identifying the features of social care work (e.g. meaningfulness and a sense of belonging) that make them feel rewarded and could therefore restore their feelings of equity.

Enhancing managers' competencies

Not only must leaders be *aware* of their duty of care to protect the wellbeing of workers, they must also have the *capacity* to offer support. Several tools are available to help leaders develop the necessary knowledge and skills. First, they must be able to recognise that an employee needs support; the checklist in Box 5.4 and the use of Wellness Action Plans (see below) can help them spot any changes in behaviour that suggest an employee may be struggling and in need of support.

Reassuringly, research suggests that the 'signs of struggle' leaders identify tend to correlate highly with employees' self-reported wellbeing (Dimoff & Kelloway, 2019). Workers who are experiencing chronic and severe stress should inform their employer, but they are often reluctant to do so due to the stigma that continues to surround mental health difficulties. The checklist below (Box 5.4) can help leaders identify signs at an early stage and use supervision or one-to-one meetings to explore problems, identify potential solutions, agree an action plan and review progress. Spotting signs of struggle when people are working remotely is more challenging, particularly for new recruits, so leaders should be vigilant for subtle behavioural cues. Any workers showing extreme signs of stress, however, should be referred for professional support. Although the ability to seek support when needed is a key aspect of resilience, remember that people who see themselves as particularly resilient may have high expectations of their abilities to cope and resist reaching out to others.

Box 5.4: Spotting signs of struggle

Changes in behaviour and attitudes.	Easily irritated, or emotional outbursts.
Confused and lacking in focus.	Quiet and withdrawn, disengaged in video calls or team meetings.
Deteriorating quality or quantity of work; missing meetings and deadlines.	Regularly sending emails out of 'usual' working hours.
Change in the tone of emails and in verbal and non-verbal communication online.	Not participating in online social activities.
Looking tired and 'zoning out'.	

This checklist was developed with input from social care practitioners who were working remotely during the pandemic and can be used to help identify when somebody needs support. The list could be discussed with teams and supplemented with any other signs people may have noticed. **Wellness Action Plans** (see below) can also be used to highlight individual signs of struggle and signpost the type of support that people might need from leaders and co-workers. Further guidance on supporting remote workers is included later in this section.

Stress/wellbeing policies

This is an important step towards preventing work-related stress and implementing change in your organisation. Normalising conversations about stress can also reduce stigma and encourage people to speak out. The HSE have developed a '**talking toolkit**' to help leaders have conversations with workers about stress, with different templates for conversations based on the six key areas included in the HSE Management Standards Framework (see above). For example, for control, employers could ask people the following questions:

> Do you feel involved in how decisions about your job are made? Think about whether you feel listened to and trusted, how you are consulted and any opportunities for input.

> Do you feel your skills are used to good effect? How could they be used more effectively?

> Do you feel you have a say in how your work is organised and undertaken?

> What improvements or support is needed to help with any of the issues you have talked about?

Employees often identify managers' behaviour as a major factor in any work-related stress. So, leaders need also to reflect on their own behaviour and whether it adds to or helps alleviate the stress experienced by workers. The HSE, in collaboration with the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) and Investors in People, has developed a set of competencies (see Box 5.5) to help leaders assess whether they have the behaviours known to be effective for preventing and reducing stress at work (Donaldson-Feilder et al., 2011).

The HSE process enables leaders to reflect on their behaviour and management style and identify areas for development. There are three related tools (see **here**):

1. A self-assessment tool for leaders	2. A tool that also requires input from the manager's team (180 degree)	3. And a tool that requires input from workers, senior leaders and colleagues (360 degree).

Many organisations use this framework to help them manage stress proactively by guiding the recruitment, selection and training of managers. It will help leaders in social care organisations identify the behaviours that are likely to support wellbeing and build a culture of resilience. (There is more information on the use of 360 Degree Feedback in KFP4 Mission and Vision). The CIPD provides a quiz to help leaders identify the extent to which their management approach aligns with the behaviours found to support health, wellbeing and engagement. It also offers recommendations to improve people's approach to this key issue. See **here**.

Box 5.5: Management competencies for preventing or reducing work-related stress

The framework comprises four broad areas of managerial behavioural (and 12 specific behaviours) that have been identified as important for preventing and reducing stress.

1. Managing emotions and having integrity

> Managing emotions (e.g. approaches deadlines or crises calmly; does not pass their own stress on to the team)

> Integrity (e.g. is a good role model; is honest and consistent)

> Considerate approach (e.g. shows respect; prioritises people's work-life balance)

2. Managing and communicating workload

> Proactive work management (e.g. communicates objectives clearly; manages current and future workloads to minimise stress)

> Problem-solving (e.g. deals rationally with difficulties; is decisive)

> Participative/empowering (e.g. delegates work fairly; involves team members in decision-making)

3. Managing the individual within the team

> Personally accessible (e.g. communicates in person rather than by email; responds to requests promptly)

> Sociable (e.g. is friendly and has a sense of humour)

> Empathic engagement (e.g. a good listener; shows an interest in others and concern for their problems).

4. Reasoning/managing difficult situations

> Managing conflict (e.g. remains objective; deals with conflict promptly)

> Use of organisational resources (e.g. seeks advice and support from others to resolve difficulties)

> Taking responsibility for resolving issues (e.g. tackles bullying; follows up conflicts after resolution).

