



Sleep and recovery:

a toolkit for employers

In association with



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

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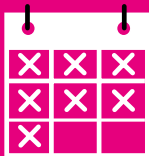
Acknowledgements 51

Sleep in numbers

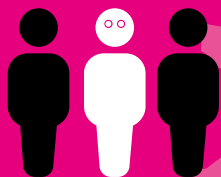


**annual cost
of lost sleep
to the UK¹**

200,000 working days lost



**in UK every year to
insufficient sleep¹**



1 in every 3

**people in the UK are
affected by insomnia³**

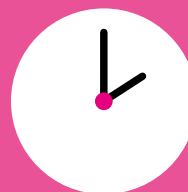
Better sleep

is the biggest
single contributor
to **living better⁶**



**We naturally feel
tired at two different
times of the day:**

2pm



2am

Working **night shifts**
has about a **25-30%
higher risk of injury**
than working day shifts⁷

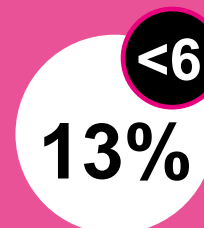


**3.2
million**

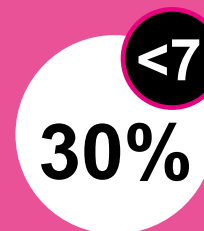
**night workers
in the UK⁵**

And **1 in 9** workers
who work night shifts⁵

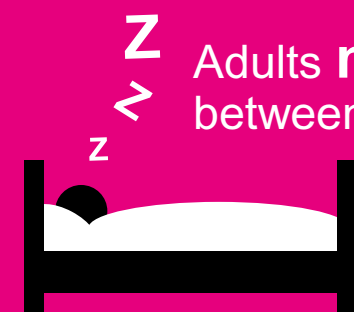
Health risks:



Adults who sleep fewer
than **6 hours** a night have
a **13% higher mortality
risk** than adults who sleep
at least 7 hrs¹



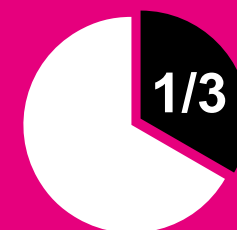
Adults who sleep less
than **7 hours** a day are
**30% more likely to be
obese** than those who
sleep for 9 hours or more⁴



Adults **need**
between

7 & 9

**hours of
sleep a night²**



We spend about
**1/3 of our
lives sleeping**

Checklist of actions

Be prepared:

- ☒ Understand the importance of sleep quality and recovery to your employees
- ☒ Inform employees that you recognise the impact of sleep deprivation
- ☒ Consult employees about their sleep and any problems they experience with getting the right amount and quality of sleep
- ☒ Understand your legal duty of care to employees and to the wider community

Encourage sleep and recovery:

- ☒ Ask employees what will help them and encourage them to take the lead on implementing change
- ☒ Identify the threats to good sleep in the workplace and the problems your employees face
- ☒ Conduct a workplace assessment for good lighting and ventilation
- ☒ Signpost managers and employees to information about better sleep circumstances and recovery
- ☒ Know how to access occupational health services
- ☒ Identify external resources you can use to support sleep and recovery among your employees

Provide knowledge and training:

- ☒ Include training, information and guidance on sleep and recovery for managers and employees in your health and wellbeing strategy
- ☒ Ensure that training, information and guidance is evidence-based
- ☒ Ensure that training and guidance is implemented
- ☒ Collect feedback to ensure training, information and guidance meets employees' needs

For more detail on practical actions:

Positive partnership



Your approach to supporting sleep and recovery will reap greater benefits if it has the support of employees.

- ✓ Engage with employees from the outset, ask them what will help them and encourage them to take the lead on implementing change
- ✓ Your employees might be aware of existing support that can be improved or expanded to have greater reach and impact
- ✓ Appoint workplace champions who can help spread the word
- ✓ Report back regularly, test what is working and what requires further development
- ✓ Create channels of communication that reach as widely as possible
- ✓ Encourage employees to share their learning across the organisation so everybody can benefit
- ✓ Agree goals and the best way to measure achievements

SMEs



This toolkit has advice that is specifically aimed at small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs can be disproportionately affected by the loss of key staff for any period of time because of illness, or when they are unable to perform to the best of their ability because of fatigue. So, helping employees to maintain healthy sleep patterns and to recover fully after a period of sleep deprivation, is of vital importance.

This toolkit provides practical information for all employers (small, medium and large) on how you can create an environment where employees understand the importance of sleep and recovery and are able to make healthier choices at work and at home.

Many of the points are simple to implement, supported by resources that are free or inexpensive. The crucial element is a commitment to support the health and wellbeing of the organisation by fostering an open and inclusive culture.

Toolkit development

This toolkit has been informed by an evidence review produced by the Public Health England Library Team and the evidence was considered by a steering group made-up of practitioners, professionals and business experts. It also draws on the experience of employers who have taken steps to support sleep and recovery and signposts external organisations that offer advice and support to employers and employees.

The case studies in this toolkit have been sourced and written following consultation with experts working in the sleep sector and through the contribution of employers who are taking this topic seriously. They demonstrate a combination of employers sharing real-world examples of the initiatives they have trialled to support employees and personal stories from individuals who have experienced situations which have impacted on their sleep and work performance.

“I haven’t seen a specific resource for sleep and recovery like this before and I think it is brilliant. It’s really clear and accessible and I’m sure employers will find it very valuable.”

Janet Cummings

Marketing and Health Coordinator, Amacus

We spend about a third of our lives asleep and the multiple risks of sleep deprivation are well documented.

This toolkit aims to provide information, resources and practical actions that employers can take to maximise employee energy through effective sleep and recovery.

Increasing awareness of sleep deprivation

Sleep has a number of critical functions. It is essential for good health and wellbeing. It is also essential for maintaining levels of cognitive skills such as speech, memory and innovative and flexible thinking. Lack of sleep has a profound impact on our brain's ability to function. The cumulative impact of successive nights of poor sleep is significant. There is a strong relationship between sleep and physical and mental health. This is why taking steps to prevent sleep deprivation or poor sleep is so important.

Organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the impact of sleep deprivation on the health and wellbeing of employees and the implications for creativity, good decision making, safety, productivity and competitiveness. Sleep deprivation is often associated with shift work, or work that takes place during antisocial hours.

Certain occupations are particularly at risk of impacted sleep (e.g. hospital night workers, emergency services, police, 24/7 call centres). But it doesn't just affect shift workers; stress at work is a significant cause of poor sleep, so employees in any organisation, whatever their working patterns, can experience sleep deprivation. All of these are reasons for employers to understand the causes, possible effects and solutions to poor sleep.

“This toolkit is a great resource for employers, providing comprehensive and easy to navigate information on the importance of sleep and recovery. As someone who provides advice and support to staff on areas such as stress, sickness absence and case management – all of which can tie into sleep issues – I found this toolkit really helpful in providing clear, practical steps to take to help benefit our workforce.”

Debs Ireland

Occupational Health Adviser,
Teesside University

Taking a proactive approach

Working in partnership with employees, employers can take a positive, proactive approach to support sleep and recovery in the workplace, with a strong emphasis on the prevention of problems.

This toolkit is designed to support employers and line managers to create a workplace culture in which the employer and the employee can openly and fairly discuss the need for sleep and recovery and employees are able to get the sleep they need to perform to the best of their ability. This includes the importance of good job design and the need to remove barriers in the workplace to good sleep and recovery.

It sets out steps that are easy to follow and helps you choose the best free resources for you and your team. Peer-reviewed evidence about what works best to support sleep and recovery is still limited, so the toolkit also reflects the experience of employers who are beginning to respond to this emerging issue at work.

Taking action on sleep and recovery can make a real difference to your workforce and doesn't have to involve a significant investment of time or resources. Using this toolkit as guidance, you can develop an approach that suits your organisation, whatever its size or sector.

"This toolkit has helped us with some really practical actions to support our employees with sleep and recovery. For us, the information on shift working, overseas travel and sleep assessment are all especially pertinent to our employees and we'll be embedding these elements into our health and wellbeing programme."

Susan Wynn
Occupational Health Manager,
Sunderland University

"This thorough toolkit will be a very useful resource for employers. I like that it encourages people to consider how a lack of sleep could be to do with a range of issues and the links to further resources where employers can find out more details about particular areas are really helpful. I certainly feel better equipped to deal with sleep and recovery in the workplace having read the toolkit."

Ashley Lowe
Health & Wellbeing Project Coordinator,
Newcastle United Foundation



Click the links below to view Anglian Water's videos on sleep and recovery:

[The importance of sleep health in the workplace](#)

[Legal responsibilities of the employers](#)

[How to sleep better and sleep hygiene](#)

Foreword from Peter Simpson Chief Executive Officer, Anglian Water

Long before the term '24/7 economy' entered our language, utilities like Anglian Water were working around the clock to ensure that our customers enjoyed uninterrupted essential services like water. Occasionally, incidents happen that require our teams to make emergency deployments that can take several days to resolve. I have first-hand experience of working 12-hour days for two weeks or so, under intense pressure and I understand the toll it takes on body and mind if you are unable to make the time to rest and recover.

