



# The Management Standards

September 2011

# Management Standards

for

## A Healthy Organisation

*Strengthening Corporate and  
Personal Resilience*

*The Promotion of  
Wellbeing and High  
Performance at Work, and*

*The Prevention of Stress*

***‘It may be common sense but it’s not common practice’***

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# Introduction

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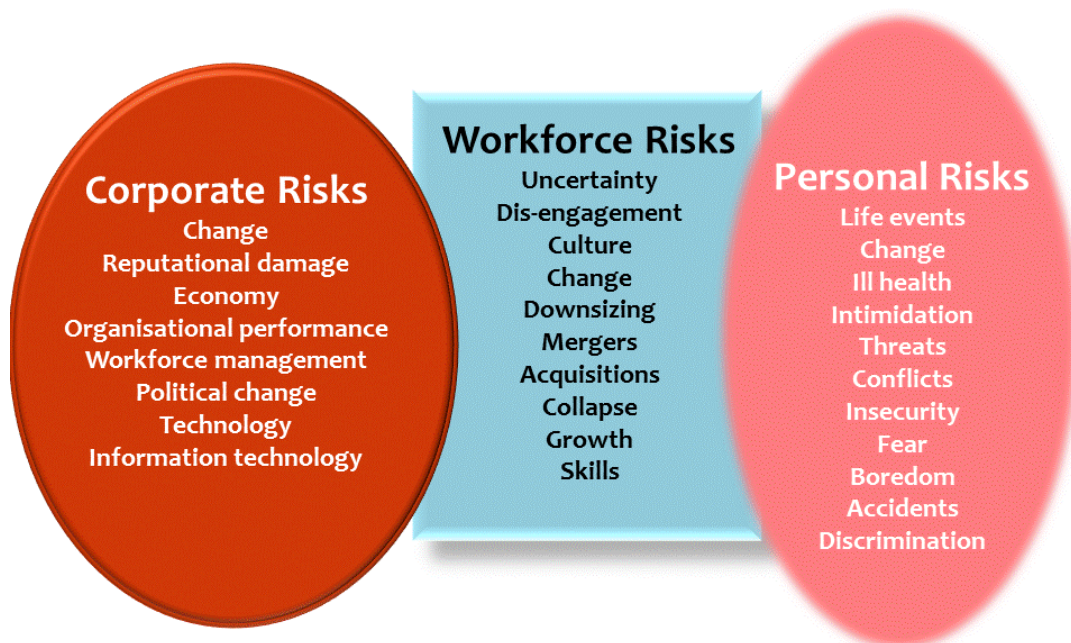
## Purpose of standards

Standards provide something to aim for; they provide the steps towards a specified aim, in this case, the achievement of high performance through strengthening corporate resilience, embedding wellbeing and high performance into the workplace culture and preventing stress at work.

## Risks to organisations, the workforce and individuals at work

We live and work in the context of organisations. Organisations continuously face risks to their survival. These have the potential to destabilise staff and cause psychological distress. Psychological distress reduces performance significantly and can give rise to avoidable and unnecessary high costs associated with staff attending work but lacking the concentration, motivation or interest in performing well, because they are diverted by events and experiences around them.

Examples of the risks are shown below:



These standards offer effective actions required to mitigate the powerful influence that corporate, workforce and individual risks have on the wellbeing and performance of the organisation and its workforce when risks turn into events, for example, when the organisation suffers reputational damage due to the behaviour of its chairman.

These standards are, also, designed to prevent the risks from turning into events, by offering actions that elevate the healthiness and resilience of the organisation so that corporate consciousness is alert to possible risks and adapts itself effectively to avoid them.

## **Strengthening corporate, workforce and personal resilience against risks**

Resilience is the capacity to respond effectively to events without experiencing psychological distress; the ability to perform well despite experiencing adverse events. It is, also, about forming attitudes that enable the organisation, workforce and individuals, to grow and become even stronger as a consequence of overcoming adverse events.

Events occur all the time, and most are accommodated without effort and undue concern. It is those events that place the organisation, workforce and individuals on alert that call on resilience to ensure the event is overcome without having an impact on performance.

## **Workforce wellbeing and performance**

Psychological wellbeing is how people feel – ‘if you feel well you perform better than if you feel unwell’.

Psychological wellbeing goes beyond health. Whilst being healthy assists with psychological wellbeing, staff can feel psychologically vulnerable at work at the same time as being healthy. Feeling psychologically vulnerable causes anxiety that interferes with performance.

Psychological wellbeing produces positive attitudes, energy, motivation, engagement, innovative thinking, alertness, excitement, happiness and the capacity to work intensively and with great effect.

Psychological wellbeing in one person can be a stimulus in others to perform well.

Physical and nutritional wellbeing boosts psychological wellbeing. These standards focus on psychological wellbeing.

Commitment and trust between the organisation, its managers and staff is a central feature of a psychologically well workforce, and the strengthening of commitment and trust is the principal platform of these standards.

## **Stress**

Stress is a personal response to events. Some features of stress stimulate us, whilst others can eventually cause serious physical ill health. Stress can be described as a continuum, as follows:

**Pressure** – a stimulant, so long as pressure is in relatively short bursts and individuals believe they can control the degree and duration of pressure. Once personal control over pressure is lost, individuals may experience –

- Tension** – which is also a stimulant to take action, in the knowledge that taking action can release tension. Tension can be felt. People report experiencing headaches, as well as sensations of anxiety. If tension is not brought under personal control, individuals may deteriorate to –
- Strain** – which is an impairment to performance. People experiencing strain tend to lose concentration and think more about the cause of their strain than their work. Unless this is brought under personal control people may deteriorate to-
- Stress** – which is a significant impairment to personal performance in work and outside work. People experiencing stress are almost always thinking about the causes of their sensations. Serious degrees of stress lead to physical ill health, some of which can be life threatening.

Stress impedes performance. Those who feel stressed tend to feel sensations of anxiety and, sometimes, depression. These sensations divert concentration. Concentration is essential for performance.

Stress isn't prominent in healthy organisations. When it arises, it is controlled very quickly. The costs of stress are largely avoided, despite healthy organisations facing similar risks as others.

These standards help with the primary prevention of stress – preventing the opportunity for stress to arise in the first place.