For more information and to download the tools, see **here**.

Identifying and developing the management behaviours that support people who are working remotely is also crucial for social care organisations; this will be discussed later in this section.

Stress, depression and anxiety related to work are common reasons for sickness absence (HSE, 2020). Some people may struggle to return after a long-term absence, while others may not return at all. Leaders' behaviours are crucial in supporting employees back to work. Munir and colleagues (2012) have identified the specific actions that are associated with successful returns after long-term sick leave:

Communication and support during sick leave:	*Inclusive behaviour on initial return to work:*	*General proactive support:*
e.g. communicates regularly in a supportive (not intrusive) way; expresses concern for wellbeing; emphasises continued support.	e.g. offers a phased return; explains any changes to role and responsibilities; makes themselves available on first day back.	managing the team (e.g. asks employee's permission to keep colleagues informed about progress); has an open and sensitive approach (e.g. listens to concerns and takes responsibility for rehabilitation); has strong legal and procedural knowledge (e.g. is aware of legal responsibilities and the need for reasonable adjustments).

Building conflict resolution skills

It has been estimated that leaders spend up to 60 per cent of their time trying to resolve workplace conflict. While some degree of conflict is unavoidable, and can even enhance individual and group effectiveness, it can have a major impact on wellbeing and job performance. Interpersonal conflict at work is more negative, enduring and pervasive than other types of stress, so must be carefully managed. Quick Win 5.1 offers some useful ways to help manage conflict. More information (from CIPD) on resolving conflict at work for leaders can be found **here**.

Quick Win 5.1: Six steps to managing conflict

Step 1. *Consider how to achieve a mutually desirable outcome*

Be aware that one party 'losing' to the other is likely to escalate conflict rather than resolve it. Perceived loss encourages people to try to re-establish a sense of fairness through competition, criticism or disengagement.

Step 2: *Encourage people to communicate human to human*

Recognise that conflict compromises people's fundamental need for respect, autonomy, feelings of competence and social status. Encouraging one party to see that the other is 'just like them' will encourage trust and the use of positive language and behaviour.

Step 3: *Anticipate people's reactions and rehearse your responses to them*

Before having a difficult conversation, thinking through how the other person might react to your argument can expose its weaknesses. It can also help ensure your message will be received in the way that is intended without the other party becoming defensive.

Step 4: *Substitute blame and criticism with curiosity*

Blame will escalate conflict, encourage defensiveness and lead to disengagement, whereas adopting a learning mind-set will inspire people to explore potential solutions where both parties can win.

Step 5: *Ask for feedback on how you managed the conflict situation*

Showing fallibility can disarm opponents, as this is a quality that inspires trust in leaders. Ask people how you could have handled the situation more effectively.

Step 6: *Assess psychological safety in your organisation*

Conflict is much less likely if people feel able to make mistakes or raise issues without fear of criticism or retribution. A psychologically safe environment (see KFP1 Secure Base and KFP3 Learning Organisation) that encourages moderate risk-taking and curiosity and enables tolerance of uncertainty will make conflict resolution easier for all.

Adapted from Delizonna (2017)

Promoting a healthy working environment

Resilient organisations will have strategies in place to support the health and wellbeing of the workforce in an effective and sustainable way. Interventions should target physical health (e.g. health promotion, occupational health support and managing disability); physical safety (e.g. safe working practices, equipment and training); mental health (stress management, risk assessments, conflict resolution training and managing mental health).

Box 5.6: Take action to protect and support the global health and wellbeing of workers

Public Health England provides a practical **tool** for organisations to assess aspects of workplace health and wellbeing (such as activity, sleep and mental health, as well as the working environment and workplace culture). This can also inform a holistic programme of interventions that will support organisational wellbeing and resilience during the COVID pandemic and beyond. A **toolkit** is also available to help organisations develop and evaluate health interventions. This framework has four stages:

1. Analyse: e.g. establish internal support; set up a steering group; identify needs at an individual and organisational level; specify goals and outcomes.

2. Plan: e.g. prioritise goals and outcomes; plan an evaluation strategy; identify tasks for the steering group and develop a community strategy.

3. Implement: ensure clear roles, pilot interventions and monitor progress.

4. Evaluate: develop an evaluation design; review and reflect on practice.

More information on this process is available **here**.

Supporting mental health at work

As discussed earlier in the workbook, people working in social care are at greater risk of stress, burnout and mental health problems related to work than most other sectors. There is also evidence that the pandemic has compounded the pressures experienced by workers. The findings of a recent survey of the mental health of UK employees suggest that more than four out of ten (41%) have experienced poor mental health caused or worsened by work in the last year (Business in the Community, 2020). This represents a substantial increase from 36% in 2018. More than half (51%) indicated that their mental health symptoms were caused by pressure of work. Although the number of employees reporting that their organisation supports their mental health has increased and most (76%) felt that their managers are considerate of their mental wellbeing, fewer than one in three respondents (30%) feel comfortable talking about mental health difficulties and only 14% had spoken about this to their manager.