Working in those conditions has consequences for the individual, but also for the organisation. The cumulative effect has an inevitable impact on the quality of decisions. But when a community is depending on you, it can be difficult for somebody who is focussed on getting the job done, as quickly as possible, to admit that fatigue is affecting their ability to work.

The impact of sleep deprivation is not only felt by teams on emergency deployment, or even by the men and women who work during the night to make sure that vital services are

delivered. These days, poor sleep has an impact across society, affecting millions of people. Stress at work, or poor job design, can cause sleep deprivation or affect the quality of sleep. And because people spend so much time at work, the workplace is an ideal place to begin to offer the support they need to address these issues.

At Anglian Water, we understand that employees are the lifeblood of our organisation. Their health and wellbeing are central to the sustainability of the business. As many employers now recognise, we have a responsibility as business leaders and managers to provide the support our employees need to stay fit and well for as long as possible. It is the right thing to do, but it also makes good business sense, for a healthy workforce will be more engaged and make a positive contribution to sustainable growth.

We have deep experience of working with our employees to embed practices that support physical and mental health across the organisation. Our "Fit for the Future" programme has transformed the way that we think about wellbeing in the

workplace, with demonstrably positive outcomes.

Sleep and recovery is a new topic, so our understanding of what works best to support employees is still evolving. Our health and wellbeing programme is focussing on the impact of sleep deprivation across the organisation and how we can support all employees to understand the importance of good sleep and effective recovery after periods of intense work. We are adopting a holistic approach, recognising that where sleep has become a problem it cannot be solved in isolation. As an organisation, we need to understand the root causes, provide support and information and make the necessary adjustments in the workplace. It is also about encouraging senior managers to lead by example and creating high performing teams that harness individual resilience.

We are committed to sharing our learning across our supply chain to ensure that as many people as possible benefit. Workplace health and wellbeing are of vital importance for the whole community.



Foreword from Dr Justin Varney, National Lead for Adult Health and Wellbeing, Public Health England and Louise Aston, Wellbeing Director, Business in the Community

Sleep is essential to a healthy life. Deprivation of it increases the risk of premature death, mental health problems, disease and disability. Nobody can perform at their best if they do not have good quality sleep.



The World Health Organisation estimates that two thirds of adults in developed countries globally do not get the recommended seven to nine hours of sleep each night. The 24/7 digital economy has brought us many good things, creating jobs and prosperity. But the downside is that we are on the go, all the time. The dividing line between our work and our life outside work has blurred. In a connected society, we are always switched on. Modern lifestyles leave less time for sleep and when we do sleep, it is often interrupted or cut short.

Evidence shows that sleep matters to individuals but it also matters to business. Poor sleep leads to poor interpersonal interactions and dynamics, poor customer service, mistakes and accidents. As a result, sleep deprivation

is estimated to cost the UK economy over £30 billion a year, equivalent to almost 2% of GDP.

All employers have a responsibility to support the health and wellbeing of their staff as part of their health and safety duties and, at a national level, we want to see more people leading healthy, productive lives.

Responsible employers are beginning to consider the implications of sleep deprivation and how it can be addressed. Their challenge is to understand and respond to the underlying reasons why employees may be suffering from poor sleep. Their reflections must extend beyond shift workers. In a global economy, employees increasingly work across international time zones, or remain connected to work during hours supposedly set aside for home life or rest. We need to raise awareness and encourage wider discussions about sleep deprivation and its impact at work and across society. Conversations about sleep need reframing and cultures which hold that getting by with little or

no sleep as something to be admired need to be challenged. Sleep deprivation is a huge organisational risk that can result in poor decision making, affecting the lives of thousands of people and even potentially causing fatalities.

We hope that businesses can use this toolkit in conjunction with the suite of Public Health England and Business in the Community toolkits to safeguard their employees and ensure that they are getting the right wellbeing support they need to remain in good health and fulfil their potential.

The business case for good sleep
As a society, we sleep less than we used to and less than we should. Although the optimum amount varies from person to person, most of us need between seven and nine hours a night. Around four in 10 people do not get enough sleep. One in five suffer poor sleep most nights, representing the second most common health complaint after pain.

The number of hours the average person sleeps has been in decline for the past few decades, but its impact on economic performance has received little attention. Yet we know that sleep quality has an important influence on our cognitive functions. Not getting enough sleep is likely to affect our performance at work.

One of the most comprehensive studies on the economic impact of sleep was carried out by Rand Europe, a not-for-profit research organisation. It used data from 62,000 people in five major economies (the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Japan and Germany). The study concluded that the economic cost of tired employees being less productive or absent from work altogether amounted to almost two per cent of GDP. In the United Kingdom, this equates to around a £30 billion a year loss, attributed to lower productivity levels and higher mortality rates.

Separately, a study published by the London School of Economics Centre for Economic Performance in 2017 found that a one-hour reduction in sleep duration adversely affects the number of hours worked and household income.

There are many reasons why people are unable to sleep, or to get the hours of sleep they need, which are discussed in this toolkit. The causes are often outside the workplace but the effects are felt at work and may impair an employee's ability to carry out their duties. Work can also cause excessive stress, which may lead to sleep deprivation or poor sleep. In some sectors, this can present a risk to the safety of colleagues or members of the public.

“We know from our wellbeing work with our staff and the work that we do as a charity, that the most important thing is to start the conversation – making people feel comfortable to start talking about sleep issues they are having which are either caused by or impacting on work. This toolkit is a great resource for employers to help people start talking about this issue.”

Kate Upshall Davis
Wellbeing and Mental Health
Manager, Crisis

Sleep deprivation takes a toll over a long period of time, which means that employees are often unable to judge for themselves how they are affected. That's why line managers play an important role. They must understand the importance of good sleep and be able to spot the symptoms of sleep deprivation. Employers should also consider this when designing their health and wellbeing strategy.

Sleep deprivation is often where physical and mental health intersect. Sleep deprivation itself can be a symptom of mental health problems and can increase the risk of developing mental health problems. There is also a growing understanding of the link between lack of sleep and hypertension, heart disease and diabetes. After just a short period of reduced sleep, people are more vulnerable to infection. Brain function deteriorates, drastically increasing the risk of accident and injury. Longer periods of sleep loss can significantly impair learning and cognitive processing, particularly in older people. Those sleeping fewer than six hours a night have a 13 per cent higher mortality risk than those getting seven to nine hours.

The challenge for employers and line managers is to understand the cause of sleeplessness to be able to consider what the best response is. The good news is that small changes to sleep duration and quality can have a positive impact and there are simple steps that employers can take to achieve this.

“Our health and wellbeing app Bupa Boost shows that sleep is among the top three issues of concern to employees. In fact, among users of the app who set personal wellbeing goals, sleep is consistently number one. Wellbeing is individual and what is important for one person may not work for another. Our sleep habits are particularly personal and it can be difficult to have a conversation about sleep in a workplace setting. But it is critical for organisations to understand the impact of sleep and recovery for the health and wellbeing of employees and the implications for productivity.

“That is why this toolkit is so important. We know there is an unmet need for advice and support and as employers we have a responsibility to ensure that employees have access to the information they need to make healthier choices and to understand what steps they can take to improve the quality of their sleep. We also can ensure that the workplace does not become a barrier to a good night's sleep and we can support employees to recover to reduce the risk of fatigue.”

Patrick Watt

Corporate Director, Bupa UK

Your legal responsibility as an employer



Employers have a legal duty to manage risks from fatigue and sleep deprivation, irrespective of any of their workers' willingness to work extra hours or preference for certain shift patterns. Under the law, employers have a duty of care to protect not just the health, safety and welfare of their workers but any other people who might be affected by their business. The following general principles apply.



Health and safety law requires employers to consult with their employees on all matters of health, safety and welfare. They can do this either directly or, if there are health and safety representatives, through them.



The Working Time Regulations 1998 (as amended) ("WTR") lay down the minimum legal requirements on how to organise working time. Employers are required not just to satisfy the provisions of the WTR, but to proactively consider fatigue a risk factor in their business like any other health and safety risk. Whether the business involves major hazards or not, employers are required to set up appropriate systems to control potential causes of fatigue, such as shift patterns and excessive overtime. Some sectors (such as aviation) have specific regulations to guard against fatigue.



Note that some employees may prefer certain shift patterns that are unhealthy and likely to cause fatigue. **Develop a policy that specifically addresses and sets limits on working hours, overtime and shift-swapping to guard against fatigue.** The WTR require employers to offer night

workers health assessments – although they don't have to accept. If a decision involving work equipment, processes or organisation could potentially affect the health and safety of employees, such as any proposed changes to shift working arrangements, the employer must give the employees (or their representatives) information about the proposals and time to consider it. The employer must also give the employees (or their representatives) the chance to express their views on the proposed changes. Then the employer must take account of these views before reaching a decision.



