

People Managers' Guide

Seirbhís Chúnaimh
d'Fhostaithe na Státseirbhíse



Civil Service Employee
Assistance Service

Supporting Staff with Work or Life Challenges



An Roinn Caiteachais
Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe
Department of Public
Expenditure and Reform

This guide has been written and produced by the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS).

The CSEAS would like to take this opportunity to thank those who generously gave their time and expert view, which helped to inform the content and structure of this document.

Contributors

- Civil Service Human Resources (HR) Policy Unit
 - Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for the Civil Service
 - Line managers from several Government Departments/Offices
-
- CSEAS documents and leaflets mentioned are available at:
cseas.per.gov.ie/pmg-links
 - Civil Service circulars, policies and procedures mentioned in this guide are available at: **hr.per.gov.ie**

Abbreviated titles used in this document	
CMO	Chief Medical Officer
CSEAS	Civil Service Employee Assistance Service
DLO	Disability Liaison Officer
EAO	Employee Assistance Officer
HRSS	Human Resources Shared Services
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation

Contents

Introduction	5
How to Navigate this Guide	6
Section 1: Role of the Manager in Managing Staff with Personal and/or Work-Related Issues	7
Where can the Manager get Help and Support?	9
Having a Difficult Workplace Conversation	14
Responding to an “On-the-spot” Conversation.....	16
Raising an Issue with your own Line Manager.....	16
Section 2: Self-Care for You as Manager	18
Building and Maintaining Resilience.....	20
Mindfulness	21
Section 3: Work or Life Challenges that may Impact in the Workplace	23
Workplace Interpersonal Difficulties	24
Dignity at Work	26
Disability	28
Diversity and Inclusivity	31
Workplace Critical Incidents	33
Customer Engagement	35
Dealing with Stress.....	37
Bereavement and Loss	39
When a Work Colleague Dies	41
Supporting a Staff Member who is in Suicidal Distress.....	43
Alcohol/Drug Misuse	46
Gambling Problems, Gaming Addiction and Internet Misuse	49
Health Issues.....	53
Mental Health	57
Financial Difficulties.....	60
Personal Hygiene Issues.....	62
Life Stages	64

Section 4: Health and Well-being in the Workplace	66
CSEAS Supporting Healthy Workplaces.....	66
CSEAS Stakeholder Engagement.....	67
 Section 5: Civil Service Employee Assistance Service	 68
How a Staff Member can Engage with the CSEAS.....	69
CSEAS Confidentiality.....	71
Exceptions to Confidentiality	71
CSEAS Records.....	71

Introduction

The Civil Service Management Board recognises that:

“People are the most important drivers of success in the Civil Service. It is incumbent on us to put the right tools and supports in place so that civil servants are empowered to excel individually”.

People Strategy for the Irish Civil Service (2017-2020)

One of the pillars of this Strategy is to *Build, Support* and *Value* managers as people developers to enable:

“...civil servants to perform to the highest level and fulfil their potential”.

The Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) contributes to this goal by supporting managers both in their personal capacity and in their professional role as people managers.

Action 6 of the People Strategy commits to providing additional support for people managers and Human Resources (HR) Divisions to assist in responding to staff facing challenging life events. This guide forms a significant component of the response to this important initiative. The intention of this guide is to inform and support managers so that they have the confidence and capability to respond to staff where challenging issues impact in the workplace.



This guide aims to assist managers in supporting staff with personal and/or work difficulties. The guide:

- outlines typical personal and/or work-related challenges that may arise
- offers guidance to line managers on how to respond to staff who experience these life challenges
- signposts to organisational and other supports available to the manager
- provides information on how the CSEAS can support both management and staff
- promotes self-care awareness for managers

How to Navigate this Guide

- You may wish to read this guide in its entirety
- You can select a topic from the Contents Page for specific information or guidance
- Each topic is presented in similar format for ease of reading and includes
 - What you can do as a manager
 - Supports available to you
 - How the CSEAS can help
 - Useful Civil Service Resources
 - Reminder to remember your supports and self-care
- Health and Well-being presentations that are available from the CSEAS are listed in Section 4 of this guide
- Details on how to contact and avail of the CSEAS are outlined
- This electronic version contains hyperlinks to relevant circulars, websites and additional information resources. These will be updated periodically.
- If you notice that a link is not working please let us know at **cseas@per.gov.ie**

We hope you find this guide helpful. We welcome any feedback to cseas@per.gov.ie

CSEAS Contact Details:

Address: CSEAS, 4th Floor, St. Stephen's Green House, Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, D02 PH42

On-duty EAO available at 0761 000 030

Mon – Thurs: 9am to 5.45pm*

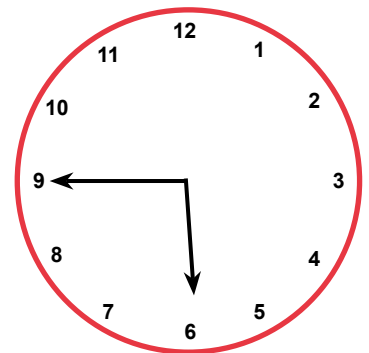
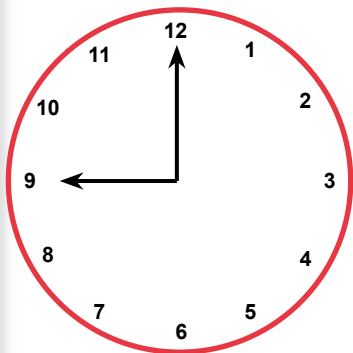
Fri: 9am to 5.15pm*