A comprehensive mental health toolkit for employers is available **here**, with guidance on how to manage common problems and take pre-emptive action. Training workers in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) (see Box 5.7) and appointing Wellbeing Champions (see Box 5.8) are popular and effective ways to help reduce the stigma of mental health and support a culture of wellbeing at work. If you are considering introducing an MHFA or a Wellbeing Champion programme, you must ensure that people taking on those roles have the training, time and resources to fulfil them effectively. Volunteers also need support for their own wellbeing and make sure appropriate boundaries are in place (Narayanasamy et al., 2018). As yet, there is little evidence that MHFA has measurable benefits for individuals experiencing mental health problems at work. Remember that these initiatives cannot in themselves provide solutions to mental health difficulties in the workplace; they should be implemented alongside the other structural interventions described in KFP5 Wellbeing.

Box 5.7: Mental Health First Aid

MHFA England provides volunteers with training in critical areas of mental health first aid, such as the signs and symptoms of common mental health difficulties, and providing 'crisis' first aid for depression, panic attacks and acute stress reactions. Mental health first aiders can provide support by engaging in an initial conversation with someone in distress and, if needed, helping them access appropriate support.

Evaluations of MHFA training suggests it can increase participants' knowledge of mental health, reduce negative attitudes among the workforce, and enhance supportive behaviours towards people with mental health difficulties (Brandling & McKenna, 2010; CMC, 2021; Kitchener & Jorm, 2006; MHFA, 2019).

Information on MHFA training and resources can be found here.

Box 5.8: Wellbeing Champions

Appointing Wellbeing Champions or Ambassadors can play a valuable role in helping to build a culture of wellbeing in your organisation. Champions can drive the wellbeing agenda (e.g. by being part of a wellbeing steering group), raise awareness of new initiatives and encourage colleagues to participate. Champions are often better placed than leaders to encourage reluctant colleagues to engage.

Time To Change provides a range of resources for the workplace, including support for running a Champions programme, and practical tips on starting conversations about wellbeing, reducing stigma and signposting support. For more information see here.

Box 5.8: Wellness Action Plans (WAPs) (Mind, undated).

WAPs can help managers support the mental health of their employees:

They are personalised, practical tools that are useful whether people have a mental health difficulty or not.

They help identify what keeps people well at work, what threatens their wellbeing, and how to address a mental health difficulty at work if this occurs.

They are particularly useful when people return to work after experiencing mental health difficulties, as they can enable a structured conversations about the actions needed to support them and the adjustments that might be required.

There are guides on setting up WAPS for **line managers** and **employees**, and WAPS for those working at home – see **here**.

Wellness Actions Plans

What keeps you well at work?

Triggers and early warning signs.

Impact of mental health difficulties on performance.

Steps you and your line manager could take.

Steps you can take yourself.

Recognising moral injury

As discussed earlier in this workbook, social care professionals are at greater risk of burnout and other emotional reactions to work than workers in most other sectors. It is therefore crucial for leaders to be aware of the effects of working conditions. Moral injury refers to the distress resulting from actions (or inactions) that violate a person's moral or ethical code. It has been seen more frequently among social care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, in response to the difficult decisions or actions that many have been obliged to take (Williamson et al., 2020). It is crucial to raise awareness of the risks of moral injury and encourage people to discuss their feelings. A workplace culture that supports ethical practice is important but ensuring that professional psychological support is readily accessible and opportunities for informal support by peers and leaders will also be effective. Leaders should also recognise the need to support workers in developing 'moral resilience' to recognise when their integrity is threatened and be aware of the actions needed to support ethical practice.

There are several ways of increasing moral resilience:

Define or refine your personal moral compass by considering how you feel about situations you have experienced or read about.

Define a personal code of ethics: setting this out in writing can be helpful.

Cultivate mindfulness to enhance focus and mental clarity.

Work on self-awareness; be aware that your feelings are based on your personal moral compass or code of ethics, so it is important to take a step back and adopt a broader perspective.

Develop self-regulation to disrupt negative patterns of thinking and behaviour; this will help to restore balance when upsets or ethical challenges occur.

Seek outside assistance by talking through complex ethical situations with others.

Identify morally resilient mentors who can help find meaning during adversity.

Nurture the willingness to take courageous action.

For further information see Rushton (2016) and Rushton et al. (2021) and see **here**. Manttari-van der Kuip (2020) also provides an interesting discussion of how the concept of moral distress can provide insight into experiences of moral suffering among social care workers.

Presenteeism: the risks of working while sick

Sickness absence can be high in social care organisations, frequently caused or exacerbated by work-related stress and pressure. While it is crucial to reduce unnecessary absence, leaders must also be aware of the risks to workers health and effectiveness posed by 'presenteeism'. This term refers to situations when people continue to work despite feeling sufficiently unwell to take sick leave, or when the return to work too soon after a period of sickness. Presenteeism is particularly common among the so called 'helping' professionals, as they have a strong sense of duty and moral obligation for the welfare of others that can increase pressure to attend work (Kinman, 2019; Kinman & Grant, 2021). People working under conditions of high demand and low support and where staffing levels are low are also more likely to work while sick.