Employees also have a duty to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others at work who may be affected by their activities. **Employers should take positive steps to help staff understand potential causes and risks of fatigue at work.** They should make staff aware of relevant safety rules, policies and procedures.

For further information, see the following resource links below from the Health and Safety Executive website:

1/ Key issues to consider

The importance of good job design
Good job design helps to reduce the risk of physical and emotional stress. Good work for employees incorporates elements which make that job worthwhile to the individual, such as job security, the ability to use and develop skills and clear responsibilities.

A job that is well designed also enables an employee to accomplish what is required in a safe and healthy manner and thereby reduce physical and psychological strain. Further, it helps with the organisation of work (identifying issues such as work overload, repetitiveness and limited control over work) and supports occupational safety and health within organisations. A well designed job results in more engaged, healthy and productive employees and these outcomes benefit both employees and organisations.

The work environment is changing, due to a move to a stronger service economy, the increasing number of women in the workforce and the large number of older workers who remain in employment. Good work design must also evolve to retain productive, safe and healthy employees.

Work and job design should occur within organisations when a new job is created or when the work and jobs no longer fit the worker or exceed the capacity of an individual employee. Effective organisations should have monitoring procedures in place to continuously assess workers' safety,

health and performance levels and thereby reduce ill health. Periodic assessment of the job or tasks is preferable as it should be able to identify if changes or adjustments are needed to the way in which employees carry out their duties.

Click on the useful resources below which help explain the importance of good work and job design:

“Sleep is a basic human need and equally important to health as good diet and exercise. Health and wellbeing policies should promote good sleep hygiene. There may also be health and safety issues arising from shift working, particularly at night and sleep apnoea, which may make the employee unfit to drive. Employers need the support of good occupational health advice.”

Professor Diana Kloss
Chair, Council for Work and Health

Shift work

Millions of people work in shifts, at night or on split, rotating or varying schedules.

Shift work can take a toll on employees' minds and bodies. Shift workers are at increased risk of chronic illnesses such as heart disease and gastrointestinal diseases. Although the link between disrupted sleep patterns and the increased risk of disease has not been proven, employers should recognise the duty of care they owe to shift workers.

Shift workers are also at increased risk of fatigue, which in turn elevates the possibility of errors, accidents and injuries. The risk is found to be higher on night shifts and rises with increasing shift lengths over eight hours, across successive shifts and when there are not enough breaks.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has developed good practice guidelines on shift design, as well as general guidance on shift work and fatigue.

HSE guidance on shift work includes:



- ✓ Plan an appropriate and varied workload
- ✓ Offer a choice of permanent or rotating shifts and try to avoid permanent night shifts
- ✓ Either rotate shifts every two to three days or every three to four weeks – otherwise adopt forward rotating shifts
- ✓ Avoid early morning starts and try to fit shift times in with the availability of public transport
- ✓ Limit shifts to 12 hours including overtime, or to eight hours if they are night shifts and/or the work is demanding, monotonous, dangerous and/or safety-critical
- ✓ Encourage workers to take regular breaks and allow some choice as to when they are taken
- ✓ Consider the needs of vulnerable workers, such as young or ageing workers and new and expectant mothers
- ✓ Limit consecutive work days to a maximum of five to seven days and restrict long shifts, night shifts and early morning shifts to two to three consecutive shifts
- ✓ Allow two nights of full sleep when switching from day to night shifts and vice versa
- ✓ Build regular free weekends into the shift schedule
- ✓ Consider increasing supervision during periods of low alertness
- ✓ Control overtime, shift swapping and on-call duties and discourage workers from taking second jobs

Remember that some employees who are not officially night workers will be affected by 'night shift' patterns (e.g. those who get up at 4 a.m. for a 6 a.m. shift).

Travel and working across time zones

The globalised nature of today's business world means that employees are increasingly likely to work across time zones.

International travel is an integral part of many occupations, while many other employees work outside normal office hours to support colleagues or customers in other parts of the world. In such cases, the demands of work can disrupt healthy sleep and become a barrier to recovery.

Jet lag is one of the most common issues impacting sleep. Typical consequences of jet lag include disturbed sleep, decreased alertness, general malaise and impaired daytime function. In addition, gastrointestinal distress is common and occurs when travellers eat at irregular hours.

When it is necessary for employees to travel across time zones, there are some simple behavioural adjustments that can be made before, during and after arrival to help minimise some of the side effects of jet lag.

Minimising the effects of jet lag



Encourage employees to do the following:

- ✓ Select a flight that allows early evening arrival and stay up until 10 pm local time
- ✓ If the employee must sleep during the day, take a short nap in the early afternoon, but no longer than two hours, setting an alarm to be sure not to oversleep
- ✓ Anticipate the time change for trips by getting up and going to bed earlier several days prior to an eastward trip and later for a westward trip
- ✓ Upon boarding the plane, change your watch to the destination time zone
- ✓ Avoid alcohol or caffeine at least three to four hours before bedtime, because both act as stimulants and prevent sleep
- ✓ Upon arrival at a destination, avoid heavy meals
- ✓ Bring earplugs and blindfolds to help dampen noise and block out unwanted light while sleeping
- ✓ Try to get outside in the sunlight whenever possible because daylight is a powerful stimulant for regulating the biological clock, while staying indoors worsens jet lag
- ✓ Although it is always important to eat healthily, the type of foods we eat have no effect on minimising jet lag
- ✓ If you are only 'in country' for a short time, it might be easier on your body to avoid adjusting to the new time zone

Driving and road safety

Managing the risk of fatigue and sleep deprivation for employees who drive can save lives. Driver fatigue is a serious problem that results in thousands of serious injuries and deaths on Britain's roads every year. It is estimated that fatigue may be a factor in up to 20 per cent of all road accidents and up to a quarter of fatal and serious accidents.

Driving while fatigued is an offence under road traffic law and may result in prosecution leading to imprisonment and other penalties. Every week around 150 British road deaths and serious injuries involve someone using the road for work purposes. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents names driving as the most dangerous work activity that most people do. Around 40 per cent of sleep-related accidents involve drivers of commercial vehicles.

Employers should consider not only the risk to those whose primary occupation is driving, but also those who routinely drive long distances for work and those who commute to and from work by road.

Long working hours, irregular shifts, work schedules and night driving are factors that increase crash risk. Business drivers with high work-related mileage have over 50 per cent more injury accidents than non-business

road drivers as they are more likely to drive in fatiguing situations, undertaking long journeys, under time pressure and after long working hours. In the rail industry, work-related road traffic accidents and incidents and [CIRAS](#) staff reports show that many workers are exposed to similar crash risk factors.

Increasingly, drivers are self-employed and may hide sleep problems through a fear of losing work. Responsible organisations should work closely with contractors to prioritise safe driving.

Safe driving



Measures for reducing risk in this regard include:

- ✓ Working practices, journey schedules, appointments and routes should enable drivers to stay within the law
- ✓ Employers are legally required to consult with employees on health and safety issues
- ✓ Work patterns should allow for a minimum of between seven and eight consecutive hours of sleep in each 24-hour period
- ✓ Foster a culture that encourages drivers to acknowledge when they are fatigued and should not drive
- ✓ Provide training on the importance of sleep and recovery to employees who drive at work for significant periods of time
- ✓ Signpost all employees to information about sleep and recovery
- ✓ Understand driver fatigue risk factors (both at-work and non-work)
- ✓ Make sure there are enough drivers to cover work schedules while maintaining required safety standards
- ✓ Ensure vehicles are well maintained, which reduces risk of breakdowns and delays
- ✓ Maintenance should include the environment within the driver's area and cabin
- ✓ Be aware of drivers who swap shifts among themselves and the impact this can have on working hours

“Fatigue is known to contribute to one in five UK road deaths, more than 80% of inflight procedural errors and to increase the risk of accidents four-fold. It is linked to longer-term health risks such as obesity, diabetes, depression, suicide, heart disease and cancer.

“As managers, we should be striving to get the best from our people and that means avoiding fatigue. Sleep is the only cure for fatigue and should be considered a weapon to be utilised against its degradation.

“It makes good business sense to protect our people from fatigue and, in return, we will be rewarded with a sharper-thinking, healthier, more effective and more efficient workforce.”

Wing Commander John Rollo
RAF Centre of Aviation Medicine

Information summarised from:

2/ Understanding sleep deprivation

Understanding sleep deprivation

The challenge for line managers is to be able to recognise the symptoms of sleep deprivation or poor sleep, particularly when it might be a health and safety issue that puts colleagues or members of the public at risk. Knowing what to look for is important.

Signs of sleep deprivation



Decreased communication



Performance deterioration



Poor concentration/
easy distraction



Poor cognitive
assimilation
and memory



Poor mood/
inappropriate
behaviour



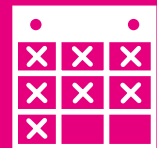
Greater risk-taking
behaviour



Inability to make
necessary
adjustments



Increased intake
of caffeine/
energy drinks



Increased sickness/
sickness absence

Causes of sleep deprivation

There are many reasons why people do not sleep enough or suffer from a broken night's sleep, which causes them to suffer tiredness the following day.