***(except bank/public holidays) Email:**

cseas@per.gov.ie

Website: www.cseas.per.gov.ie

**CSEAS General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Statement
is available on the CSEAS website**



Section 1: Role of the Manager in Managing Staff with Personal and/or Work-Related Issues



In today's modern and dynamic Civil Service, the role of the line manager is varied and demanding. A significant aspect of the role may involve leading and managing teams to deliver on Civil Service strategic goals and priorities, to bring quality customer service to citizens and to ensure value for money.

It is through people that these aims are achieved. Line managers are key in supporting staff to deliver on Civil Service goals.

Knowing your staff

As a line manager you get to know your staff over time. You are well placed to identify changes in a staff member's behaviour, attitude and/or work performance/attendance. These changes may be indicators of an emerging or ongoing problem/issue.

You may need to address performance, behaviour and/or attendance issues. Staff members may come to you as their line manager to highlight certain issues impacting on them e.g. interpersonal issues, stress, bullying.

Sometimes these interactions can be challenging. You may feel unprepared or overwhelmed. You may feel that you don't know what to do or how to handle a given situation. These feelings are not unusual. For sources of support to assist you when staff issues arise please refer to the heading Where can the Manager get Help and Support? in this guide.

Common Thread - Communication

Good communication is essential in addressing staff issues. In some instances workplace conversations you have with your staff member(s) can be challenging. Staff may be angry or upset. The atmosphere can become highly charged where there is conflict. Your skills as a line manager will influence how well these communications go.

Advice on conducting a difficult workplace conversation is outlined in this guide. You are encouraged to read this. Take time to consider whether you need training or support in this area. Be aware of your responsibility to have due regard for the privacy of an individual's personal data. Be clear on what will happen with the information to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Acts 1988-2018. All personal information is subject General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Management issues that can arise in the course of any working day

- Dignity at work issues e.g. interpersonal issues, bullying, harassment/sexual harassment
- Underperformance
- Issues arising during a staff member's probationary period
- Behavioural issues
- Staff in emotional distress
- Sick leave absences
- Work attributed stress
- A staff member wishing to speak to you about personal issues which may be affecting his/her well-being, or work performance e.g. family issues, bereavement, personal or family illness, financial difficulties
- A staff member raising an issue out of the blue
- Bereavement and Loss including the death of a colleague



Remember
confidentiality in
communications



Your role and response
as a manager is crucial



**Do remember... early
intervention is key**



Senior Manager

Senior managers play an important role in supporting their own line managers and staff. They have a core function in areas such as leading their teams, managing underperformance, attendance, staff development, coaching, mentoring, on-the-job training and addressing interpersonal issues.

Where line managers need support in their management role, they should discuss this in the first instance with their senior manager who can direct and guide them. Senior managers can assist the line manager in considering options such as training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for their own personal and career development, provide guidance on staff matters, coaching and direct to other supports such as Human Resources (HR), OneLearning, CSEAS, DLO and the CMO.

HR Divisions

HR Divisions have a vital role to play in supporting line managers and staff. They do so by implementing robust HR policies and providing advice and guidance on a range of workplace issues and procedures. Line Managers can contact their HR Divisions if they need support in their management role.

Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS)

The CSEAS, under central management in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), is an important shared service element of the Human Resource (HR) structure in the Civil Service. It plays a key part in an ethos of promoting employee wellness and organisational effectiveness.

Provision of a service of this nature arises from a recognition that staff are a valued resource, whose continued well-being contributes to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Civil Service.

The CSEAS provides a wide range of free and confidential¹ supports to staff and management designed to assist employees to manage work and/or life difficulties which, if left unattended, could adversely affect work performance and/or attendance and quality of life. Employee Assistance Officers (EAOs) operate on a regional basis. For further information and contact details for the CSEAS please see www.cseas.per.gov.ie

Office of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO)

It is the mission of the CMO's Office to deliver an efficient and cost effective occupational health service as well as policy advice on work and health matters in the civil and public service. The involvement of the CMO's Office in workplace health issues is twofold. Firstly, where an individual is absent from work on certified sick leave with a health issue, the individual is automatically referred to the CMO's Office after a four week absence to facilitate his/her workplace rehabilitation. Secondly, where an individual is at work and there are concerns about a workplace health issue, he/she may be referred to the CMO by their HR Division for occupational medical advice. Line managers can seek guidance from their HR Divisions in these situations. Refer to www.cmo.gov.ie

¹ See CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie for details of confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality

Disability Liaison Officers

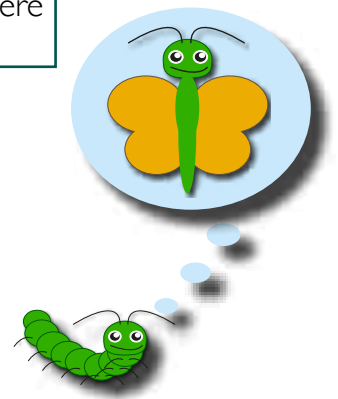
The role of the Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) is as follows:

- To act as the point of contact for staff with disabilities, their managers and HR Divisions
- To assist and support staff with disabilities and their line managers by the provision of necessary information, appropriate contacts, guidance, suggestions and advice
- To assist in the implementation of best HR practice in line with equality legislation
- To facilitate increased awareness of disability throughout the organisation

The DLO can support both managers and employees to ensure that reasonable accommodations, where possible, are made available when required. You can get in touch with your HR Division for DLO contact details or visit **hr.per.gov.ie/disability** for the full list of Civil Service DLOs.