## Organisation health

Organisations provide the context for work. Healthy organisations facilitate the highest performance and have the following characteristics. They

- buzz with high level performance.
- have the capacity to respond effectively to internal and external pressures faster and more effectively than their competitors.
- have the capacity to renew themselves rapidly.
- determine their own destiny, and shape their own future.
- have the capacity to be 'ambidextrous' - deliver effective and efficient products and services at the same time as adapting to changes in their environment.

These standards are designed to facilitate the growth of healthy organisations

# OrganisationHealth<sup>®</sup> Management Standards

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The **OrganisationHealth<sup>®</sup>** Management Standards describe the cultural context, management rules, attributes and the behaviours of managers that produce high performance in organisations and individuals.

High performance, in this context, is the elimination of avoidable costs<sup>1</sup> associated with under performing individuals. The absolute standard, for individuals, is the elimination of repetition, deviation or hesitation in the performance of their work, which, when all staff perform to this standard, will result in high performing organisations.

**These standards have the purpose of strengthening corporate and personal resilience, promoting the activities that produce high performance and wellbeing, and promoting the activities that produce the culture, rules and behaviours that prevent stress at work.**

These standards place the responsibility for psychological wellbeing and performance on directors and managers. Directors and managers are the controllers of organisations, and their impact on the wellbeing and performance of organisations and staff is hugely influential.

Staff, also, have a responsibility to sustain high levels of resilience against adverse events.

Psychological wellbeing is directly linked, and central, to workforce high performance.

**Directors and managers play a pivotal role in provoking workforce high performance by creating the environment for staff to thrive, and by behaving towards their staff in ways that result in commitment, trust and engagement between staff, their work and their organization.**

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<sup>1</sup> Costs associated with repetition, failed tasks, slowness, sickness absence, costs of unnecessary agency and additional staff, manager costs associated with under performing staff.

## Low cost investment that yields a high performance dividend

The standards are designed to influence thinking, feeling and behaviour of people at work.

The workplace is controlled by managers and these standards are designed to help them create the environment that nudges their thinking to constantly include the wellbeing and performance of their staff.

Building and sustaining trust and commitment between Board directors, managers and their staff has a major impact on the workforce's psychological wellbeing and performance.

Shareholders, and other owners, expect the highest possible performance from their organisation for lowest investment.

Consistent behaviour that provokes commitment and trust from managers towards their staff is a low cost investment yielding a high performance dividend.

Training managers in the behaviours required is a low cost investment with a high performance dividend.

High performance needs mental energy, concentration and motivation combined with appropriate skills, knowledge and experience. These can be facilitated by well trained and effective managers.

## The XABC model – the foundation for these standards

Through the construction of a positive working culture the aim is to influence the nature of events and to ameliorate the impact that adverse events have on the workforce. Additionally, the aim is to strengthen the individual resilience of staff, so that adverse events are overcome with minimal impact on performance.

This sequence forms the XABC model, which is presented below.



Individuals experience events all the time. For the most part they are accommodated without due attention as they will have been experienced before, and been assessed individually as having no threat.

However, there are times when we are placed on alert because an event may not have been experienced before, or that something about the context, the event and previous experience doesn't relate satisfactorily to our expectation, and this triggers an alert or particular attention from us.

This model provides a framework for the standards. They cover

- how to achieve a positive working environment that is designed to provoke wellbeing and high performance, and reduce the risks of stress;
- the rules of how the organisation should work to promote wellbeing and performance, thereby reducing the risks of adverse events;
- and strengthening personal resilience which helps form robust attitudes towards events and reduce the impact that adverse events have on individuals.

## **Commitment, trust and engagement**

There is a substantial body of evidence that suggests that the creation and maintenance of commitment and trust between managers and staff is the route to reducing psychological distress at work. Commitment and trust also leads to social engagement between staff, their work and their employing organization. These features are known to strengthen resilience, reduce stress and provoke high performance.

Commitment and trust between managers and staff and between staff is a basic ingredient of a healthy organisation.

These standards set out the key elements that help managers build and sustain a healthy organisation, a high performing workforce and resilient individuals, by selecting those elements that directly influence commitment, trust and engagement.

The evidence in support of this approach may be found in Mowbray, D. (2008)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Building Resilience – An Organisational Cultural Approach to Mental Health and Well-being at Work: A Primary Prevention Programme. Derek Mowbray in Employee Well-Being Support. A Workplace Resource. (Eds) Andrew Kinder, Rick Hughes, Cary L. Cooper. John Wiley and Sons 2008

## Common sense – influences on our behaviour

We live in the context of organisations. Organisations are formed when 2 or more people interact with each other to achieve a common aim. Informal organisations are formed and disbanded constantly. Formal organisations are normally established to achieve a business or service purpose, and are normally controlled communities, controlled by managers.

Successful organisations have the characteristic of people interacting effectively without causing psychological distress in the process.

The high costs associated with poor interaction are avoidable.

There are several features about people that influence the way in which we behave towards each other. Some are described here. They influence the approach to these standards.

- We are conditioned to survive.
- We don't know what is going to happen in the future, so the future poses a constant threat to our survival.
- We are, ultimately, motivated by self interest, to survive.
- We cannot survive effectively on our own; we have to interact with others.
- We live in the context of organisations almost all the time, whether informal like a party, or formal like the workplace.
- We need to interact effectively to get what we want to survive; we often feel we do not have time to interact effectively and resort to quick processes to broadcast messages to others in the hope they will respond favourably.
- We are conditioned to maintain control of ourselves and those around us to survive; broadcasting messages is often a form of exercising control over others.
- We rely on reciprocity; if we do something for someone, we often expect something in return, even if it's only a smile.
- We are influenced by social proof; if everyone around us does something we tend to do it too.
- We are idiosyncratic; our thinking and feelings, and therefore our behaviour, is unique to individuals.
- Our thinking and feelings are influenced by our understanding of the situation we are in.
- We only have what others behave, write, speak and wear as clues to what they think and feel.
- We jump to conclusions about others almost instantly; this doesn't always align with what is genuine.
- We all act; we act according to our interpretation of what we believe others expect from us; our acting ability influences the reaction to us; we tend to repeat the same act if it has worked for us in the past, as this has helped us to survive to this moment.
- We find it difficult to change our behaviour; to do so we need to think differently first.

## Responsibility for implementing these standards

Board directors and managers control formal organisations.