Although working while not fully recovered from illness can facilitate recovery, presenteeism can increase the risk of future health problems and long-term absence. It can also compromise the health and safety of colleagues and people who access services due to the risk of contracting infectious illness (a particular concern during a pandemic) and an increased likelihood of errors and accidents. Leaders who are tasked with developing a sickness absence strategy for their organisations should be aware that reducing absenteeism can increase pressure to attend work while sick. This is a particular risk during times of high demand and short staffing, and where jobs may be seen as insecure. Some ways that leaders can tackle presenteeism are shown in Box 5.9 below.

Box 5.9: Tackling presenteeism in your organisation

Identify the risks and causes through workforce surveys.	Undertake a review of absence management policies and practices.
Ensure that the organisational culture values and promotes employees' health.	Consult workers about their experiences and involve them in deciding how to manage it.
Monitor their workload and working hours to ensure they are not overloaded.	Identify the support they need.
Enable workers to take sick leave when required.	Implement an employee wellness programme to highlight the importance of self-care.

As a leader, role model 'healthy' sickness absence behaviour.

More information on sickness presenteeism and how to manage it is available **here**.

Supporting conditions for work-life balance and effective flexible working

Resilient organisations encourage a healthy work-life balance among their workforces. There is growing awareness that working long hours can damage health and family relationships and reduce satisfaction with work and life in general. Worrying about work can make it hard to 'switch off, meaning that people can struggle to replenish their mental and physical energy after the working day. Social care professionals may find it especially hard to balance the demands of their work and personal lives, and this can lead to stress, mental health difficulties and relationship difficulties (Kalliath et al., 2012). Conflict between work and personal life also has serious implications for workforce retention; a recent survey of nearly 1,200 social workers identified poor work-life balance as one of the most important reasons for wishing to leave the profession (Cooper, 2019).

It is crucial, therefore, to make a clear and strong commitment to supporting work-life balance among your workforce and to provide practical strategies at organisational and individual levels. Leaders might consider developing a specific policy for helping workers achieve a healthy work-life balance. Box 5.10 lists some issues that could be covered in such a policy. Some practical tips for achieving work-life balance are in Quick Win 5.2.

Box 5.10: Making a commitment to work-life balance

An organisation that is committed to maintaining a healthy work-life balance places this high on its list of priorities. Such an organisation:

Acknowledges that individuals are healthier, happier and more productive when they have a 'healthy' balance between their work and their personal life.	Recognises that supporting work-life balance will benefit the organisation (and people who access services) as well as its employees.	Asks employees for their views on how best to support work-life balance.
Adopts a flexible approach (acknowledges that people's needs relating to work-life balance will change over time) and offers a range of flexible working strategies and encourages their uptake.	Has policies to support carers but ensures that work-life balance initiatives are equitable and not only targeted at parents of young children.	Acknowledges that work-life balance is not just about ensuring people stop work on time; strategies are also needed to help them 'switch off' emotionally and cognitively from work.
Encourages people to work efficiently and productively, and measures performance by output (not hours worked).	Encourages joint responsibility between individuals and leaders to implement effective work-life balance solutions.	Regularly reviews workloads to ensure duties are achievable in 'standard' working hours.
Is vigilant for signs of over-commitment and over-involvement to the job among its workers and encourages boundary-setting.	Encourages leaders to lead by example by openly prioritising their own work-life balance.	Ensures that employees who take up flexible working options or who work at home are not disadvantaged in terms of promotion or progression.
Makes sure employees take their full annual leave entitlement	Is aware of up-to-date innovations in promoting work-life balance	Evaluates the success of any strategies implemented to support work-life balance.

Quick Win 5.2: Tips to improve your self-care work-life balance

Have regular breaks away from your desk

This will help reduce the intensity of work and get you in the habit of switching off. Micro breaks (two or three minutes focused on something other than work) can improve concentration and reduce stress. Regular breaks from a computer screen each day are vital for visual and musculoskeletal health. Short bursts of exercise are beneficial, but wherever possible try to get outside to exercise during the day in natural settings.

Use your diary to schedule activities that you enjoy

Planning your leisure time well in advance will help make sure you get opportunities to switch off.

When you think about work after the working day, are you problem-solving or ruminating?

Problem-solving can provide solutions and insights, whereas ruminating will drain your mental and physical energy. So, try to make sure any thoughts about work are restricted to the former.

Do something different:

It is particularly replenishing to use a totally different skillset during leisure time. So, for example, take up a craft, join a choir, or learn a foreign language. See guidance on increasing flexibility earlier in this section and in KFP3 Learning Organisation.

Write a daily exit list

Jotting down what you need to do the next day will help clear your mind and provide a sense of control and resolution. Mentally prepare yourself as you review your activities the following day.

Switch off when you commute home

Try not to see commuting as extra work time; read a book or talk to a fellow passenger if you are on public transport or listen to music in the car. If you are working at home, use a 'virtual commute', such as meditation, yoga or a go for a walk, to unwind before and after the working day.

Quick Win 5.2: Tips to improve your self-care work-life balance (continued)

Identify a corridor between work and home
People who do emotionally demanding work often need to 'decompress' before moving into their personal life. Consider how you can transition between work and home, physically and mentally: change your clothes, have a shower, cook a meal, or go for a run. Mindful walking can be a good way to switch off. It helps you become more aware of your bodily sensations and encourages you to tune into your environment as you walk. (See **here** for some guidance from Headspace.)