Workplace Mediation

Without transformation there would be no butterflies



The Civil & Public Service Mediation Service (CPSMS) was established in 2012 with the aim of providing workplace mediation by civil and public servants who are qualified mediators, accredited by the Mediators' Institute Ireland. Mediation is a voluntary confidential² process. It allows two or more disputing parties to resolve their conflict/interpersonal issue(s) in a mutually agreeable way with the help of a neutral third party, namely the mediator. Mediation focuses on the interests and/or needs of the parties and on solutions, not on determining or assigning blame. What distinguishes mediation from other forms of dispute resolution is that mediation does not impose a solution but rather works with both parties to create their own solution.

Guidelines on the Mediation Process

- If you receive a complaint of interpersonal conflict or an allegation of bullying/harassment or sexual harassment, having consulted the Dignity at Work Policy, you can firstly attempt to resolve the matter locally
- If this is not possible or the issue is not resolved, you can consult with your manager and HR Division for advice
- Mediation is a process to help resolve disputes including those around bullying, harassment or sexual harassment. Mediation can be suggested by you, as manager. You can invite the parties involved in the conflict/allegation to attend mediation. The parties involved may seek mediation themselves. In

² See page 7 Appendix 1 paragraph 2 of Mediation Guidelines for exceptions to confidentiality. Information on CPSMS see website hr.per.gov.ie/mediation

either situation mediation is organised through your HR Division.

- The mediator initially meets each separate party to get a sense of the presenting issues, explain the mediation process and answer any questions each party may have about the process
- In the event that all parties, including the mediator, are willing to proceed, the mediator then arranges to meet with both/all parties together. A suitable time and venue is arranged.
- During the mediation meeting, both/all parties have the opportunity to outline the dispute or issues as they see it. The mediator will facilitate respectful dialogue and negotiation between the parties.
- The aim of the mediation is for the parties involved to reach an agreement on how to resolve the dispute or issue, and move on from it. The agreements reached by the parties may be incorporated into a Mediated Agreement.

OneLearning

OneLearning is the Civil Service Learning and Development Centre staffed by civil servants and based in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. OneLearning is responsible for all core training that is common across the Civil Service. The first OneLearning training session was held in September 2017.

New courses are being developed and released on an incremental basis. OneLearning are introducing a new Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS will make training accessible to all Civil Servants regardless of organisation or location. This new system will be available to employees in 2019. Once implemented the LMS will enable digital learning.

The expectation is that courses regardless of delivery channel will be reviewed at minimum on an annual basis to ensure relevancy and that they meet the requirements of civil servants. The catalogue of courses will not stay static with courses decommissioned or being added as and when required.

A range of courses is currently available for Managers to equip them with the skills to manage their own work and to support, develop and coach their team members.

Departmental Learning and Development (L&D) Units

Your Department/Office may have its own L&D Unit. In some instances it may be beneficial to you and/or your staff members to avail of in-house informal and/or formal training courses e.g. where you have identified a gap in a staff member's skills which is contributing to underperformance issues or, perhaps you may wish to avail of management training opportunities.



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources - available at hr.per.gov.ie

- Dignity At Work Policy
- Circular 05/2018 arrangements for paid sick leave
- Managing Underperformance
- Probation
- Grievance Procedure
- Information on Mediation in the Civil Service

External Resources/Legislation

- Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015
- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005
- FAQs on Health and Safety Authority website

Having a Difficult Workplace Conversation

Workplace conversations happen all the time and are essential to everyday business. For the most part they are the normal day-to-day engagements you would expect. However, issues may arise which need be handled in a sensitive manner and could give rise to the need for a difficult workplace conversation e.g. interpersonal difficulties between staff members, a personal hygiene issue, problems relating to alcohol/drug dependency or gambling etc., which may result in underperformance. If a staff member discloses personal information to you, be clear on what will happen with the information to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Acts 1988-2018. All personal information is subject to GDPR.



Preparing for the conversation with your staff member

- You might like to discuss your proposed approach with your own manager – it can be helpful to tease things out
- As with any other meeting you attend you need to be prepared
- Think about the timing of the meeting with the staff member taking into consideration the subject you will be discussing
- Notify the staff member of the meeting in good time and let them know what the meeting is about
- Should the staff member request that another person accompany them to the meeting, consider whether this is appropriate in the circumstances
- Arrange to have the meeting in private
- Be mindful that the staff member could be worried or upset
- If your staff member is on probation be aware of the probation guidelines
- Be aware of relevant policies and guidelines if addressing issues such as underperformance, sick leave etc.