Managers have a duty of care towards their staff, and a responsibility for the wellbeing and performance of their staff.

Implementing these standards will, also, facilitate the implementation of the HSE Management Standards.

## Leadership style recommended to implement these standards

The purpose of leadership is to take a lead.

Taking the lead in building and sustaining commitment, trust and engagement, requires a leadership style and approach that persuades employees to trust their leaders.

**Adaptive** principles and leadership style have the attributes that encourage commitment, trust and engagement.

The principles are:

- Shared responsibility for the organisation amongst all employees, including managers.
- ‘Elephants on the table’ are encouraged to be exposed and resolved.
- Independent judgement by all employees is expected.
- Reflection and continuous learning are institutionalised.
- Leadership capacity is developed and expanded.<sup>3</sup>

The key element is that employees respond to the needs of the organisation and not simply the needs of managers, although, hopefully, these are aligned.

## Support for managers

Managers have a responsibility to implement these standards.

Few managers have been trained in managing people.

Managers may require support to apply these standards. Support may be obtained from [www.orghealth.co.uk](http://www.orghealth.co.uk) and [www.mas.org.uk](http://www.mas.org.uk)

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<sup>3</sup> For more on Adaptive Leadership see The Practice of Adaptive Leadership by Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky. Harvard Business Press. 2009. ISBN 978-1-4221-0576-4

## HSE Management Standards<sup>4</sup>

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards have been the benchmark for raising awareness about stress at work. The standards focus on 6 areas of risk:

<b>Demands –</b>	workloads, work patterns and work environment
<b>Control –</b>	how much say the person has in the way they do their work
<b>Support –</b>	the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
<b>Relationships –</b>	promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour
<b>Role –</b>	whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles.
<b>Change –</b>	how organisational change (large and small) is managed and communicated to the organisation.

**OrganisationHealth®** standards are focused on the primary prevention of stress – preventing the opportunity for risks of stress from occurring in the first place.

**OrganisationHealth®** standards describe, amongst other matters, how managers can




- prevent excessive demands,
- enable staff to have a say,
- produce the behaviours that motivate and encourage,
- create a positive environment,
- help everyone be clear about roles,
- can limited stress whilst going through changes.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/>

## Application of these standards

The standards are in three parts plus an implementation section:

 Organisation Standards	The cultural context for promoting wellbeing and performance
 Workforce standards	Rules and attributes for wellbeing and performance in the workforce
 Individual Standards	The elements that strengthen personal resilience leading to wellbeing and performance

It is recommended that all the standards are implemented as a whole as each relies on the other to achieve optimum impact.

# Organisation standards – cultural context for wellbeing and performance

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## Standard 1 – the purpose of the organisation

*The true purpose of the organisation is the reason for its existence.*

### The standard:

*To express the purpose of the organisation in a way that powerfully influences the workforce to feel proud to be associated with it.*

*To express the purpose in a way that stimulates managers and employees to talk glowingly about the organisation amongst their friends.*

*To express the purpose in a way that customers and clients can instantly relate to its purpose.*

**A purpose** for this standard is to improve commitment, trust and engagement by identifying the true purpose of the organisation and to providing the foundation for a healthy organisation.

- The description of the true purpose should instantly convey to all employees, clients and customers what the organisation is all about and why it exists.
- The purpose needs to be succinctly expressed as a ‘big idea’ – a concise statement that should embrace the uniqueness of purpose, drawing a distinction between it and its competitors.
- The unique expression of purpose as a ‘big idea’ is closely aligned to the thinking behind producing a brand, a logo, or succinct marketing statement.
- The expression of the true purpose as the ‘big idea’ has a powerful effect on the commitment of staff to the organisation.
- Examples may be found at [http://www.orghealth.co.uk/uploads/articles/Organisation\\_Purpose.pdf](http://www.orghealth.co.uk/uploads/articles/Organisation_Purpose.pdf)

## Standard 2 – values of the organisation

*Values are the drivers of the organisation.*

### The standard:

*To adopt core organisational values which align with the values of the workforce.*

*To use these values as standing items on the agenda of Board and Manager meetings throughout the organisation for aiding ethically challenging decision making and for monitoring wellbeing and performance of the organisation and its workforce.*

*To regularly review the core values to test their relevance and continued alignment with the values of the workforce.*

**A purpose** for this standard is to improve wellbeing and performance by identifying and using core values to drive the organisation forward to success.

- Values are the core drivers for organisations and individuals.
- Taking decisions in certain ways may be attributable to core values. Organisations that keep to their core values in difficult times show features of strong resilience.
- Identifying corporate core values takes time and requires constructive challenge to establish their reliability and validity. The number of corporate values will be low – about 4 or 5.
- Corporate values need to be closely aligned to the values of the individuals in the workforce. This fosters commitment and trust with the organisation, and strengthens engagement between the workforce and their workplace.
- Corporate values should be working values. They should inform decision making at all levels, and guide the developments in products and services. They should help with ethical decisions that may be required, and should be regular items of Board and Manager agenda throughout the organisation.
- Core values should be re-assessed and reviewed regularly to ensure their relevance and effectiveness in producing high performance.
- Examples of corporate values are at [http://www.orghealth.co.uk/uploads/articles/Corporate\\_values.pdf](http://www.orghealth.co.uk/uploads/articles/Corporate_values.pdf)

## Standard 3 – a positive work culture

*The working culture sets the tone for the whole organisation.*

### The standard:

To establish a positive working culture based on commitment and trust between managers and staff.

**A purpose** for this standard is to improve wellbeing and performance by setting the tone for the organisation, and its corporate attitude towards staff and customers.

- A culture that promotes wellbeing and performance amongst its staff, based on commitment and trust, will produce a healthy organisation, strengthen corporate resilience and avoid costs associated with stress.
- A positive work culture will nudge managers and staff to exhibit behaviours that encourage, motivate, stimulate, innovate, adapt and support the growth and development of the organisation and its people.
- A positive work culture is driven from the top – the Board of Directors. Top managers are role models, and their behaviour is copied by other managers at each level, infiltrating every aspect of the organisation.
- A positive work culture is almost instantly recognisable to the outsider by the attentive and interested behaviour of all staff towards each other and their customers or clients.
- The elements that form a positive work culture are described throughout these Management Standards.
- For an example of a description of a positive work culture see <http://www.mas.org.uk/positive-work-culture.html>

## Standard 4 – structure

*Structure is the architecture of an organisation.*

### The standard:

*To ensure that the organisation architecture is as flat as possible.*

**A purpose** for this standard is to improve commitment by promoting structures that facilitate engagement by managers and employees in the decision making processes that affect them directly.