There may be more than one reason, and these may not be related to work, although the impact will be felt in the workplace. Line managers should try to understand what is causing sleep deprivation to be able to take steps to address the problem, including recognising when changes to work can help remove some causes of sleep deprivation. When health and safety is a concern, such as handling heavy machinery, an employer may request that an employee consult with their GP before resuming duties.

An employee might not even be aware that he or she is not sleeping enough and may not be able to pinpoint the reasons. This might be the first time an employee has considered the significance of sleep.

Work-related causes



Shift patterns: Shift work can create issues because it involves working against the body's natural rhythm. We look at this in more detail on [page 15](#).



Time zone work: Globalisation means more people work across international time zones, either travelling in person or engaging with customers and suppliers outside normal working hours, by phone or email. Allowance must be made for extended working hours and the time it takes to recover from jet lag and international time differences. Air travel within the same (or similar) time zone can also be disruptive to sleep. [See page 16](#) for more info.



Working day/week: The 24/7 economy requires many of us to work longer hours than a generation ago. Even when our formal working hours have not changed substantially, we find it harder to disconnect from work because of our mobile devices and expectations of an immediate

response, regardless of time of day or night. Encourage employees to disconnect work emails, calls and texts between agreed hours and/or at weekends. Sharing out-of-hours calls across teams can also help.



Stress: Work-related stress can have an adverse impact on sleep. The risk is greatest at times of change, or when there is uncertainty at work. Some stress can be positive, but stress that is persistent over longer periods is detrimental. It can make it difficult to rest and sleep and cause fatigue. [See page 25](#) for further detail.



Work relationships: Work is central to many people's lives, and relationships with colleagues have a significant bearing on wellbeing. A difficult relationship with a line manager or bullying by colleagues can cause stress, which carries over into a person's home life, disrupting sleep.

Changes in health and wellbeing



Temporary/treatable illnesses

A short-term illness or injury can affect the quality of sleep or cause sleep deprivation. Small adjustments to working arrangements, including working from home and flexibility around working hours, may aid recovery.



Onset of a lifelong condition/disability

Employees diagnosed with serious illness or those who experience a life-changing disability are more likely to suffer from sleep deprivation in addition to other problems linked to their diagnosis. A side effect of medication or treatment such as chemotherapy can be sleep disturbance. Cancer Research UK provides support for chemotherapy and insomnia.



Mental health

There is a close relationship between sleep and mental health. Living with a mental health problem can affect how well you sleep and poor sleep can have a negative impact on mental health. Business in the Community and Public Health England's [Mental Health Toolkit for Employers](#) provides straightforward advice and actions for employers. The mental health charity Mind has useful information on sleep, including tips from mental health advocate, [Jonny Benjamin](#). Likewise, the charity Mental Health Foundation has a guide to sleep. Workers can also review the [Good Thinking](#) website and [One You](#) content on sleep and stress.



Pregnancy

Sleep can be difficult at any stage of a pregnancy and adjustments must be made in the workplace if an employee chooses to disclose their pregnancy. Pregnant workers can review NHS Choices for advice about sleep during pregnancy.



Age-related

It is a myth that older people need less sleep, but we are less able to sleep in a single block as we age. When we are older we are more prone to being affected by a poor sleep environment or entrenched lifestyle factors. An older worker may need more time to recover from a late/night shift than in their younger years. Information for aiding sleep in later life can be found at Age UK and could be used sensitively and, where appropriate, to start a conversation with employees.



Menopause

The menopause transition can disrupt sleep for a prolonged period. Employers are encouraged to make adjustments at work, such as providing desk fans, cold water fountains, access to natural light, quiet workplace rest areas and non-synthetic clothing or uniforms.

Personal and lifestyle factors



Poor housing

Living conditions that are noisy, cramped, damp, or poorly heated and ventilated can contribute to fatigue and sleep deprivation. While most employers have limited scope for influencing where and how people live, it is important to understand the pressures that employees and their families must cope with in order to provide appropriate support in the workplace.

Employers who have influence over living arrangements – for example, those employing seasonal or migrant workers and those who provide temporary or overnight accommodation for staff, shift workers, people on call for duty (including emergency workers), or staff working offshore – have opportunities to create the conditions for employees to sleep and recover after extended and intense periods of work.



Financial

Money problems can cause anxiety, which leads to sleep deprivation. Employers can signpost financial advice, including credit unions, which offer lower rates of interest on loans. Citizens Advice is a source of online information about debt management. GamCare and Gamblers Anonymous give advice about gambling addiction and financial problems caused by gambling. Click on the below links for more information:



Bereavement

The loss of a loved one can precipitate an extended period of sleep deprivation. Fatigue, anxiety and mood swings are common during bereavement. Knowing that their employer supports them can help to minimise the employee's stress levels and reduce or avoid periods of sick leave, as well as aiding sleep and recovery. It can help employees to have access to counselling sessions, which may be provided through HR or an employee assistance programme. ACAS has developed an employers' guide, *Managing Bereavement in the Workplace*, in partnership with the bereavement charity Cruse.



New parents

One inevitable consequence for new parents is sleep deprivation. Families have the option of [shared parental leave](#) but employers also should consider making other reasonable adjustments, particularly in the first few months. NHS Choices provides advice and support for new parents.



Personal life

Significant changes at home can also affect sleep patterns for prolonged periods, with a detrimental impact at work. Divorce and separation should be considered as risk factors, as should disputes over child custody. The charity Relate provides support and information for families.

Sleep disorders



Sleep deprivation or poor sleep may be the consequence of a clinical sleep disorder, or this may be a contributory factor. Line managers should encourage employees to seek advice from their GP for symptoms of a possible sleep disorder. These include insomnia and breathing-related disorders such as obstructive sleep apnoea. They can have a significant impact on health and wellbeing, but they can be treated. NHS Choices has information about these and other conditions.



Line managers should consider health and safety implications when an employee has been diagnosed with a clinical sleep disorder. Does it put the safety of colleagues, or members of the public at risk? Should an employee be temporarily reassigned to other duties?



Workplace adjustments may be required to support employees who have a clinically diagnosed sleep disorder, including extended leave or working from home, temporary help with work responsibilities, or reassignment to another role.

“The serious impact of those health conditions which cause sleep-disrupting pain must be recognised by employers. If someone has a painful condition that affects their sleep, it then has a far greater impact on that person’s health and their ability to perform in day to day life, including at work.

“Therefore if someone has sleep-disturbing pain they need to target it by using analgesics or other approaches so their sleep is less disturbed. This is why shoulder pain, neck pain and other MSK conditions can have a greater impact than individuals and employers might expect, because they are conditions which wake people from sleep.”

Professor Anthony D Woolf
Bone and Joint Research Group,
Royal Cornwall Hospital

“It’s important to take employee welfare seriously and that includes supporting sleep and recovery. Sleep is often underrated, yet we need it to feel healthy and happy.

“Poor sleep and fatigue are common problems, affecting millions of people world-wide. Chronic sleep debt can have a seriously damaging effect on our mental and physical health and research shows that lack of sleep erodes concentration and problem-solving ability. Each hour of sleep lost per night is associated with a temporary loss of one IQ point.

“This toolkit provides an invaluable insight for employers to know what steps they can take to support sleep and recovery by improving staff environment, looking for sleep deprivation signs and providing advice on how they can address the issue with their employees.

“Early detection is key if someone is suffering with lack of sleep. It is much easier to help and solve the problem if it’s addressed quickly. Once a sleep issue becomes a sleep disorder, such as insomnia, it becomes much harder to change the learned behaviour and habits.”

Lisa Artis
The Sleep Council

Stress

Stress is one of the main causes of sleep deprivation or poor sleep quality. In many cases, the cause of stress is outside the workplace, but in around a third of cases, it is related to work.

All employers have a legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. This includes minimising the risk of stress-related illness or injury to employees.

The Health and Safety Executive has designed the Management Standards Approach to help employers manage the causes of work-related stress. It is based on the familiar 'Five steps to risk assessment' model, requiring management and staff to work together.

People sometimes get confused about the difference between pressure and stress. Everyone experiences pressure regularly – it can motivate people to perform at their best. It is when people experience too much pressure and feel unable to cope that stress can result.

Many organisations have reported improvements in productivity, retention of staff and a reduction in sickness absence after tackling work-related stress. As an employer, you are also required by law to assess the risk of stress-related ill health arising from work activities and take action to control that risk.

Line managers

Line managers play a vital role in identifying and managing stress within the organisation. They are likely to see the problems that cause stress first hand and will often be the first point of contact when an individual is feeling stressed. It is essential that they have the skills and behaviours to be able to manage these situations.