Establish an unwinding ritual
For the last 30 minutes of your working day, only start jobs that you can complete easily. Alternatively, spend time clearing your desk.

Find a restorative place
Spend 15 to 20 minutes somewhere you feel happy and relaxed. This could be a favourite chair or a place in the garden.

Disconnect
Switching off from the outside world for a while will help you recoup your energies.

Practise self-compassion and self-kindness
avoid the punitive self-talk that can encourage you to work longer and more intensively. See guidance on using CBT techniques later in this section.

Get another perspective
Regular input and advice from a mentor or a coach can be liberating. Anticipating opportunities to talk about concerns with a trusted person can help people contain difficult emotions and to switch off.

As discussed in KFP1 Secure Base, the pandemic means that many people are working remotely for at least part of the time. And while there may be benefits, those who work off-site can feel isolated from their colleagues and may struggle with work-life balance. This can be a particular risk for social care workers who can experience intense emotional demands and require regular support from leaders and colleagues to sustain their wellbeing. There is evidence that the pandemic has posed some challenges for the continued functioning of some social work teams as a secure base (Cook et al., 2020). It should be noted that employers have a duty of care to support the health and wellbeing of workers that work remotely as well as those working on-site. Guidance can be found **here**.

Managing online meetings

Some guidance on mindful listening in online meetings was provided in KFP2 Sense of Appreciation). Since the pandemic, many people are spending a considerable amount of their time online and this will continue if organisations move to permanent remote working, or hybrid working patterns. Regular 'check ins' with people who work remotely can provide routine and structure as well as reassurance and support. Opportunities to connect informally with colleagues are also effective. Nonetheless, a full day of remote meetings and video calls can make us feel drained and fatigued – far more so than after a day of face-to-face meetings. What has become known as 'Zoom fatigue' reflects the additional demands we experience during online meetings. Firstly, we need to concentrate more intently on conversations online to absorb the same amount of information. Secondly, the temptation to multitask during meetings means we can easily lose focus. Thirdly, online meetings can be stressful due to technological difficulties and the many distractions of working in the home. Finally, online conversations can be particularly challenging as we are less able to pick up non-verbal cues, may struggle to follow points arising, and the potential for misunderstandings is increased.

Guidance is available to help social care practitioners build rapport and establish meaningful relationships using technology, with input from people who access services. The first thing to consider is, do you really need to hold a meeting? Could the outcomes and aims could be met another way: e.g. by having a one-to-one phone call, or by using email to review and feedback on a document. A decision tree can be helpful for this – see **here**. Some research-informed tips on reducing Zoom fatigue are:

Avoid multitasking:

although it is tempting to use the opportunity to do more in less time, switching between tasks takes more time and effort, we risk making errors and people are likely to notice that we are not focusing. Close any programmes or tabs that may distract you (e.g. your email inbox) and remain fully present in the meeting.

Avoid scheduling back-to-back calls, build in breaks:

ensure that there is enough time between online meetings to get up and move around and try not to schedule meetings during lunchtimes.

Agree an end time for the meeting and stick to it:

ensure that meetings do not over-run. Sharing an agenda in advance of the meeting can be helpful.

Do not feel obliged to turn your camera on.

Make online social events optional:

after a long day of online meetings, or during lunchtime, people may not want to join in.

See Bailenson (2021). For more information, see **here**.

Managing email

Engaging with email has become one of the most stressful activities in the workplace. People spend a high proportion of their working time on email (Hearn, 2019), and for many this will have increased substantially during the COVID-19 pandemic. As email use increases, productivity deteriorates and the risk of burnout and disengagement rises. There is also growing awareness that failing to switch off from email during evenings, weekends and holidays can be a major threat to work-life balance and wellbeing. Many organisations now offer guidelines on managing emails in a healthy way. Quick Win 5.3 has examples of strategies that can be implemented at the organisational and individual level.

Quick Win 5.3: How to be 'e-resilient'

Develop an organisational policy on email use and etiquette, with input from workers.	Remember that email is a key part of the job, particularly when people are working at home, so should be included in job descriptions and when estimating the time taken to do tasks and overall workload.	Lead by example: leaders are powerful role models for email behaviour. Unless it is an emergency, do not send emails out of hours even if you make it clear you do not expect an immediate response (or use the delay function).
Consider limiting (or even banning) the use of the 'reply all' function.	Limit the use of 'OK' and 'thank you' emails – instead, use 'thank you in advance'.	Encourage people to review their email strategies – are they purposeful and efficient, or reactive and habitual?
Process and clear an email whenever you check it, rather than resolve to return to it later.	Switch off email notifications – they can cause stress and anxiety.	Be aware that 'switching' between email and other types of work can add up to two hours to your working day.
Use blocks, filters and folders and keep up with digital housekeeping (e.g. maintaining folders, deleting files, etc.)	Manage other people's expectations: an 'out of office' notification should mean just that.	Consider picking up the phone if emails are >3 paragraphs, or if messages fill the screen (>2 paras).
Remove email from your phone and other personal devices, or have a separate phone for work.	Develop 'rules of engagement': set boundaries and decide when you will read emails and when you will switch off.	Take email vacations – disconnect for half a day a week, or even longer.