Having the conversation with your staff member

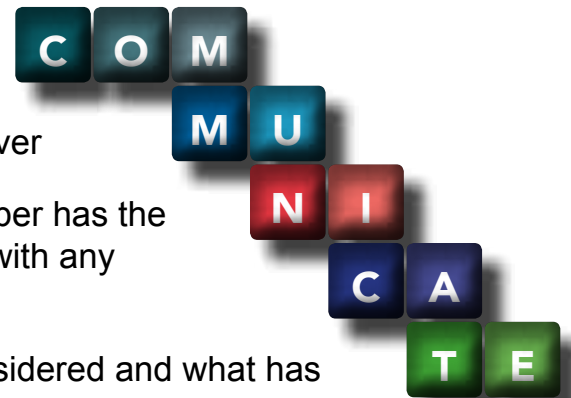
- Be clear about what you want to address/discuss at the meeting
- Have factual information written down or documented
- Let your staff member know your observations and concerns
- Recognise the positive aspects of his/her work performance

Difficult Workplace Conversations

Effective communication in the workplace is essential. There may be times when conversations you have as a line manager may be difficult.

- You may need to plan a meeting with a member of staff about their work performance, attendance or behaviour
- A staff member may approach you about something out of the blue
- You may want to speak to your own manager about an issue.

- Be objective - focus on what is being said, not on who is saying it
- Make the conversation two-way. Be an active listener and allow for feedback.
- Listen – use non-verbal response e.g. nodding, smiling
- Let your staff member know you hear what he/she is saying by paraphrasing (stating what you have heard in your own words) and summarise
- Clarify with your staff member that your understanding of what is being said is correct
- Do not diagnose or make assumptions
- Ask if there is anything he/she would like to speak about. If the staff member discloses personal and/or work-related difficulties, inform them that you will provide appropriate support in seeking any help required.
- Show empathy
- If your staff member gets upset, don't panic, just wait, provide a tissue and give them time to recover
- Encourage use of the CSEAS so your staff member has the opportunity to explore and get help and support with any difficulties or personal issues
- Be clear about what actions may need to be considered and what has been agreed at the meeting. Take note of these decisions.
- Set a date for a review meeting, if appropriate



Remember you can consult with the CSEAS for guidance and support in advance of having a difficult conversation with your staff member. This may help you in structuring the conversation and focus on what outcome you wish to achieve.

Follow up on the conversation with your staff member

- Monitor the situation
- Document, where necessary, the improvements or lack of progress
- If things do not improve discuss the next step and/or possible consequences
- Have a review meeting, where necessary

Show concern for the staff member's welfare in relation to the issue being discussed, e.g. mental or physical ill health, addiction, loss or bereavement. In some instances you may need to advise your staff member that it may be appropriate to consider a referral to the CMO, in consultation with your HR Division.

While the focus here is on the conversation, do remember that any form of communication e.g. email, text, conversation, should have a respectful tone.

Responding to an “On-the-spot” Conversation

Situations can arise where you don’t have time to prepare.

- A staff member could approach you to discuss an issue. You might not have time to prepare for the meeting. You may need to respond immediately.
- A staff member may request a meeting where you are unaware of its purpose – issues that emerge might surprise you

Tips

- Listen
- Don’t react – respond in as much as you can to the query/issue
- Take time to reflect
- The staff member may be upset – show empathy and understanding
- You may need to reflect further and arrange a follow-up meeting
- You may need to discuss this with your manager

Raising an Issue with your own Line Manager

Just as a staff member may raise a sensitive issue with you, there may be times when you might wish to speak to your own manager about a sensitive situation. Consider the best way to approach the matter, taking account of timing, availability of your own manager etc.

Tips

- Request a meeting with your manager
- Let your manager know that there is something of a sensitive nature you wish to discuss
- Decide whether you (i) wish to discuss the issue (ii) are seeking guidance or (iii) looking for a solution
- Be prepared – have relevant information to hand
- Allow your manager time to reflect and come back to you



How the CSEAS can help

The CSEAS can:

- Be a sounding board to discuss how best to navigate the difficult workplace conversations
- Offer support and guidance – explore options for addressing the situation



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources - available at hr.per.gov.ie

- Dignity At Work Policy
- Probation
- Circular 05/2018 arrangements for paid sick leave
- Managing Underperformance
- Grievance Procedure

CSEAS publications listed here

- Effective Communication
- Conflict Resolution Skills for Managers
- CSEAS as a Resource for Managers

Section 2: Self-Care for You as Manager

In your busy life as a manager you may not get enough time to focus on your own self-care. Often ignored but essential, self-care is any action or behaviour that helps you avoid triggering health and well-being problems.



It is recognised that there are many demands and challenges in your role as a people manager. Therefore, it is important that a guide such as this offers advice and guidance on how you can look after your own health and well-being.

Self-care is beneficial in improving your mental and physical health, resulting in improved self-esteem, overall well-being and less stress. It is an essential part of a healthy, happy life in which we become more in tune with our minds and bodies. Paying attention to your own self-care helps you to achieve a healthier work/life balance. Benefits can be seen both at work and at home.