HSE Management Standards

The Standards refer to six areas of work that can lead to stress if not properly managed:



Demands

Workload, work patterns and the work environment



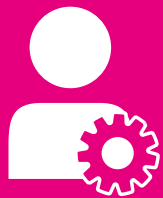
Control

How much say a person has in the way they do their work



Support

Includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line managers and colleagues



Role

Whether people understand their role in the organisation and whether the organisation ensures they do not have conflicting roles



Change

How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organisation



Relationships

Promoting positive working relationships to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

Mental health and work life balance

Good mental health and work life balance are important for sleep and recovery.

Workplace initiatives to encourage sleep and recovery can be part of a holistic approach to health and wellbeing, with a focus on mental health as well as physical and social wellbeing.

The [mental health toolkit for employers](#), created by Business in the Community and Public Health England, is an ideal starting point.

[Good Thinking](#) is an online service that helps people to manage and maintain their wellbeing. [One You](#) also provides information about good sleep and recovery.

Sleep hygiene: the right conditions for a good night's sleep

Sleep hygiene is simply a description of the ideal conditions for a good night's sleep. Each person has individual preferences but 'good' sleep hygiene includes:



Fixed times for going to bed and waking up



Regular physical activity can positively impact sleep. Also keep to a relaxing bedtime routine



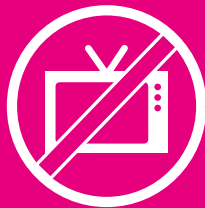
Maintaining a comfortable sleeping environment that's not too hot, cold, noisy or bright



Avoiding caffeine, nicotine and alcohol late at night



Avoiding eating a heavy meal late at night



Avoiding watching television, making phone calls, eating or working while in bed



Turning off all devices at least one hour before bedtime and keeping technology out of the bedroom



Avoiding the use of a smartphone as an alarm clock and charging the phone away from the bedroom at a central charging point for everyone in the household

Impact of blue light on sleep
Although any type of light can stop people feeling sleepy, research has shown that light towards the ‘blue’ end of the spectrum is particularly likely to keep people awake because it suppresses the production of the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin.

Computer screens, tablets, smartphones, flat-screen televisions and LED lighting all emit large amounts of blue light. Encourage employees to limit their exposure to blue light in the few hours before they go to bed. Some organisations choose to close down email servers after a certain point in the evening, to encourage staff to switch off from work. If using a smartphone, tablet or computer is necessary late in the evening, it's important to turn down the brightness and keep the device at least 12 inches from the eyes. There are a number of apps available to dim lighting on phones and tablets.

“It is not only the physiological impact of the blue light on our ability to produce melatonin. If you check your work email, Facebook or BBC News before you turn in for the night and read something that causes a negative emotion, for example, this could impact your ability to fall asleep or disturb your sleep throughout the night.

“By the same account, if you keep your phone in your bedroom and wake up in the middle of the night to see it flashing with notifications then the temptation to check it is there. We recommend that people get an alarm clock, turn off their phones and other technology and charge them in the kitchen or living room away from the sanctuary of their bedroom.

“Also, by leaving your phone off while you get up, dressed and eat breakfast makes for a better start to the day. You are setting your own agenda as opposed to allowing whatever you read to set it for you.”

Laura Willis
Shine Offline

3/ Taking action to support good sleep



Actions for employers

We suggest you include sleep matters in your organisation's approach to health and wellbeing.

These simple steps will also support and reinforce actions you are already taking to support other issues, including mental health, physical activity and musculoskeletal health. They will help you recruit and retain valued employees and help them to stay well at work for longer.

Starting the conversation about sleep with employees can be challenging; sleep is very personal and can be difficult to discuss. As a first step, encourage employees to use the NHS Choices self-assessment tool to review the quality of their sleep.

1. Prevention: creating the right culture and providing support



- ✓ Embed sleep and recovery into your organisation's health and wellbeing strategy
- ✓ Consult employees about the support they need and put it into practice with their collaboration
- ✓ Conduct a sleep audit in the workplace, or encourage employees to self-assess
- ✓ Support line managers, particularly through training, helping them to recognise symptoms of sleep deprivation
- ✓ Use the HSE stress management standards to reduce work-related causes of stress
- ✓ Make sure staff have access to natural light and consider the use of daylight simulator lamps, which emit a bright flicker-free light close to natural sunlight, particularly during the winter
- ✓ Temperature, ventilation and humidity all contribute to comfort at work. They help employees work efficiently during the day and rest/sleep at night, so ensure air conditioning is well maintained and provide additional ventilation such as fans when necessary
- ✓ Create quiet spaces for rest and relaxation, where employees can switch off completely from work for a period
- ✓ Work with employees to create shift patterns which allow for recovery, making adjustments for those who work out of the office, particularly those who spend time on the road and will sometimes be long distances from home when their regular working day ends
- ✓ Incorporate flexitime for employees who work or travel across international time zones
- ✓ Don't count travel time as down time, even if employees have not been connected to the office
- ✓ Make allowance for additional time employees have spent away from their families
- ✓ Let staff unplug; encourage employees to switch off by reducing/halting out-of-work emails and protecting disconnected time during non-work hours
- ✓ Bear in mind that some employees will find it stressful to be 'out of the loop' and work with them to decide what's best for them

2. Early intervention: recognising and addressing sleep deprivation



- ✓ Empower line managers to intervene when necessary and to approach the subject in a caring and concerned way
- ✓ Open a dialogue with employees to talk and recognise if sleep deprivation is a problem
- ✓ Remember that many will not consider that sleep and recovery is an issue that can and should be addressed at work
- ✓ Signpost to information that will help employees make lifestyle changes that will address some of the problems they experience with sleep and recovery
- ✓ Self-care is an important first step, so promote good sleep routines
- ✓ Encourage use of self-care tools like sleep diaries or apps to help get a better understanding of triggers and issues
- ✓ Lighten their load: Consider the possibility that some employees are working long hours because they are not coping well with their workload
- ✓ Explore ways to ease their burden: sometimes job redesign may be necessary
- ✓ Where appropriate, refer to Occupational Health or an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP); Most EAPs have a confidential helpline or advice service for employees
- ✓ When symptoms persist, encourage employees to seek professional help
- ✓ A pharmacist may be appropriate in the first instance and NHS Choices provides a lot of advice

3. Recovery: helping employees to recuperate



- ✓ Help employees to understand the impact of excessive screen time on their mental wellbeing, work/life balance and sleep
- ✓ Encourage them to have screen breaks, including a break from social media and news channels throughout the day
- ✓ Hydration aids recovery, so make drinking water available throughout the workplace
- ✓ Encourage exposure to natural light, as sunshine helps the body recover natural rhythms disrupted by poor sleep or lack of sleep
- ✓ Walking meetings, outside lunches and breaks from work that involve stepping out of the workplace can all be promoted
- ✓ Ensure staff have a quiet space away from their desks to eat lunch and consider providing spaces for staff to relax during the working day or night
- ✓ Break-out spaces, sofa areas and relaxation pods are used by some employers to promote rest and recovery
- ✓ Ensure staff take their full holiday entitlement. Time off work is not 'nice to have' but an essential element of work/life balance

“There are a number of determinants of insufficient sleep which will affect many employees, including heavy commutes, not getting enough physical activity, smoking and alcohol. Employers can provide practical support relating to all of these situations, which needn’t be complex or intrusive. Support can range from allowing flexitime and home-working to help with long commutes, to incentivising employees to be more active (such as offering additional holiday time to employees who cycle to work or meetings). This toolkit provides a good, comprehensive resource for employers to consult when considering employee support around sleep.”

Marco Hafner

Senior Economist, RAND Europe

Appendices



Glossary of terms

Good sleep

This will vary from person to person, but evidence suggests the healthy daily sleep range is between seven and nine hours every 24 hours.

Sleep quality

The key determinants of sleep quality are the time spent sleeping in bed, the time taken to fall asleep and the amount of times sleep is disrupted.

Sleep deprivation

Where good sleep (between seven and nine hours every 24 hours) is denied over a prolonged period of time. Chronic sleep deprivation involves sleeping less than six hours a night over a prolonged period of time.

Fatigue

Generally considered to be a decline in mental and/or physical performance that results from prolonged exertion, sleep loss and/or disruption of the internal clock. It also refers to the issues that arise from excessive working time or poorly designed shift patterns.

Mental health

A person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being.

Sleeplessness

Inability to sleep, or to achieve good sleep.

Sleep disorders

A group of conditions which affect the ability to sleep well on a regular basis.

Recovery

The process that enables a person to return to a normal state of health, mind or strength after a prolonged period of sleep deprivation.

A guide to sleep

We all have a ‘sleep-wake cycle’, known as a Circadian rhythm, the daily pattern of alternating wakefulness and sleep. This rhythm is a biological programme tied to time, like an internal clock. This clock tells us when it is time to go to bed and when it is time to wake up. Our sleep-wake cycle occurs about once every 24 hours.

Our Circadian rhythm is also influenced by cues from the external world. Most of us go to bed not only when we are tired, but also when the outside world says it is time. Similarly, we tend to wake up when the room becomes bright with morning light, or when the alarm clock goes off. These cues from the outside world are important in determining both the quality of sleep and how long we sleep.