- Structures delineate functions and relationships, and provide a map for decision making.
- Normally, organisations will have three distinct types of decision making:
  - Policy decisions, including strategies.
  - Administrative decisions that translate policies and strategies into actionable activities.
  - Executive decisions that take action and deliver the products and services to customers and clients.
- For each type of decision making there may be a broad range of inputs to arrive at decisions. There will, also, be mechanisms for taking action arising from decisions.
- The flatter the structure the more involved will be the people who provide inputs and take action arising from decisions. This increases the range and, possibly, quality of information in the decision making process, as well as a greater understanding of the implications, reasons and challenges to implementation.
- The opportunity of involvement of as many people as possible in decision making increases commitment, trust and engagement, which leads to stronger wellbeing and higher performance.

## Standard 5 – corporate strategy

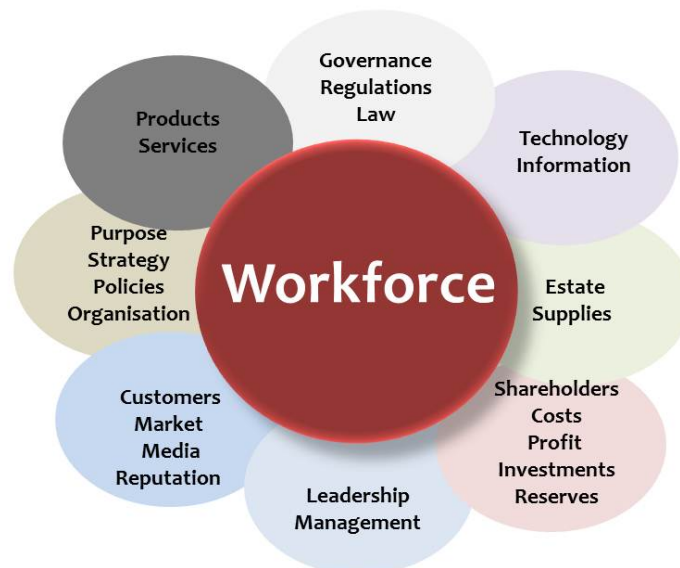
*Organisations do not exist without the workforce.*

### The standard:

*To place the psychological wellbeing of the workforce at the centre of corporate strategy.*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve wellbeing and performance by placing the psychological wellbeing of the workforce at the centre of corporate strategy.

- Corporate strategy often involves strategic thinking and planning of the topics in the outer ring of circles in the diagram below.
- At its core, however, should be the wellbeing and performance of the workforce, as the workforce is critical to the success and prosperity of organisations
- Pursuing actions for a healthy organisation and workforce is a positive process of thriving.



- The focus for a workforce corporate strategy is the link between psychological wellbeing and performance. People who feel psychologically well have the mental energy to perform at high levels, as they have the opportunity to concentrate intensively on their work. Concentration is key to performance. Individuals with all the appropriate skills, knowledge, experience and talent required to complete a job will fail to perform unless they can concentrate intensively, and without mental distraction, on their work.
- Concentration, however, comes in relatively short bursts. There isn't a common period that people can maintain their concentration, but managers need to understand that short and frequent breaks help with concentration.
- A framework for a workforce corporate strategy, that includes helping people with stress, is below:
  - **Prevention** – the primary prevention of psychological distress achieved by promoting the culture, rules and behaviours that produce commitment, trust and engagement of staff with their organisation.
  - **Prevent deterioration** – the immediate intervention of services to prevent the deterioration of anyone suspected to be under performing due to pressure, tension, strain or stress.
  - **Restoration** – the restoration of people suffering stress back to their normal level of independent lives and beyond.
  - **Palliation** – the maintenance of the highest standards and quality of life in those with chronic stress, knowing they will not be restored and knowing they shall continue to deteriorate.
  - **Next generation** – the continuous application of measures to achieve the primary prevention of psychological distress.
  - For more on a corporate stress strategy go to:  
<http://www.orghealth.co.uk/uploads/articles/Stress.pdf>

# Workforce standards – rules and behaviours for wellbeing and performance

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## Standard 6 – recruitment

*Recruitment is the starting point for organisations to build and strengthen commitment, trust and engagement directly with aspiring candidates for a job.*

### The standard:

*To ensure that all appropriate candidates feel they are personally treasured by the organisation.*

*To ensure that the recruitment process stimulates commitment, trust and engagement between the candidates and the organisation*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve commitment, trust and engagement. Recruitment is the start of the process of building commitment, trust and engagement between new employees, managers and the organisation by ensuring the expectations of the employer and all the candidates are closely aligned.

- Recruitment is the process that seeks to effectively marry contrasting expectations – the expectation of the organisation in relation to the job, and the expectation of the candidates in fulfilling their role in the job.
- Candidate expectations often include thoughts beyond the job itself - about the future, about their security, about a fresh start, about building on the past, moving house and many other considerations.
- Recruitment is expensive. Inappropriate recruitment is more expensive in wellbeing and financial terms, as an inappropriate or unsuitable appointment will under-perform over a long period of time.
- Recruitment is a commitment by both parties to a future.
- The recruitment process provides the launch pad for continuous psychological wellbeing and performance. The process itself should be a demonstration of how the organisation promotes wellbeing. It is the start of the commitment process that should never end.

## Standard 7 – clarity of job purpose

*There is a difference between what a job is expected to achieve and the tasks a job contains.*

### The standard:

*To ensure that all employees clearly understand their own job, how it fits with other people's jobs and how it contributes to the organisation.*

*To induct the employee into the tasks that, when combined together, achieve the overall expectation for the job*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve wellbeing and performance. Clarity of job purpose continues the process of encouraging commitment, trust and engagement, by explaining the unique contribution, and value, the job holder is going to make to the organisation as a whole.