An individual toolbox of wellbeing skills

As well as tackling stress at source, organisations should ensure that workers are provided with guidance to develop their skills in managing stress and building resilience. It is crucial to offer a range of strategies and encourage people to try something new – this will encourage flexibility, build tolerance of uncertainty and broaden their skill set (see KFP3 Learning Organisation). Our research found that multi-modal training (including mindfulness, cognitive behavioural skills, peer coaching, reflective supervision and goal setting) can enhance the personal characteristics that underpin resilience and improve wellbeing in early career social workers (Kinman & Grant, 2014). When planning interventions, however, it should be recognised that people are often attracted to training that strengthens (or validates) the skills they already possess; for example, more action-oriented people may seek out training in time management and goal setting, rather than the relaxation techniques that would help them switch off from work. Similarly, the findings of our recent evaluation of a mindfulness intervention (Kinman et al., 2019) suggest that it tends to attract practitioners who are more 'naturally' reflective.

Strategies that could be included in personal toolboxes have been highlighted throughout this workbook. Some of these are likely to be particularly helpful in managing stress and enhancing wellbeing. Peer coaching techniques (see KFP3 Learning Organisation) can provide workers with a mechanism to give and receive support and identify solutions to stressful problems. Opportunities for reflective conversations will help people to manage challenging situations and explore and resolve uncomfortable emotions. In the next section, we highlight the importance of self-compassion and self-care in underpinning a resilient organisational culture. Particular focus is placed on developing cognitive behavioural skills, as they are an effective way to protect wellbeing and may be used individually, in teams and/or during supervision. We also provide some quick wins to help you fill your toolbox. More information on these strategies can be found in our book (Grant & Kinman, 2014).

Building a culture of self-compassion

For people whose work is emotionally demanding, self-compassion and self-care are essential. Social care workers gain considerable satisfaction from supporting others, but the emotional demands of the job can lead to compassion fatigue and burnout. Research has found that maintaining compassion towards the self can protect against these negative effects (Kinman & Grant, 2020b).

Self-compassion can improve coping abilities and protect us from stress and burnout. It is also one of the most powerful sources of resilience, enabling us not only to survive adversity but to flourish. And because self-compassion can enhance empathy and improve interpersonal relationships, there will also be benefits for people who access services.

Neff (2016) identifies three elements of self-compassion:

Self-kindness:

being warm, patient and understanding towards ourselves when we suffer, fail or feel inadequate, rather than being self-critical and hostile.

Common humanity:

recognising that personal suffering and feelings of inadequacy are part of the human condition, and not something that makes us different from others.

Mindfulness:

taking a balanced and accepting approach to our negative emotions, so feelings are neither avoided nor exaggerated.

It is particularly important to develop interventions to encourage compassionate feelings towards the self and healthy self-care strategies among social care workers early in their career, as this can be more challenging for people who have spent longer in the job. Kinman and Grant's (2020) research found that social care practitioners often see themselves as self-compassionate but are reluctant to prioritise their own wellbeing over other people's needs; this can even be seen as self-indulgent and irresponsible. Other studies have found that prioritising self-care in both working and personal lives can be challenging and workers often feel they need 'permission' to do so (Andrews et al., 2019; Egan et al., 2019).

Leaders can build a culture that supports self-compassion by role-modelling self-kindness, common humanity and mindfulness, and encouraging workers to accept that, like everyone, they are not perfect. But in seeking to develop such a culture, leaders must pay attention to working conditions; a heavy workload, employee shortages and lack of appropriate supervision will thwart any attempts to improve self-compassion and self-care.

At an individual level, compassion-focused expressive writing can help people overcome self-criticism and develop the self-reflection that underpins self-compassion (see Quick Win 5.4). Other strategies, some of which are outlined in this workbook, can also help:

Reflective supervision and having reflective conversations can foster self-compassion and encourage people to prioritise self-care.

Peer coaching (see KFP3 Learning Organisation), and group approaches such as World Café (see KFP4 Mission and Vision) and Appreciative Inquiry (see KFP2 Sense of Appreciation), will help identify and share best practice among co-workers to improve self-care.

Mindfulness techniques (see Quick Win 5.5) can help us maintain personal boundaries and enhance awareness of the self and the need to care for it.

Cognitive behavioural strategies (see below) can also help us relate to ourselves in a more compassionate, friendly and forgiving way.

More information about self-compassion and some useful resources can be found **here**.

Quick Win 5.4: Expressive writing

Research findings show that people who regularly engage in expressive writing tend to feel happier and more satisfied. Writing about negative feelings and life experiences can help us reduce stress, depression and anxiety and discourage unhealthy rumination; it can even improve immune system functioning and physical health. There is also evidence that writing about positive experiences can be beneficial for wellbeing.

Research with social work students (Grant et al., 2014) found that writing about their emotional reactions to practice in diary form significantly improved their reflective ability and empathy and reduced feelings of distress. Studies (e.g. Sexton et al., 2009; Tonarelli et al., 2018) have also found similar benefits for the mental health and wellbeing of other 'helping' professionals. Several mechanisms are thought to underlie the benefits of expressive writing – as it involves thinking about experiences as well as expressing emotions, writing helps people process their thoughts and give meaning to their experiences. There is also evidence that expressive writing can improve emotional regulation skills, which is a key aspect of resilience for practitioners.