Sleep occurs in a recurring cycle of 90 to 110 minutes and is divided into two categories: non-rapid eye movement (non-REM), which is further split into four stages and rapid eye movement (REM) sleep.

Non-REM sleep

Stage 1: Light Sleep

During the first stage of sleep, we're half awake and half asleep. Our muscle activity slows down and slight twitching may occur. This is a period of light sleep, meaning we can be awakened easily at this stage.

Stage 2: True Sleep

Within ten minutes of light sleep, we enter stage two, which lasts around 20 minutes. The breathing pattern and heart rate start to slow down. This period accounts for the largest part of human sleep.

Stages 3 and 4: Deep Sleep

During stage three, the brain begins to produce delta waves, a type of wave that is large (high amplitude) and slow (low frequency). Breathing and heart rate are at their lowest levels.

Stage four is characterised by rhythmic breathing and limited muscle activity. If we are awakened during deep sleep, we do not adjust immediately and often feel groggy and disoriented for several minutes after waking up.

REM sleep

The first REM period usually begins about 70 to 90 minutes after we fall asleep. We have around three to five REM episodes a night. Although we are not conscious, the brain is very active – often more so than when we are awake. This is the period when most dreams occur. Our eyes dart around and our breathing rate and blood pressure rise. However, our bodies are effectively paralysed, said to be nature's way of preventing us from acting out our dreams.

After REM sleep, the whole cycle begins again.

Clinical sleep conditions

Obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA)

OSA is a condition where the walls of the throat relax and narrow during sleep, interrupting normal breathing. This may lead to regularly interrupted sleep, which can have a big impact on quality of life and can increase the risk of developing certain conditions. OSA is a treatable condition, and there are a variety of treatment options that can reduce the symptoms.

Sleep apnoea can have adverse effects on workplace safety, but is frequently undiagnosed. Employers may wish to consider screening for sleep apnoea in the workplace, or encouraging employees to undertake a self-assessment, using a tool like The Epworth Sleepiness Scale.

Although sleep apnoea can present risks to workplace safety, there are a number of treatment options available, including:

- Lifestyle changes, such as losing weight, cutting down on alcohol and sleeping on the side of the body

- Using a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) device, which prevents airways closing during sleep by delivering a continuous supply of compressed air through a mask
- Wearing a mandibular advancement device (MAD), which are gumshield-like devices fitting around the teeth, holding the jaw and tongue forward to increase the space at the back of the throat during sleep
- Surgery may also be an option if sleep apnoea is thought to be the result of a physical problem that can be corrected surgically, such as an unusual inner neck structure

Insomnia

People with insomnia find it difficult to sleep or to stay asleep for long enough to feel refreshed. It affects about one in three people and is common in older people.

Occasional episodes of insomnia may come and go without causing any serious problems, but for some people it can last for months or even years at a time. Persistent insomnia can have a significant impact on quality of life. It can limit what can be achieved during the day, affect mood and lead to relationship problems.

It is not always clear what triggers insomnia, but it is often associated with:

- Stress and feeling anxious
- Poor sleeping environment, such as an uncomfortable bed, or a bedroom that is too light, noisy, hot or cold
- Lifestyle factors, such as jet lag, shift work or drinking alcohol or caffeine before going to bed
- Mental health conditions, including depression and schizophrenia
- Physical health conditions, including heart problems and chronic pain
- Certain medicines, including antidepressants and steroids

continued overleaf

Clinical sleep conditions *continued*

Treatment: insomnia will often improve by making changes to bedtime habits, and using [sleep hygiene methods](#). If these don't help, GPs may recommend other treatments. If insomnia lasts for more than four weeks, cognitive and behavioural treatments or a short course of prescription sleeping tablets as a temporary measure may be recommended. If it is possible to identify an underlying cause of sleeping difficulties, treating this could be enough to return sleep to normal.

Restless legs syndrome (RLS)

RLS is a sleep-related movement disorder, which gives an overwhelming and often unpleasant urge to move the legs while at rest. RLS is believed to affect about 10 per cent of adults, although the symptoms vary from mild to severe. The worst cases can severely disrupt sleep and cause insomnia.

There is a link between RLS and pregnancy – about one in five pregnant women will experience symptoms in the last trimester.

Narcolepsy

This is a rare long-term brain disorder that causes a person to suddenly fall asleep at inappropriate times. The brain is unable to regulate sleeping and waking patterns normally. The condition is usually diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 40 years. There is no cure, but making changes to improve sleeping habits and taking medication can help minimise its impact. The charity Narcolepsy UK provides help and support to those with the condition.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

We can all benefit from improving the quality of our sleep. For many of us, it may simply be a case of making small lifestyle or attitude adjustments in order to help us sleep better. For those with insomnia, it is usually necessary to seek more specialist treatment. Sleep medication is commonly used, but may have negative side effects and is not recommended for the long-term.

Psychological approaches are useful for people with long-term insomnia, because they can encourage us to establish good sleep patterns and to develop a healthy, positive mental outlook about sleep, as well as dealing with worrying thoughts towards sleeping.

One of the most widely used and successful therapies is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). This is useful even for people who have had insomnia for a long period of time. A full course of such a therapy with a sleep specialist is potentially costly and is most appropriate for people with severe sleep problems. But some CBT principles can be appropriate and easily practiced for anyone who is experiencing a sleepless night.

Resources for employers



Resources for employers

Further information about the business impacts from lack of sleep:

RAND Europe – Why Sleep Matters

www.rand.org/randeurope/research/projects/the-value-of-the-sleep-economy.html

Further information and resources about sleep and sleep quality:

HSE – Fatigue

www.hse.gov.uk/humanfactors/topics/fatigue.htm

NHS Choices – Better sleep

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

NHS Choices – How to get to sleep

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/insomnia/Pages/bedtimeritual.aspx

NHS Choices – Insomnia

www.nhs.uk/conditions/insomnia

NHS Choices – Narcolepsy

www.nhs.uk/conditions/narcolepsy

NHS Choices – Obstructive Sleep Apnoea

www.nhs.uk/conditions/obstructive-sleep-apnoea

NHS Choices – Sleep self-assessment tool for individuals

www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Sleep-self-assessment.aspx

NHS Choices – Why lack of sleep is bad for your health

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/tiredness-and-fatigue/Pages/lack-of-sleep-health-risks.aspx

Information on managing specific circumstances relating to sleep:

ACAS – Managing Bereavement in the Workplace

www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/7/a/Managing-bereavement-in-the-workplace-a-good-practice-guide.pdf

Age UK – Aiding sleep in later life

www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/mind-body/getting-a-good-nights-sleep

Cancer Research UK – Support for chemotherapy and insomnia

www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-in-general/treatment/chemotherapy/side-effects/about/insomnia-chemotherapy

HSE – Stress Management Standards

www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards

NHS Choices – Tiredness in pregnancy

www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/pages/tiredness-sleep-pregnant.aspx

TUC – Guidance on Supporting Working Women through the Menopause

www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/TUC_menopause_0.pdf

Resources for employers *continued*

Sleep and sleep condition organisations:

British Snoring and Sleep Apnoea Association

www.britishsnoring.co.uk

Narcolepsy UK

www.narcolepsy.org.uk

Restless Legs Syndrome UK

www.rls-uk.org

The Sleep Apnoea Trust Association

www.sleep-apnoea-trust.org

The Sleep Council

<https://sleepcouncil.org.uk/>

Mental health resources:

Business in the Community and Public Health England – Mental Health Toolkit for Employers

https://wellbeing.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/mental_health_toolkit_for_employers_-_small.pdf

Mental Health Foundation – How to sleep better guide

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/file/1485/download?token=BUCq_Am1

Mind – Information on sleep

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/sleep-problems/#.Wha057SFhYJ

Information about work patterns, driving and long hours:

ACAS – Changing patterns of work

www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/5/b/B09_1.pdf

Gov.uk – Health assessments for night working hours

www.gov.uk/night-working-hours/health-assessments

HSE – Guide to managing shift work

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg256.pdf

HSE – Research report on working long hours

www.hse.gov.uk/research/hsl_pdf/2003/hsl03-02.pdf

IOSH – Research on the effects of shift work on health

[www.iosh.co.uk/Books-and-resources/The-effects-of-shift-work-on-health-\(2015\).aspx](http://www.iosh.co.uk/Books-and-resources/The-effects-of-shift-work-on-health-(2015).aspx)

Safety Critical Offshore Workers – Hours, shifts and schedules

www.offshoreworkers.org.uk/files/Publications/Offshore%20report%2028%204%2016.pdf

ROSPA – Resources on driver fatigue

www.rospace.com/road-safety/advice/drivers/fatigue

Case studies



Anglian Water

Joe Perry, Head of Employee Relations, Anglian Water Services

At Anglian Water, the topic of sleep finds its way into everyday conversations. We are the largest water and water recycling company in England and Wales by geographic area, so many staff unavoidably spend a lot of time on the road.