- Clarifying the purpose of a job also has the purpose of eliminating ambiguity – a known stressor – and to provide the baseline expectations against which performance may be judged.
- Managers need to engage with employees to explain clearly what a job is all about.
- Staff should be encouraged to think for themselves what a job is meant to achieve and to obtain agreement with their manager. Newly appointed employees should not be left to rely on finding out what the job is about from predecessors or colleagues, as those arriving into a new environment should be thinking of the future and how he/she can help to shape that future through the way in which the job is undertaken.
- Managers need to encourage employees to use their personal discretion in developing their job. This assists with developing commitment and trust, as it implies that the employee is valued sufficiently to work on their own initiative.

## Standard 8 – job challenges

*Stretching individuals through challenges strengthens commitment, trust and engagement*

### The standard:

To stretch managers and staff by offering them periodic challenges within their assessed capabilities.

To offer support to help managers and staff rise to the challenges and complete them successfully.

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve commitment and engagement. Job challenges stimulate the acquisition of new skills, knowledge and experience, which, in turn, consolidates commitment by staff to the organisation.

- Individuals feel valued when such challenges are unique to themselves.
- Most people respond positively to challenges that stretch them. Challenges stimulate individuals as they cause the sensation of pressure and tension, both of which can have the effect of increasing mental energy.
- However, this works if the individual maintains personal control over the experience, and care needs to be taken by the manager and employee to ensure that the individual does not deteriorate into burnout, strain or stress. Routine monitoring of the individual is essential, as the individual may not be aware of their deterioration into burnout.

## Standard 9 – pay

*Most people have an in-built appreciation of what is fair and reasonable as remuneration for the work they undertake.*

### The standard:

*To agree remuneration with an employee on an individual basis*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve commitment. People respond with stronger commitment if they believe their pay is fair.

- Most people have an inherent understanding of what is fair, but find it hard to describe.
- Therefore, arriving at a fair level of pay requires a discussion between the manager and the member of staff. In most situations the employee should be asked his or her opinion as to an acceptable level of pay.
- Pay is one component of staff engagement. Fair pay strengthens engagement, particularly when staff compare their pay from one employer to that of a similar role offered by another, and concludes that the current employer is providing pay that's sufficiently fair that moving elsewhere is ruled out. This doesn't necessarily mean the pay is higher, but that it is fair.

## Standard 10 – team working

*Teams are organisations. They are, generally, 2 or more people working together to achieve a common purpose.*

### The standard

To facilitate the formation and maintenance of effective team working by adopting Adaptive Leadership principles, where each team member supports each other in an atmosphere of ‘critical friend’.

To focus on wellbeing and performance, and achieving the idea of ‘the whole team being greater than the sum of its parts’.

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve wellbeing and performance. Effective team working is the essential working process that contributes to corporate and personal resilience.

- Effective team working provides a vignette of how a wider organisation might effectively work. The accumulation of teams interacting effectively with each other will result in increased psychological wellbeing and performance for the organisation as a whole.
- There are multiple constructions for teams, but it is the interaction of members that’s important. Successful teams are groups of people who, when combined together effectively achieve the maxim ‘the whole is greater than the sum of the parts’.
- Effective teams are, also, safe havens, where members should be encouraged to share all their observations, feelings and thoughts without any sense of humiliation; they should be received with critical assessment and encouragement, support, and friendship. This arrangement can dramatically defuse the sensations of stress. It fosters commitment and trust within the team, and can unleash energy and motivation that draws team members more closely towards feeling engaged and a sense of psychological flow with their work and workplace<sup>5</sup>
- Teams that adopt the Adaptive Leadership principles of openness, joint responsibility, robustly resolving ‘Elephants in the Room’, will quickly turn into highly effective groups.

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<sup>5</sup> Psychological flow is the sensation of feeling a strong sense of happiness, wellbeing and ‘at one’ with the world, work, friends. Flow stimulates energy.

## Standard 11 – involvement

*Healthy organisations share responsibility for the organisation amongst all its staff*

### The standard:

*To encourage the involvement of employees in the policy formulation, strategic development, and their application, and the processes involved in the delivery of products and services.*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve engagement. Effective involvement is a process that strongly influences organisation health, flexibility, adaptability, psychological wellbeing and higher level performance.

- This means that employees should focus their attention on the interests of the organisation as a whole and not solely on the interests of managers. This provides a sense of ‘ownership’ that leads to strong commitment and engagement between the individuals and the organisation.
- Involvement means being engaged with the overall development of the organisation by being encouraged to articulate independent contributions to organisation activities. This adopts the principles of Adaptive Leadership that expects independent thinking to be encouraged, and thoughts to be expressed openly.
- An effect of being involved is greater commitment producing higher levels of psychological wellbeing and improved performance.

## Standard 12 – openness

*People who are consistently open and revealing about their thoughts, feelings, ideas, attitudes and reasons for decisions produce consistent behaviour that results in strengthening the feeling of trustworthiness between people.*

### The standard:

*To be consistently open in revealing the steps and influences on managers, their judgements and decision making.*

*To provide the results of judgments and decisions in a timely manner, explaining the reasons why they are made.*

*To be open in manager interaction and action even when the consequences may be expected to cause distress.*

*To periodically consult amongst managers and staff the degree of satisfaction about the levels of openness and transparency being adopted by the organisation.*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve trust, commitment and engagement though promoting openness in the operation of the organisation.

- Transparency is about revealing the processes involved in arriving at decisions, and openness provides the opportunity to comment of those processes.
- Openness mitigates against the opportunity of rumour becoming instilled into the thinking of the workforce, influencing attitudes and causing an unnecessary diversion from work.
- Encouraging openness in people is an important step towards strengthening trust.
- Openness in times of challenge strengthens corporate and individual resilience by reducing unnecessary uncertainty and enabling focus on resolving challenges,
- Respect and attentiveness to other people's thinking, ideas and opinions, even if they do not accord with ones' own, is an important contribution towards openness, and towards commitment, trust and engagement.

## Standard 13 – communication

*Communication is more than broadcasting; it is a two way process.*

### The standard:

*To communicate with managers and staff in a personal way.*

*To present communication in a way that encourages a response.*

*To reply to responses and continue this form of interaction until all parties are satisfied or a conclusion is reached.*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve engagement. Effective communication provokes strong commitment, trust and engagement between the organisation and the workforce.