You may have a tendency to look after the needs of others before you look after your own needs.

Having some “down time” helps provide balance in an increasingly demanding world.

When we constantly feel stressed or overwhelmed we can become ill, either mentally, physically or both. Ignoring our self-care needs can have a negative impact on us. It can exacerbate existing conditions – not to mention the emotional consequences.

Using your own personal resources, building and maintaining your resilience helps you in all areas of your life including your role as line manager.

Your own Department may have Health & Well-being initiatives that offer health promoting activities for staff or are arranged as part of the Healthy Ireland campaign.

Look after yourself

- Learn to recognise the signs of needing some “down time”. Self-care is different for everyone. For some, it’s listening to music, taking a warm bath, meeting friends for a coffee - whatever you enjoy.
- Learn to recognise when you are feeling stressed
- Take breaks
- Manage your time - it is an essential part of effective stress management (time management is a skill that can be developed and improved. Your Learning & Development Unit may have a time management course available).
- Identify a physical activity you enjoy, for example, cycling, running, going for a walk, gardening or dancing. Make sure to include your preferred activity in your day/week.
- Consider mindfulness or meditation
- Get a good night’s sleep
- Ensure that you are eating a well-balanced diet
- Recognise that your job may be stressful. Managing the organisation’s business needs as well as staff issues can be challenging at times.
- If you are worried about work, talk to someone for support e.g. your manager, HR or the CSEAS
- Build your resilience – refer to the following pages. Read CSEAS leaflet - *Building Personal Resilience*



What do I do for self-care?



Get plenty of sleep



Enjoy the outdoors



Cook



Talk to friend and family



Read



Walk or bike



Tidy



Write or draw



Garden

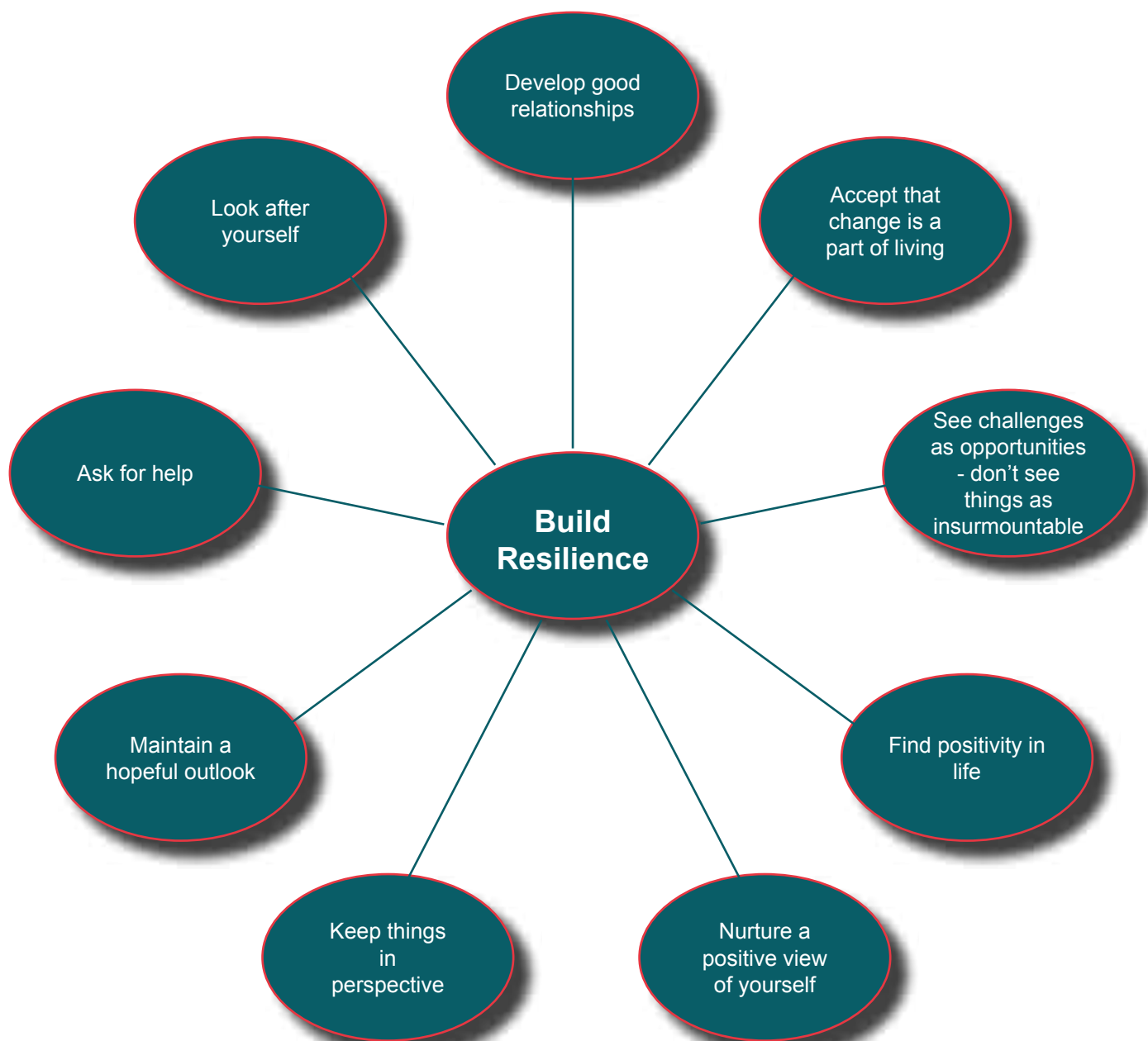
Make your own list!