Travel time can be significant and has to be factored into a typical working day. That often means deciding whether to stay overnight in a hotel, or planning the day around a long drive. Not surprisingly, many staff prefer to return home, even at the end of a long, challenging day. A judgement has to be made about safety; whether it would be better to drive up the day before a meeting, or return home the day after.

This opens up a natural opportunity to talk about sleep and sleeping habits. How do you get a good night's sleep in an unfamiliar room and bed? More importantly, how does this compare to how you sleep at home? The discussion is now about sleep hygiene, although we may not think of it as such. We are sharing information and advice about sleep that will help employees, whether they are working or at home. Any workplace conversation that encourages discussion about sleep or, more broadly, health and wellbeing, is a good thing.

This is easier in an environment where there is a culture that fosters open and honest conversations about health and wellbeing. The senior leadership of Anglian Water has a strong commitment to health and wellbeing. The organisation has adopted Business in the Community's [Workwell Model](#), which puts employee wellbeing at centre stage in boardroom discussions. Our Healthier, Happier, Safer programme has transformed the way that we think about wellbeing in the workplace, with demonstrably positive outcomes. We work with employees to embed practices that support physical and mental health across the organisation.

In such an environment an employee is less likely to feel uncomfortable if his or her line manager asks them how they are sleeping. They are also more likely to come forward if they have a concern that is affecting his or her sleep, knowing that it will be addressed sympathetically. Across the organisation, we adopt practices that are conducive to good health and wellbeing which are, by extension, good for sleep and good for recovery. We are encouraged not to work at the weekends and to take all our holidays

with a complete break from work. I try not to email before 8am or after 6pm. I don't want my team checking their phone after work and on weekends.

This holistic approach has many benefits for wellbeing, including creating the right conditions for healthy sleep. By doing so, we all benefit.

Dystonia and long-term conditions

Anonymous

Long-term conditions can have a profound impact on sleep. I have a neurological condition called dystonia, which affects people in different ways. In my case, dystonia affects the upper left side of my body, causing involuntary spasms in my arm, shoulder and neck.

Fortunately, I am right-handed so it does not affect my handwriting, for example. But I have to make adjustments to do basic tasks, such as tying shoelaces and hammering in a nail. I cannot carry a mug of tea with my left hand.

However, dystonia is most affecting when I am trying to relax or go to sleep. Even though my body is ready to sleep, my left arm and shoulder have other ideas. Eventually, it settles down. But on a bad night it might cost me, say, 30 minutes of sleep, which is a lot over the course of a week.

Stress has a big impact on my dystonia, as does the cold. Coffee also seems to aggravate the symptoms. Yet I am my own worst enemy when it comes to managing my condition. As a journalist and editor, I worked unusual hours and often against deadlines. For some years, I could not sleep until I had seen and responded to, the first editions of the national newspapers.

Typically, that task was completed by 1am. By then, I would be too wound up to sleep and my dystonia was wide awake.

These days, I have a better work life balance but dystonia is a constant and it still intrudes on my sleep. I combine work with fostering, so I often work in the evening once the children are asleep. I have to be firm about my routine. I try to switch off my laptop at least one hour before I intend to go to sleep, although 90 minutes is better. It is easy to cheat by simply using my mobile phone instead and it takes a lot of willpower not to check emails one last time. But the benefit of switching off in terms of quality of sleep and how much better I feel the next day is immense.

Exercise is critical for me. It is an important antidote to my desk-bound work, but it also seems to reduce the impact of my dystonia. On days when I have been able to get out on the bike or go for a run, the spasms abate and are easier to manage. The opposite is also true. If I go several days without exercise, the spasms can be really intrusive. My sleep suffers and I am definitely less productive the following day.

I love strong, black coffee and I am inclined to drink too much of it. Sensibly, I should only have coffee in the morning, or after lunch. Anything later than that seems to encourage spasms that disrupt my evening.

One issue with my dystonia is that it is invisible to most people (although my wife knows when it is causing me problems). It has a limited impact on my life, particularly when compared to many other long-term conditions. It is also fiendishly difficult to explain. So, discussing it with colleagues or line managers has been awkward and is generally best avoided. I know many people with long-term conditions will feel the same way. Yet talking about it is important and the first step towards putting in place support which might make a significant difference.

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Dr Ali Hashtroudi, Clinical Director and Honorary Senior Lecturer

We consider sleep and recovery issues in relation to our staff in two capacities at Guy's and St Thomas'. Many of our staff work in shifts and we know first-hand the potential impact this has on health and wellbeing. The risks of shift work causing different types of ill health is documented in literature too.

We have two strands of work around sleep and recovery at Guy's and St Thomas'. We have around 15,300 staff (and an extra 3,000 Bank staff), many of whom work in shifts, so we know the importance of the issues. The first strand is 'reactive', involving those who come to the Occupational Health team because they are struggling with shift work. We deal with these issues on an individual basis, understanding what the problems are and how best we can address them. For example, people on insulin may struggle with shift patterns, so we provide them with expert training to manage their medication and their work pattern. Sometimes referrals onto other services like sleep disorder specialists are necessary. Whatever the action, the end product of these interventions is to advise staff and managers on how best to handle these issues.

The second strand of our sleep and recovery work is proactive. We run a number of initiatives as part of our '5 ways to a healthier YOU' programme which encompasses all our health and wellbeing offerings for staff, such as smoking cessation, gym memberships, exercise groups, healthy eating support etc. We run monthly campaigns themed around different topics. One recent campaign was under the slogan HALT (hungry, angry, late, tired) when we reiterated the importance of maintaining a healthy work-life balance and taking breaks. As part of this campaign, we also focused on the importance of sleep and how to maintain a sleep pattern – especially for those who do shift work.

We've worked with a leading specialist (Dr Michael Farquhar) to develop workshops and seminars, including training on sleep and recovery, for our paediatric junior doctors. We're currently working to roll out the ideas to staff in other directorates.

Historically, sleeping on shifts used to be discouraged. We are working to promote taking a short nap at long breaks during night duties as it helps improve sleep patterns. To establish this, some ground work is needed to shift the culture to accept that taking breaks and sleeping during breaks is important, but also to support this to happen. For instance, you need a place for people to sleep, planning for breaks in advance and proper handovers to ensure the continuity of care.

The Working Time Directive (WTD) often comes up and it is essential that it's embraced by all. This doesn't just mean paying attention to working hours, it means providing health checks for staff who undertake shift work. The bottom line is to ensure everyone, staff and managers, recognise the importance of sleep in the context of productivity, health and wellbeing.

Menopause and sleep deprivation

Anonymous

The menopause is a significant cause of sleep deprivation or poor sleep. It is a normal and natural part of ageing and affects all women. Yet its impact, which can last several years, is not easily discussed in a workplace environment. This makes it difficult for organisations to make the necessary adjustment to support women at this stage of their lives.

I have a senior position in a large organisation, with significant responsibilities and a busy schedule every day. I have worked through the menopause, but it has sometimes been a challenge to maintain the same pace because of a lack of sleep, which may have built up over several nights.

Knowing that I'd wake up in the early hours of the morning sweating profusely several times a week meant I could never go off to sleep peacefully. I rarely enjoyed deep sleep. At times, the sweating was so bad that I needed to take a shower and change the bed sheets. The disruption prevented me from going back to sleep.

Inevitably, I suffered from severe fatigue during the day, which made me short-tempered and affected my ability to concentrate and to make good decisions. There were many times when I felt too unwell to go to work. But knowing that this was something that was likely to persist for a long time, several years even, meant that I knew I had to find a way to manage the way I felt.

The average age for the onset of menopause is 50. But the transition phase can take place over several years, so it is not unusual for women in their early to mid-40s to feel the effects. Treatment for other conditions, such as ovarian cancer, can bring on the menopause much earlier.

Employers need to become more aware of the impact of the menopause, particularly if they are serious about equality of opportunity for women and about the recruitment and retention of older workers. There are simple, practical steps that will help, such as giving more people the opportunity to work from home, flexible hours, better air conditioning in the workplace

and easy access to water. But what really will make a difference is creating a culture where employees are able to discuss issues like the menopause with their line manager, knowing that they will be treated sensitively and without prejudice.

NATS

Julie Elder, HR & Corporate Services Director

NATS looks after the vast majority of aircraft flying in the airspace above the UK. Our air traffic controllers are responsible for the safe passage of aircraft 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They work a shift system to accommodate this. With increasingly busy air traffic, our controllers can be just as busy at 5 o'clock in the morning as they are at 5 o'clock in the afternoon.

The safe and efficient movement of aircraft depends heavily on the skill and performance of our controllers. Controllers have to process large amounts of information, make timely decisions and be vigilant continually for potential problems. Our regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority, recognised nearly 30 years ago that to maintain consistently high levels of safe performance, the amount of time controllers can 'talk to pilots' needs to be tightly regulated. Our controllers' working hours and rest breaks are therefore carefully controlled – probably to a greater extent than any other profession in the UK.