- Communication is a process of transmitting messages that encourages a response, and for the response to trigger a reply.
- Communication is about transmitting messages in the simplest language to avoid ambiguity and misunderstanding.
- Communication is best achieved in person. Indirect communication, using media, tends to result in a broadcast for which no response is expected and is, therefore not interactive and engaging.
- Personal communication helps to build commitment, trust and engagement between people if the communication is open, and responses are expected. Manager meetings based on these principles will strengthen commitment, trust and engagement

## Standard 14 – career opportunity

*Most people appreciate an opportunity to acquire and apply new skills, knowledge and experience.*

### The standard:

*To encourage managers and staff to acquire new skills, knowledge and experience that can be applied to career and personal aspirations.*

*To construct career opportunities for managers and staff.*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve commitment. Providing career opportunities is to strengthen commitment and trust between the workforce and their employing organisation.

- Staff, generally, respond well to the acquisition of fresh skills, knowledge and experience.
- Organisations that provide these opportunities increase the strength of commitment from staff to the organisation.
- Managers should encourage the acquisition of new skills, knowledge and experience in themselves and their staff. If this cannot be achieved within the organisation, managers should consider secondments to other organisations, as this conveys a message to staff of their value to their employing organisation, a process that strengthens commitment.
- Managers should map out, with their staff, the career opportunities that are available that use newly acquired skills, knowledge and experience.
- Managers should help to engineer the progress of staff.

## Standard 15 – manager encouragement

*Everyone responds well to encouragement.*

### The standard:

*To provide encouragement on a regular basis to managers and staff*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve wellbeing and performance.

- Manager encouragement stimulates motivation in staff to perform well.
- Encouragement, incorporating valid critique of work, helps to strengthen the relationship between managers and staff. This is a critical feature of a healthy and high performing organisation, one that responds quickly to internal and external pressures for change.
- Motivation is derived from personal attitude. An attitude is formed from individual thoughts and feelings. If these are influenced by manager encouragement, this has positive impact on employee self worth, from which self esteem is partly derived. This elevates individual engagement with their manager and the organisation. It also leads to high performance.
- Encouragement, however, needs to be genuine. Routine encouragement without a reason will soon diminish the impact.

## Standard 16 – performance appraisal

*Most people have some, often inflated, idea how well or poorly they perform.*

### The standard:

*To regularly appraise the performance of managers and their staff*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve wellbeing and performance by promoting regular and consistent performance appraisal of managers of their staff, and staff appraisal of their manager.

- Managers and staff respond positively to regular and constructive appraisal of their work and general performance. There must be a consistent approach that is a positive interaction for the effect of appraisal to be positive.
- Managers, in particular, must be conscious of ‘fair comment’. Any critique that is perceived as being unfair, without redress by the staff, will prompt dis-engagement, and can become an issue that polarises the relationship between manager and staff.
- Appraisal needs to be specific, relating to a specific piece of work. General appraisal is not sufficiently unique to register any power or significance.
- Annual appraisals need to reflect closely, and be aligned to, the content of regular appraisals.

## Standard 17 – worklife balance

*Worklife balance is really about life balance*

### The standard:

*To respond positively and with support for employees when employees are faced with a domestic crisis.*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve commitment by staff to the organisation through managers responding positively to domestic crisis<sup>6</sup>.

- People who are strongly committed to their work and workplace have to balance their commitment with domestic life. Where commitment to work is high it can often encroach on domestic life.
- There are times when it becomes impossible for domestic arrangements to fit comfortably with working commitments.
- Domestic crises can arise at any time, and can become disruptive to the routine of daily living, including daily working. This can become detrimental to general health.
- Where organisations respond positively and with support for the manager and staff facing a domestic crisis, commitment by staff to the organisation is strengthened. This commitment often results in extra effort by staff to catch up for lost working time, and extra effort to ensure that the working day is not unnecessarily disrupted in the future.
- Sometimes, the positive response to a domestic crisis is seen as a ‘quid pro quo’<sup>7</sup> for the commitment to work; if this isn’t recognised, the commitment may weaken.

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<sup>6</sup> Domestic crisis here means any crisis outside the workplace

<sup>7</sup> A, more or less, equal exchange

## Standard 18 – training and development

*Training and development is a form of nurturing*

### The Standard:

*To establish training and development for each manager and employee that enables each to thrive and prosper personally and professionally.*

*To ensure that facilities and services for individual continuing professional development requirements are provided.*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve wellbeing and performance by offering training and development opportunities to managers and employees.

- Managers and staff respond well to opportunities to acquire new skills, knowledge and experience, and this increases their commitment to the organisation.
- Offering opportunities for acquiring new skills strengthens the commitment that employees have with their employing organisation.
- Training and development activities that have a direct alignment with the work of managers and employees are particularly valued.
- Training and development opportunities that are responsive to individual development needs are, also, valued by managers and employees. This reinforces both the value of the manager or employee to the organisation, and the concern of the organisation to nurture the individual.
- Training and development activities that offer the opportunity of acquiring fresh skills, knowledge and experience to equip managers and employees with career progression are, also, valued by the employee, as this demonstrates an interest by the organisation in the future of the manager and employee which plays directly to a sense of survival.
- The offering of training and development opportunities demonstrates to managers and employees the value they have within the organisation, and demonstrates the commitment that the organisation has in the interests of the managers and employees.

## Standard 19 – Manager behaviour

*Staff are stimulated and inspired by attentive managers.*

### The standard:

*To support all managers in acquiring suitable attributes and exhibit behaviour that provokes commitment, trust and engagement between staff, their work, their organisation and their manager.*

*To develop, adopt and embed a Manager's Code of Conduct, based on attributes and behaviours that provoke commitment, trust and engagement.*

**A Purpose** of this standard is to improve wellbeing and performance by embedding into manager behaviours those that stimulate commitment, trust and engagement in others.

- Behaviour is the outward manifestation of individual thought and feeling. Behaviour is one of only four clues that we can use to interpret what other people may or may not think and feel. The others are what people say, write and wear. All these clues are unreliable, and give rise to **False Attribution Error** – attributing to people an understanding of what they think and who they are simply by interpreting their behaviour, writing, what they say and what they wear. Our interpretation is often incorrect, unless and until there is consistency over time in the behaviour being observed. Consistency contributes to trustworthiness, and over time we tend to rely on our interpretation of a consistent behaviour.
- If someone's behaviour is consistently positive, supportive and encouraging, we will interpret this over time as having a genuinely positive attitude towards us, and we will reciprocate with similar behaviours.
- A key element in this process is **attitude**.
- Attitude is, effectively, the basis for a decision about how a person thinks and feels about an event or another person. Events occur all the time, the majority of which pass us by sub-consciously as we have experienced them before and they hold no threat to our survival, therefore, do not place us on alert.
- In this context the attitude of managers towards their staff and the attitude of managers and staff towards each other is the focus for what follows.
- For anyone to change their behaviour they must, first, think differently.
- Managers are the controllers of organisations and in the position to reduce the risk of incubating psychological distress amongst their staff, by being attentive to their needs

and providing positive reinforcement for their work, without causing distress in the process.