To get maximum benefit, people should write every day, but it need not take up much time. Studies suggest that expressing emotions in writing for only a few minutes a day can improve wellbeing (Burton & King, 2008). There is no one 'correct' way to do this, but these tips may help:

Try writing in the third person to give you some distance and even a new perspective.	Write about your emotional responses to specific situations: i.e. those that evoked negative feelings (e.g. fear, confusion, embarrassment or frustration) and those that were positive (e.g. satisfaction, pride or a sense of meaning).	Make a note of what you were doing and who you were with; this can help you identify patterns to your emotional reactions to different situations and individuals and can encourage a more in-depth understanding of your emotions.

Although writing about emotions can be helpful, it may not be effective for people who are experiencing ongoing or serious mental health challenges. Any personal reflections on emotional reactions to work experiences should always be kept in a secure location.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the basic ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we are doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what is going on around us.
(Mindful.org, 2014)

Many studies have demonstrated the positive effects of mindfulness, particularly for people working in social care (NICE, 2020); van der Riet et al. (2018) highlighted the effectiveness of mindfulness for the wellbeing of healthcare practitioners, and research by Kinman et al. (2019) found wide-ranging benefits for the wellbeing and resilience of social workers. They found that an eight-week mindfulness training course increased emotional self-efficacy and reduced compassion fatigue and distress. Interviews with participants revealed that mindfulness can benefit many aspects of wellbeing. In particular, it enhances work-life balance by helping people 'switch off' from work concerns and enabling them to replenish their energy and motivation.

This study also found mindfulness can help improve job performance:

When experiencing pressure, we are more aware of the options we have available to manage it.

We can sharpen our focus and prioritising skills.

We become more adept at identifying what we can and cannot control in high-stakes situations.

We carry more energy by reducing wasted effort and enhancing recovery processes.

We are less judgmental towards others and ourselves, more patient, and trust in our intuition and authority.

Quick Win 5.5: Learning to be mindful

Several apps are available that introduce people to mindfulness principles and offer guided meditations; these can be customised to individual needs and contexts. For example, 'one-minute mindfulness' exercises can help people recover after difficult meetings and switch off from work when they get home. A 'mindful pause' can be useful when you feel overloaded or frustrated during the working day (maybe as a way of taming your inner chimp – see KFP Secure base), when you want to gain perspective, or when you are transitioning from work to personal life.

Some brief mindfulness techniques include:

Mindful eating:

paying attention to the taste, sight and textures of what you eat. For example, when drinking a cup of tea or coffee you could watch the steam that it gives off or focus on how hot and liquid it feels on your tongue. Mindful eating can also help us avoid over-eating by making us aware that we are full.

Mindful walking:

if possible, find a quiet space outside to walk. Notice the feeling of your body moving. You might notice the air against your skin, the feeling of your feet on the ground, and the different sights, smells and sounds that are around you.

Body scan:

this involves moving your attention slowly through different parts of the body. Start at the top of your head and gradually move down to your toes. You could focus on feelings of warmth or relaxation of different parts of your body.

Mindful meditation:

sit quietly and focus on your breathing, your thoughts, your bodily sensations, and what you can hear around you. You might choose to do a systematic body scan (as above), or you could choose to explore bodily sensations randomly as they occur. If your mind wanders, simply notice this is happening and gently try to focus yourself back on the present.

Grant and Kinman recommend:

Buddhify | **Headspace**

Both require subscriptions, but others are available free of charge – there are many excellent exercises on YouTube.

Challenging thinking errors: cognitive behavioural strategies

Thinking errors are cognitive distortions based on erroneous beliefs about ourselves or about the world. Everyone experiences thinking errors, but when those errors are extreme, they can impair personal functioning, relationships and wellbeing. An understanding of the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) provides insight into how cognitive distortions can be replaced by more helpful thoughts, feelings and actions. Examples of different types of thinking errors are outlined in Box 5.11 and Box 5.12. Techniques are also included to help leaders track the thinking patterns and understanding of their workforce, helping them to identify and challenge unhelpful thinking errors when they occur. How CBT can be used to manage stress and support emotional resilience is also considered.

Box 5.11: Thinking errors		
Magnification and minimisation: recognising only the negative aspects of a situation and ignoring or downplaying the positive. 'My personal achievements are insignificant, but my mistakes are very important.'	**Catastrophising:** ruminating about irrational worst-case scenarios and impending disaster. 'I couldn't solve the service user's problem before the weekend – I just know something awful will happen to them.'	**Over-generalising:** making broad interpretations from a single incident or a single piece of evidence. 'I made a mistake with this person who uses services, so I am an incompetent worker and a bad person.'
'All or nothing' thinking: over-generalising and seeing things in extremes. 'I never do a good enough job – I am always going to fail.'	**Dogmatic demands:** believing that things should be a certain way can cause guilt and expectations of punishment if our rules are violated. 'I should do this/I shouldn't do that.'	**Emotional reasoning:** the assumption that our unhealthy emotions reflect reality. 'I feel guilty, so I must have done something bad.'
Magical thinking: a belief that one's acts will influence unrelated situations. 'I am a good person so bad things shouldn't happen to me.' (Or vice versa.)	**Personalisation:** the belief that one is responsible for events outside of one's control. 'The service user is upset. It's my fault; I haven't done enough to help her.'	**Jumping to conclusions:** interpreting the meaning of a situation despite having little or no evidence. This has two strands: a) mind-reading: interpreting the thoughts and beliefs of others without evidence ('I wouldn't get promotion, as I am stupid'), and b) fortune-telling: believing that future events are pre-ordained ('Things will turn out badly, so why bother?').