Even with these controls in place, people vary in how they cope with shift work depending on their health, fitness, age, lifestyle and domestic responsibilities. Some adapt well, others do not. Recognising this, NATS Human Factors specialists run a programme to inform controllers about the importance of proper rest and sleep to promote high performance in the work place. For example, all staff in NATS with a role that has safety implications (and this extends beyond air traffic controllers to include engineers, managers, etc.) have to complete a detailed e-learning course on fatigue management. This helps them to recognise the signs of tiredness and fatigue and to know how to prevent these things affecting the jobs they do. This training material is augmented by regular 'campaigns' that promote various topics, such as techniques to maintain alertness and maintaining good sleep habits.

An excerpt from a recent article on shift work and sleep on the NATS in-house intranet site:

Working shifts that differ from the routines of friends and family can leave you feeling isolated and it is important to make the effort not to lose contact with them.

- Talk to friends and family about shift work. If they understand the problems you are facing, it will be easier for them to be supportive and considerate
- Make your family and friends aware of your shift schedule so they can include you when planning social activities
- Plan your domestic duties around your shift schedule and try to ensure that you do not complete them at the cost of rest/sleep. You may need to change the times/days when some jobs are done

continued overleaf

NATS *continued*

To help controllers tackle tiredness as their working day progresses, NATS air traffic controllers are encouraged:

- To use their mandated rest breaks in such a way that their recovery from a spell in front of a radar display or in the control tower is maximised. For example, getting some fresh air is promoted but sitting down at a computer to check emails is discouraged.
- To take short (20-30 minute) naps where their duties allow, as these have been shown to boost productivity and alertness later in the day. NATS provides suitable facilities for this.
- To set up their working environment in such a way that it is conducive to aid concentration and minimise physical fatigue.

Finally, NATS has a fatigue risk management policy and strategy which underpins all our efforts in this area. The overarching principle of this is that fatigue management must be a shared responsibility between both management and staff. Simply speaking, this means that everyone in the Company needs to take seriously the risks that fatigue can bring to the air traffic control operation and take steps both when at work and when at leisure to rest, sleep and recover from the demands of the job.

Royal Mail Group

Dr Shaun Davis, Global Director of Safety, Health, Wellbeing & Sustainability

At Royal Mail, we recognise that there are links between sleep and a range of physical and mental health issues and for the benefit of our staff, we wanted to consider ways to approach the issues of sleep and recovery.

One of the ways we have done so is through our 'Feeling First Class' programme. It's a comprehensive health and wellbeing initiative which promotes good work, exercise and sleep and is available to all our 141,000 permanent staff and 20,000 Christmas casuals. The programme promotes balance – for good health and wellbeing, you have to do everything together and everything in moderation. Diet, exercise, alcohol consumption and sleep all affect how you are at work.

Through the programme, we ran a mini campaign on sleep, promoting information on good habits. We've also empowered and coached line managers to have conversations with staff about health and wellbeing on a range of difficult to approach topics – relationship or financial issues, stress and, crucially, sleep. Managers have been trained to spot signs of sleep deprivation and the

potential resulting behaviours – if people aren't sleeping well, their anxiety levels might rise and they may get trapped in a negative cycle of poor diet and lifestyle.

Alongside this, we have an employee assistance programme, including a 24/7, 365 helpline that families and staff can access. We signpost to legal and therapeutic services and Occupational Health can refer to counselling.

Poor sleep and fatigue go hand in hand and fatigue is extremely dangerous – it's often the cause of accidents at work and on the roads. We recognise that we have a responsibility to our shift workers to promote safety and so we have moved to full compliance with Working Time Regulations. This is key not just because it's a legal requirement, but because it means we're giving people time to recover.

Sleep is a difficult subject – it is intensely personal, but it is also essential to people's ability to perform at work. For us, creating a positive culture around wellbeing has been key to opening up conversations on difficult subjects like sleep. 'Feeling First Class' has

been instrumental – it's easier for staff to engage with wellbeing issues under the banner of a branded campaign with its own identity and to talk openly about sleep and recovery in the workplace without it feeling like a taboo topic.

Unilever PLC

Marcus Hunt, Health & Wellbeing Manager UK, IRE & Europe

We have made sleep a priority at Unilever. Throughout 2015, we launched a range of sleep initiatives, among them our national 'Sleep Well' campaign, which we connected very closely to our annual celebration of World Mental Health Day.

Sleep is fundamental to good health and wellbeing and we decided to approach the issue in a range of ways. The 'Sleep Well' campaign included a number of options, with each site given a selection of resources to help meet the needs of the diverse working environments across the UK. Our colleagues broadly work across manufacturing, distribution, research and development and office work spaces.

One of the particularly engaging and interactive options was a pop-up roadshow set, showing a typical bedroom and the key factors in it that can affect sleep. The pop-up set had moveable discs showing sleep 'preventers' (like mobile phones and bright lights) and 'enablers' of sleep. Employees were encouraged to move the discs around to select correct enablers and preventers, which then entered them

into a competition to win a sunrise alarm clock. All of this helped ensure employee involvement and engagement with the topic.

A sleep psychologist helped to inform our approach and, with their input, we co-wrote a sleep handbook for employees. This provides key information on sleep hygiene, lifestyle factors, sleep enablers, sleep and shift work and sleep and mental health.

We also developed a practical workshop for employees, focusing on sleep, lifestyle and stress factors. The one hour sessions were delivered either face to face or online, to ensure another way to reach employees directly. We also produced evidence based webinars, podcasts and literature with top tips on sleeping well.

This campaign and the materials continue to be part of our 'Unilever Global Health & Wellbeing Strategy' – which has the four pillars of physical, mental, emotional health and purpose. As we discuss and promote good wellness behaviours, our ongoing dialogue about sleep continues to be especially connected with emotional and mental health

items and resources such as our Employee Assistance Programme (including financial advice support), our support of daily physical activity and the promotion of mindfulness. We also encouraged the promotion of our materials and resources to colleagues' family members to help support their ongoing needs at home – which may be directly or indirectly related to sleep.

We received great employee feedback following the 'Sleep Well' campaign, with almost 60% of national employees engaging with our resources, but things didn't end there – we have an ongoing commitment to this issue and, for example, we are now running a global programme on sleep with a supportive webinar to colleagues globally.

Yorkshire Building Society

Sarah Moore, Wellbeing Lead

You wouldn't expect employees of Yorkshire Building Society to be at risk of sleep deprivation. We don't have shift workers as such and many of our staff work in branches, which keep regular office hours. But when we started talking about sleep as part of our approach to health and wellbeing at work, we quickly realised how important sleep is as an issue.

In the first instance, the subject of sleep was raised by an employee during one of our regular discussions. A follow-up post on our intranet was widely read and attracted more than 40 responses from our colleagues, who shared tips and advice for getting a good night's sleep. We used one of our weekly staff intranet polls to find out more about sleeping habits and 30 per cent answered: "Sleep? What's that?" So, we knew that our colleagues would welcome more support.

We followed up with campaigns around sleep, framed as an integral part of our approach to health and wellbeing and co-created by employees. Our aim was to provide the information people need to understand why sleep is good for you and to help people get more sleep. We posted articles about sleep, with practical advice about how to get a good night's sleep, which have proven very popular across the organisation.

Working with the Mental Health Foundation, who support our wellbeing programme, we provided additional advice about how to heal after a period of poor sleep. This encompassed health, environment, attitude and lifestyle. We made available an eight-week sleep course and encouraged employees to access 'Unmind', our own health and wellbeing portal, which includes sleep support.

An important consideration is that it became clear to us that for many employees a barrier to a good night's sleep is their children not sleeping well. So, we signposted to advice to help their children at bedtime, knowing that this is a positive step towards also helping parents.

Sleep is a deeply personal experience and not everybody will want to talk about it. But, as we found, it is an issue that concerns many employees. Having an open conversation in the workplace encourages people to think about their own sleep patterns and whether there are things they can do to help themselves sleep better.

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- [ACAS](#)
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- [CIPD](#)
- [Circadian](#)
- [Connect Health](#)
- [Council for Work and Health](#)
- [Crisis](#)
- [Crossrail](#)
- [Faculty of Occupational Medicine](#)
- [Guy's and St Thomas' Foundation Trust](#)
- [Health and Safety Executive](#)
- [Heineken](#)
- [HM Revenue & Customs](#)
- [IOSH](#)
- [Linklaters](#)
- [Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Muckle LLP](#)
- [NATS](#)
- [Newcastle United Foundation](#)
- [RAF](#)
- [RAND Europe](#)
- [Royal Mail Group](#)
- [Sainsbury's](#)
- [Shine Offline](#)
- [Sleep Apnoea Trust Association](#)
- [Society of Occupational Medicine](#)
- [Sunderland University](#)
- [Teesside University](#)
- [The Sleep Council](#)
- [TUC](#)
- [Unilever](#)
- [Yorkshire Building Society](#)

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Resources for employers

Business in the Community and Public Health England have developed a range of toolkits to support employers with employee health and wellbeing:



Sleep and recovery: a toolkit for employers

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