- Managers reflect the cultural influences the organisation promotes. Sometimes these cultural influences are difficult to ascertain, and no obvious culture is perceived by outsiders. It's only with regular contact with an organisation that cultural influences may be identified, and even then, may remain covert until specific events occur to reveal the underlying influences.<sup>8</sup>
- Many managers have not received training in managing people.
- There is, commonly, an assumption that managing people is straightforward and easy. This isn't always the case. If the workforce is not motivated and suffers from corporate depression it can be difficult to gain the attention and interest of staff. This has the knock on effect of reducing the organisation's capacity to be healthy, and respond effectively to internal and external pressures for change.
- Managing people successfully relies on effective interaction between the manager and employee.
- A strong influence on successful interactions is reciprocity. If someone does something for someone else there is a high probability that the other person will reciprocate and do something for the first person. This happens in about 80% of situations. However, there is, nearly always, a core of people for whom reciprocity principles do not work, in which case alternative interactive strategies may be required.
- Managers need to establish the self interest of those with whom they interact. This may not be straightforward and does require the manager to ask some unique questions of their staff to establish what their self interest might be. Once established, managers are in a position to address the self interest of staff by 'feeding' the self interest in the expectation that staff will reciprocate by 'feeding' the self interest of the manager. Adaptive Leadership principles suggest that promoting shared responsibility for the organisation as a whole should be one element of individual self interest.

### Desirable attributes

1. The first and most important attribute is being **attentive**. Conveying genuine attentiveness requires behaviours from each party that makes them feel that the other is attentive. This means no distractions, diversions or superficial responses. It means asking unique questions, and concentrating on what is being spoken, ensuring that each understands the other. If someone feels that someone else is attentive to them, they will automatically be attentive in return.
2. The second is being **trustworthy**. Trustworthiness is established through being behaviourally consistent.
3. The third is being **wise**. Wisdom requires the person to think, and to appear to think, before speaking. Anything that is spoken needs to be in the simplest possible language to

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<sup>8</sup> A serious conflict that the author resolved involved an organisation that proclaimed positive attitudes to its staff whilst masking and condoning bullying and intimidating behaviour. The organisation had known of the conflict for 9 years before it was made more widely known by chance.

avoid misunderstanding. Responses that are closely aligned to common sense will be perceived as being wise.

4. The fourth is being **assertive**. Assertive thinking starts with considering the other person first, creating a positive context for the subsequent discussion. An assertive discussion never includes an accusation or blame for any event. An assertive discussion is about how one person feels and why, and concludes with the same person outlining what he or she would wish to happen next. The behaviours that assertive thinking should produce are those that encourage engagement, understanding and openness.
5. The fifth is to be **intelligently witty**. Humour is an effective way of strengthening interaction, and reduces the risk of stress during the interaction. A successful form of intelligent wit is self deprecation.
6. The sixth is being **passionate** about the topic in the interaction, and expressing this passion with encouraging words and gestures. Being passionate about something is a strong attractor and helps strengthen commitment and engagement.
7. The seventh is having a **committed ambition** to seeing a project, or event, or anything, through to a conclusion. This attribute may be demonstrated by encouraging and enthusiastic words in an interaction, full of persuasive words to engage the imagination to 'see' the completed project.
8. The eighth is being able to create and dissolve **tension** quickly. Tension is a stimulant if it is dissolved quickly by the person who created it. The resolution of tension is a strong attractor, and helps strengthen commitment and engagement.
9. The ninth is to **address staff needs**. This thinking is aligned to thinking of 'feeding' the self interest of others. The behaviours are those that encourage openness and a frank, but non-stressful, exchange of the perceived needs of staff. The behaviours should, also, include a critical appraisal of needs, as this demonstrates a genuine interest, attentiveness, and conveys a sense of personal value to staff.
10. The tenth is to **nurture** staff. The thinking behind nurturing is aligned to a desire to encourage and help others. People respond well to others nurturing them, so long as the intensity of the nurturing accords with the perceived needs of the individual concerned.
  - Each of these attributes helps to produce behaviours, words and writing that draw others to the person with the attributes. They are attractors. They, therefore, help with the processes of interaction, generating and strengthening commitment, trust and engagement.
  - These attributes and behaviours may form the basis for a Manager's Code, which sets out for all to see the behaviours to be expected from managers at work. For an example of a manager's code go to

<http://www.mas.org.uk/uploads/articles/Managers%20Code%20Nov%202010.pdf>

# Individual standards for wellbeing and performance

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## Standard 20 – Corporate citizenship

*To be a citizen is to belong*

### The standard:

*To expect all managers and staff to share responsibility for the success of the organisation and to behave as Corporate Citizens, stimulating wellbeing and performance at work.*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve commitment between staff and the workplace.

- Individuals respond well to a sense of ‘belonging’ to someone, a team, a group, or a larger organisation.
- The sense of ‘belonging’ carries personal responsibilities that need to remain in place for the individual to continue to ‘belong’.
- The idea of corporate citizenship strengthens a sense of ‘belonging’. It suggests certain behaviours that promote a working environment based on shared concerns and responsibilities.
- Sharing responsibility for the organisation is a feature of adaptive leadership. It manifests itself in the encouragement of discussing and resolving the unmentionable problem, it encourages independent thinking and judgment, and it encourages leadership.