Building and Maintaining Resilience

“Resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress.”

American Psychological Association

Building resilience does not prevent difficult or stressful events occurring. It helps us to respond to life events and recover quicker from the impact they can have on us. Resilience is not a trait that people either have or have not. It can be developed over time by anyone because it involves learning how to behave, think and act differently. As a people manager you will face many challenging situations. Managing a modern workplace environment requires a multitude of skills. Building your own personal resilience will help you meet these challenges and effectively enhance your leadership style.



Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to, and clearly noticing, whatever is happening in our lives at a particular moment. It involves removing our attention from thoughts of what has happened in the past or what might happen in the future and instead, focusing on what is going on right now in the 'here and now'. When you are mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings without judging them, good or bad.



Mindfulness won't eliminate life's pressures but it can help us to respond to them in a calmer way. This benefits our health and well-being. You can do this as you go about your daily life.

For example, you could notice what your senses are bringing you:

- what you are seeing and hearing
- how you are breathing, standing, sitting or lying down
- how the ground feels under your feet

Mindfulness is a powerful technique in stress management. It is based on the concept of living in the moment and attending not to the past or future, but only to the here and now.

As you do this your mind will probably keep drifting out of the present so you need to keep bringing it back. It is bringing your mind back to the present that is the practice of mindfulness.

Don't be harsh on yourself and don't criticise your mind for drifting away – just bring it back kindly and gently to the present.

Some benefits of mindfulness exercises are:

- Enhanced attention and productivity
- More level-headedness and resilience to stress
- Less tension, anger, fatigue, anxiety and depression
- Increased self-awareness/emotion regulation
- Improved insight and innovation
- Better relationships
- More vitality, compassion and 'joie de vivre'

Becoming more mindful of your own emotional responses and actions can help alter them. Adopting a mindful approach may lead you to intentionally choose more hopeful, optimistic and resilient ways of dealing with workplace stress and resistance to change. Mindfulness is about accepting what is happening now. Mindfulness can be learned through formal and informal practice and training.



How the CSEAS can help

With your own self-care

- As a support for you if you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed
- Explore ways of including self-care in your personal and working life
- It's good to talk over situations and consider options for moving forward

When you are supporting a staff member

- EAOs can act as a confidential³ sounding board
- Offer advice and guidance on how to conduct a conversation where sensitive issues are to be discussed
- Provide information on the support offered by the CSEAS, where there is a concern for his/her health and well-being
- Direction to other resources

Remember, you can avail of the confidential support of the CSEAS either in a personal capacity as an individual staff member or, in your professional capacity as a people manager.

When facing challenging life events, think of previous occasions when you overcame other life challenges. Strengthen resilience by building on your successes.



Useful Resources

CSEAS publications here

- Understanding Stress
- Stress Awareness
- Introduction to Mindfulness
- Personal Action Plan
- Building Personal Resilience

³ See CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie for details of confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality

Section 3: Work or Life Challenges that may Impact in the Workplace

Ctrl Click on a topic below to go straight to the relevant page

Workplace
Interpersonal
Difficulties

Dignity at
Work

Disability

Diversity and
Inclusivity

Workplace
Critical
Incidents

Customer
Engagement

Stress

Bereavement
and Loss

When a Work
Colleague Dies

Suicide

Alcohol/Drugs
Misuse

Gambling, Gaming and
Internet Misuse

Health Issues

Mental Health

Financial
Difficulties

Personal Hygiene
Issues

Life Stages

While the main purpose of this guide is to assist managers in supporting staff who experience any of these work or life challenges, it is recognised that managers can also be impacted by any of the issues mentioned above.

Workplace Interpersonal Difficulties

It is not unusual for interpersonal difficulties or conflict to arise in the workplace from time to time. It is an inevitable part of human relationships. It can at times allow for a healthy exchange of ideas or creativity. However, it can also be unhealthy and may negatively impact the productivity and morale of everyone in the workplace.



Conflict can be obvious. It can also be subtle and not easy to identify. It can emerge as something brewing under the surface or in full-blown arguments. As a manager, it is important to be able to identify and understand the varying levels of conflicts and how these levels are manifested in different ways. An early sign of conflict is that “nagging feeling” or tension you feel. You sense something is up, yet you can’t quite put your finger on what is wrong. When you begin to notice that things are “not right”, don’t ignore it. It is important for the manager to take steps to try to identify and resolve issues as soon as possible.

Not addressing conflict can have a negative impact on staff in the workplace. Unaddressed tensions can lead to hostility, disruption, further arguments, lack of communication and possibly result in sick leave absences. This in turn can create a toxic workplace culture. In dealing with these situations you may wish to refer to the section Having a Difficult Workplace Conversation in this guide.