Box 5.11: Thinking errors (continued)

Control fallacy:

beliefs about being in control of every situation in one's life. If we feel externally controlled, we are helpless and a victim of fate or chance: 'I did a bad job as I was given the wrong advice'; if we feel internally controlled, we assume responsibility for the wellbeing and distress of everybody: 'Why are you angry, what did I do to upset you?'

Global labelling:

generalising one or two personal characteristics into a negative global judgement about oneself or others. 'I'm such a loser'; 'He is such an idiot'; 'People always let you down.'

'Just world' fallacy:

the belief that the world is a fair place – good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people. 'Nobody has that much bad luck. She must have done something to bring it on.'

'Heaven's reward' fallacy:

the belief that self-sacrifice and self-denial will eventually pay off. 'If I work hard enough, people will notice, and I will be rewarded.'

Thinking errors have implications for people's wellbeing and professional functioning. 'Personalisation' and the 'heaven's reward fallacy' might encourage over-commitment to the job, poor boundary setting and a reluctance to prioritise self-care; 'global labelling', on the other hand, could compromise positive outcomes for people who access services. We may fail to see the person behind the label and filter out any information that does not fit with our belief. So, the 'just world fallacy' may encourage us to blame 'victims' in the belief that people who are experiencing challenging circumstances must somehow have brought it on themselves. 'All or nothing thinking' is a distortion often found in those who are anxious, perfectionist or have low self-esteem. This can also be damaging for people who access services; a tendency to believe that 'everything is right, or it is wrong' may lead a worker to 'over-generalise' from one perceived 'failure' and so overlook improvements in other areas.

Box 5.12: Identifying thinking errors in meetings and supervision

Active listening – based on warmth, genuineness and unconditional positive regard – is necessary to enable formation of a trusting relationship.

Conversations should be collaborative and should involve feedback and reflection. Notice how people use words that might signify thinking errors. For example, most people exaggerate at times, but chronic 'all or nothing' thinking can make us see the world and other people in over-simplified terms and encourage pessimism and feelings of helplessness. Listen out for and challenge words such as 'always', 'never', 'everything', 'totally', 'everyone' or 'no one'.

A more structured approach can be used to examine specific incidents (i.e. activating events) where thinking errors have been used. By focusing on the following issues during supervision and reflective conversations, leaders can gain insight into how unhelpful behaviours and mood states are triggered – and maintained:

Situational: the environmental factors that were present	Behavioural: what the person did	Cognitive: the thoughts that were present at the time
Affective: the emotional reactions that occurred	Interpersonal: who else was present	Physiological: the bodily reaction that occurred.

Cognitive behavioural techniques for stress management and resilience

The cognitive behavioural techniques discussed above can be incorporated into supervision, reflective conversations or peer coaching sessions in which options for change are explored. Identifying thinking errors that underpin self-criticism, poor self-care, inflexibility and feelings of isolation will be particularly helpful. Cognitive behavioural techniques are an effective stress management tool for individuals. They can provide a fresh perspective on a situation, help people reduce the physical and emotional symptoms of stress and regain a sense of control, and encourage self-compassion.

There is evidence that stress management training based on the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is more effective than many other methods (Bhui et al., 2012). Research (Grant & Kinman, 2016) found that CBT also has the potential to enhance wellbeing and many of the qualities that underpin resilience. Computerised CBT programmes can be as beneficial as face-to-face training for reducing stress and improving mental health (Proudfoot et al., 2003) and are more cost-effective. CBT principles can also be applied to teams and organisations. Spotting and challenging individual and collective thinking errors has clear potential for enhancing group problem-solving and guiding systemic change. More information on developing resilience using CBT strategies for social care workers can be found in Alexander and Henley (2020). This guide will also be relevant for healthcare professionals.

The importance of self-care for leaders

Leaders play a key role in preventing and reducing work-related stress and are expected to be role models for 'healthy' behaviour. This is a major responsibility, especially if you are struggling to maintain your own work-life balance and protect your own wellbeing.

What you can realistically achieve may feel constrained by the need to manage teams with large caseloads or having day-to-day responsibility for the functioning of an entire service. At the time of writing, leaders are required to navigate their organisations through considerable uncertainty that will compound the existing pressures of the job. Although the social care sector tends to have a more positive approach to stress, mental health and wellbeing, you might work within an organisational culture that stigmatises (albeit unconsciously) stress and help-seeking, encourages long working hours and presenteeism, and overlooks the adverse implications for the wellbeing and performance of its workforce.

Protecting your own wellbeing will be challenging under such conditions; but if you are not able to take care of yourself, then you will not be able to support your team. Remember, the strategies in this workbook apply to you as much as to your team or workforce. Self-care is not a luxury for leaders of social care organisations but a core competency, and it is essential for survival. So, it is crucial that you develop your own 'toolbox' of strategies to sustain your resilience and make sure you are as compassionate towards yourself as you are to others.

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