## Standard 21 – Personal resilience

*Resilience is the capacity to form an attitude that copes with adverse events without experiencing stress*

### The standard:

*To ensure that managers and staff regularly assess and review the strength of their resilience against adverse events and difficult experiences.*

*To ensure managers and staff receive appropriate support and training to strengthen their resilience*

**A purpose** of this standard is to improve wellbeing and performance by strengthening individual psychological immunity against the risks and threats of stress at work

- Resilience is the capacity to form a positive attitude towards an event that results in the individual overcoming the event without experiencing distress.
- Resilience is also about accumulating resilient attitudes as a result of overcoming adverse events.
- Resilience is a central feature of primary stress prevention.
- Resilience is strengthened by overcoming adverse events and difficult experiences. Overcoming events adds to self esteem, which, in turn, contributes to self worth. Overcoming a previous adverse event contributes to psychological immunity against similar events in the future. Care must be taken with those whose psychological immunity has been compromised by previous events. Most, in this situation, when facing a similar event in the future, require psychological support.
- Resilience is strengthened by adopting techniques and approaches that facilitate personal thinking about potential threats that may turn into adverse events.
- Resilience is strengthened by effective interaction with others.
- Resilience is strengthened by having an idea of what individuals want from their lives over the long term, and going after it.
- Resilience is strengthened by:
  - Having a vision
  - Being determined to achieve it and other tasks
  - Interacting effectively
  - Having strong relationships with those who are important to their success and happiness.

- Being able to solve problems
- Being organised
- Being confident by being able to control one's own anxieties.
- Individual resilience contributes to workforce resilience and corporate resilience.
- For a corporate resilience programme go to:  
[http://www.orghealth.co.uk/uploads/articles/Corporate\\_resilience.pdf](http://www.orghealth.co.uk/uploads/articles/Corporate_resilience.pdf)
- For more on an individual resilience go to:  
[http://www.mas.org.uk/uploads/articles/Resilience\\_and\\_strengthening\\_resilience\\_in\\_individuals.pdf](http://www.mas.org.uk/uploads/articles/Resilience_and_strengthening_resilience_in_individuals.pdf) and <http://www.mas.org.uk/development-programmes/resilience-training.html>

## Implementation

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These standards help organisations strengthen corporate and personal resilience, the promotion of wellbeing and performance and the primary prevention stress at work.

The responsibility for implementation lies with the Chief Executive and Board of Directors (or their equivalent). Implementation needs to be driven by a Board member.

Implementation will, typically, involve three stages:

- **Raising awareness** of these standards and the approach that they represent.
- **Implementing** the standards into the organisation. This may involve a survey to establish the extent to which these standards are already in place and working effectively, identifying gaps and formulating plans to apply the standards.
- **Embedding** the standards into the routine working day. This will involve continuous reinforcement of the standards through such mechanisms as manager meetings, reports to the Board reviewing the headline measures - such as rates of presenteeism, sickness absence rates and staff turnover.

### Raising awareness

This may be achieved through in house interactive workshops that include a survey questionnaire, and exercises to identify the state of readiness for the organisation to change.

### Implementing standards

This requires a multi-pronged approach, including:

- The commitment of the Board of Directors to drive the **Corporate Workforce Strategy**, and its commitment to use the **Corporate Values** as the basis for all forms of meetings concerning the management of the organisation.
- Consultancy to help assess the corporate, workforce and individual **risks** facing the organisation.

- The use of **Action Learning Sets** throughout the organisation as the vehicle for drawing together individual experiences of the training, coaching and management behaviours that are suggested. As far as possible the Action Learning Sets should equate with existing team working, and where this does not exist, the Action Learning Sets may set the pattern for team working.
- **Training** of all managers in **Adaptive Leadership** principles and practice.
- **Consultancy** to assist with the preparation of a **Manager's Code of Conduct**.
- A **Staff Survey** to establish the current profile of the organisation against these standards. The profile can be used as the baseline against which improvements can be measured.
- **Manager survey** with staff, using **Appreciative Inquiry** principles, to establish the corporate values that are aligned with the personal values of managers and employees.
- The publication of **Organisation Values**
- Training all staff on the interpretation of the Organisation Values, and how the values must underpin all routine daily activity.
- The preparation of a Corporate Workforce Strategy, and the population of the strategy with services to achieve specific aims.
- The preparation of a **Wellbeing and Performance Agenda** that sets out the stages the organisation needs to go through to achieve the **primary prevention** of psychological distress at work – managing my organisation, managing my workforce and managing myself.
- **Consultancy** to facilitate a review the purpose, architecture and rules about how the organisation is meant to work, and to make amendments to the rules against the content of these standards.
- **Training** of all staff in the revised approach to the rules, their content, how they shall be implemented, and how their implementation shall be monitored.
- **Cognitive Coaching** of all managers in the attributes to be developed and the behaviours to be applied to routine daily management.
- Training all staff in **Corporate Citizenship**, what this means and how this will be implemented throughout the organisation.
- **Resilience** training for everyone.

## Embedding change

This requires continuous reinforcement of the new arrangements.

The regular use of **Corporate Values** as agenda items.

Regular short **meetings** between managers to monitor the psychological wellbeing and performance of the workforce will help to embed the arrangements.

Regular **interaction** between managers and their staff is necessary to build commitment, trust and engagement.

Regular **reports** to the Board will help to demonstrate the commitment of the Board to a Wellbeing and Performance Agenda.

As psychological distress reduces and performance increases, there should be regular acknowledgement of the growing success by the Board.

## About the author

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Derek Mowbray is a Chartered Psychologist and Chartered Scientist with a background in top management in all sectors. He is Visiting Professor at Northumbria University at Newcastle, where he studied stress under the direction of Professor Jenny Firth-Cozens. Dr Mowbray has a doctorate in leadership, particularly the information that leaders use to make decisions on a daily basis, and the psychological influences on those decisions.

Derek Mowbray is the founder and director of The Wellbeing and Performance Group, a group of services that focus on the primary prevention of stress, including corporate and personal resilience, positive work cultures, and the wellbeing and performance agenda.

The Wellbeing and Performance Group includes:

- **OrganisationHealth** that focuses on creating and sustaining healthy organisations.
- **The Management Advisory Service** that focuses on manager influence on the performance of staff.
- **PsychologistsDirect** that helps to develop Psychologists as facilitators of change in organisations
- **The National Centre for Applied Psychology** that spearheads the development of **Centres for Psychological Health, Wellbeing and Performance**.

## Support for implementing these standards

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**OrganisationHealth**<sup>®</sup> provides consultancy, facilitation and coaching services that support organisations in the implementation of these standards.

The Management Advisory Service provides consultancy, facilitation and coaching that supports managers.

Contact details:

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