What you as manager can do when workplace interpersonal difficulties/conflict arise:

- Early intervention is key to addressing workplace conflict
- Seek advice from your manager and/or HR
- You will need to meet the parties involved
- Meet each party to the conflict individually
- Listen impartially to each person/all concerned and let them know you have heard what they are saying
- You will need to arrange to meet all parties involved together
- Gather information – invite both/all parties in turn to give their account of the issue
- Establish the key issues – take notes
- Brainstorm solutions on how to resolve the issues – ask the parties involved for ideas or suggestions
- You also may have a solution

Early warning signs of interpersonal difficulties or conflict

- **Change in atmosphere**
- **Whispered conversations**
- **Lack of co-operation**
- **Arguments**
- **A staff member isolating themselves**
- **Formation of cliques**
- **Non-verbal behaviour e.g. staff ignoring each other, being dismissive through facial gestures, adopting an aggressive or argumentative body stance.**

- Negotiate a solution – aim to get an agreed solution
- Clarify the decisions/actions agreed with all parties and take note of same
- Set a date for a review meeting
- Following the review meeting, check in periodically with all parties on how things are progressing

What is Conflict?

Conflict can be defined as a state of disharmony among people brought about by a clash of interests, values, actions and/or personalities. Many factors contribute to conflict situations such as individual needs, desires and expectations, differences in personalities, self-perceptions, self-esteem and opinions.

How the CSEAS can help

You may be unsure of what to do

- It may be helpful for you to confidentially⁴ explore options with the CSEAS
- You can talk through your approach to an upcoming meeting
- If you are concerned about a staff member you can suggest he/she contacts the CSEAS for support
- Where there are two or more individuals involved in a conflict, the CSEAS can offer separate EAOs to each party. This ensures that each party gets impartial confidential support.

Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources - are available at hr.per.gov.ie

- Dignity at Work policy
- Information on Mediation in the Civil Service

CSEAS publications listed here

- Conflict Resolution Skills for Managers
- CSEAS as a Resource for Managers

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

For information on Civil & Public Service Mediation Service (CPSMS) and the Mediation Process see Where can the Manager get Help and Support section of this guide. Refer also to hr.per.gov.ie/mediation

⁴ See CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie for details of confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality.

Dignity at Work

The Civil Service is committed to promoting the dignity and respect of all staff. Creating a positive working environment is the responsibility of all staff and managers in the workplace. Situations might arise where staff may feel that their dignity at work has been impacted. If this arises the line manager will need to address it.



What you as manager can do:

- Be familiar with the Dignity at Work Policy (DAW). It outlines clearly the steps to take when a dispute between staff arises.
- Be aware that a member of staff may come to you in situations where (i) they feel they are being bullied, harassed or sexually harassed (ii) they have been accused of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment or (iii) they are witnessing bullying, harassment or sexual harassment
- Meet with the staff member(s) involved. Listen and try to resolve the issue. If necessary, seek advice from your own manager, HR Division and the CSEAS.
- Familiarise yourself with the process of mediation, the role of the Civil & Public Service Mediation Service (CPSMS) and how it can be accessed

The CSEAS is available in situations where:

- A staff member feels they are being subjected to bullying, harassment or sexual harassment
- A staff member has had an allegation of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment made against them
- A staff member is asked to be a witness in an alleged bullying, harassment or sexual harassment complaint

If two or more parties involved in a conflict seek support from the CSEAS every effort will be made to ensure that different EAOs support each party to the conflict

Dignity at Work

The Dignity at Work Policy 2015 (DAW) is the Civil Service anti-bullying, anti-harassment and anti-sexual harassment policy. A key aim of the Policy is to provide awareness of the steps which staff may take if they believe that they have been bullied, harassed or sexually harassed and the procedures which should be followed by all parties involved.

The intention of the Policy is to encourage the use of informal resolution methods and the use of mediation as often and as early as possible during disputes.

There is a Designated Person in each Department whose role is to oversee complaints which have been referred to HR, as outlined in the Dignity at Work Policy.



How the CSEAS can help

- The EAOs in the CSEAS are Contact Persons for all Departments/Offices under the DAW Policy. Additionally, some Departments/Offices also have internal contact persons⁵. The contact person is available to explain the various resolution options, the potential supports which are available to individuals, and to explain the role of the various parties involved in the resolution process.
- In addition to the Contact Person role, EAOs also offer the full range of CSEAS supports and can act as a confidential⁶ sounding board for the manager
- If you are concerned about a member of staff you can suggest they contact the CSEAS for support

For information on Civil & Public Service Mediation Service (CPSMS) and the Mediation Process see Where can the Manager get Help and Support section of this guide. Refer also to hr.per.gov.ie/mediation



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources - available at hr.per.gov.ie

- Dignity at Work policy
- Information on Mediation in the Civil Service

CSEAS publications listed here

- Conflict Resolution Skills for Managers
- Effective Communication

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

⁵ Contact your HR division for details.

⁶ See CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie for details of confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality.

Disability

A staff member may have a disability when joining the Civil Service or may develop a disability during the course of their career. People managers need to be aware of the employer requirements in supporting a staff member who has a disability.

Please refer to **Civil Service Code of Practice for the Employment of People with Disabilities** for guidance.

Suggestions for the manager

- Create an atmosphere that allows for disclosure and discussion about disability
- Be positive about disability – your response to a person with a disability is very important
- Be open to learning about the disability presented
- Be aware that people don't always disclose their disability
- Be willing to have conversations....listen
- Have conversations in private
- Ask for advice from other experts, or from the person with a disability themselves. You're not expected to know everything about every disability.
- If a staff member discloses a disability to you, be clear on what will happen with the information to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 - 2018. All personal information is subject to GDPR.
- Check if the person wants others to know about the disability
- Encourage contact with the Disability Liaison Officer (DLO)
- Where there are attendant psychosocial or emotional issues, encourage use of the CSEAS
- Where mental health issues are disclosed, encourage use of the CSEAS
- Consider whether or not reasonable



Disability Definition

According to the Employment Equality Acts 1998 to 2015, Disability is defined as

- (a) the total or partial absence of a person's bodily or mental functions, including the absence of a part of a person's body,
- (b) the presence in the body of organisms causing, or likely to cause, chronic disease or illness,
- (c) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of a person's body,
- (d) a condition or malfunction which results in a person learning differently from a person without the condition or malfunction, or
- (e) a condition, illness or disease which affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or which results in disturbed behaviour, and shall be taken to include a disability which exists at present, or which previously existed but no longer exists, or which may exist in the future or which is imputed to a person.

accommodations are required (refer to Para. 4.4 of Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave)

- Where reasonable accommodation has been provided, check in with the staff member periodically to ensure that the measures put in place are working effectively
- Liaise with your manager and/or HR Division as appropriate

Disability Liaison Officer (DLO)

All Government Departments and Offices are required to appoint a DLO to assist and support staff with disabilities, and their line managers.

The role of the Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) is:

- To act as the point of contact for staff with disabilities, their managers and HR Divisions
- To assist and support staff with disabilities and their line managers by providing necessary information, appropriate contacts, guidance, suggestions and advice
- To assist in the implementation of best HR practice in line with equality legislation
- To facilitate increased awareness of disability throughout the organisation, the DLO can support both managers and staff to discuss reasonable accommodation⁷ options

Guidelines for Managers regarding the provision of reasonable accommodation(s) for a staff member with a disability

The Employment Equality Acts oblige employers to consider reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities. An employer must take 'appropriate measures' to meet the needs of a staff member with a disability in the workforce. This means they must make arrangements that will enable a person who has a disability to:

- have equal opportunities when applying for work
- be treated the same as co-workers
- have equal opportunities for promotion
- undertake training

Reasonable accommodation does not mean that an employer has to recruit, promote, retain or provide training to a person who does not have the capacity to do a particular job. However, an employer cannot decide that a person with a disability is incapable of doing a particular job without considering whether there are appropriate measures which they could take to support the person in carrying out the required duties.

As a manager you may have responsibility for a staff member who has a disability. You will be familiar with the role of your staff member. You may be best placed to have a discussion

⁷ Refer to paragraph 4.4 of Circular 05/2018 Arrangement for Paid Sick Leave in the Civil Service.

with him/her to ascertain what practical supports and/or reasonable accommodation(s), if any, are required. You may also need to consult with HR to discuss any reasonable accommodation(s).

Where an individual attributes poor attendance at work to a medical condition, consideration must be given as to whether that individual may have a disability as defined under Employment Equality legislation. (Refer to Para. 4.4 of Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave).



How the CSEAS can help

- EAOs can act as a confidential⁸ sounding board
- If you are concerned about a member of staff you can suggest they contact the CSEAS for support



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources - are available at hr.per.gov.ie

- Disability Guidelines hr.per.gov.ie/disability – which includes list of the Disability Liaison Officers for the Civil Service
- Circular 18 of 2004 – Career Progression of People with a Disability in the Irish Civil Service
- Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave
- Code of Practice for the Employment of People with a Disability in the Irish Civil Service

External Resources/Legislation

- Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015
- Equality Act 2004
- Disability Act 2005
- National Disability Authority

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

⁸ See CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie for details of confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality.

Diversity and Inclusivity



The Civil Service is strongly committed to equality of opportunity in all its employment practices. Equality of opportunity in the Civil Service means that:

- Throughout their working lives, civil servants can be assured of equality of participation in their Department/Office, as per the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015
- All civil servants have a responsibility to create a working environment in which differences are respected and in which all people – staff, clients and customers – are valued as individuals
- As an employer, the Civil Service will strive to achieve real equality of opportunity by continually monitoring its employment practices to ensure that they do not contravene equality legislation

Tips for the Manager

- Create an atmosphere that allows for disclosure and discussion
- Be positive to difference - your response is very important
- Be open to learning about diversity
- Value all your staff equally
- Respect difference
- Be aware that people don't always want to disclose their differences
- Be willing to have conversations....listen
- Have conversations in private
- Ask for advice from relevant bodies
- Be clear on what will happen with the information if someone discloses something about themselves, to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 - 2018. All personal information is subject to GDPR.
- Liaise with your manager and/or HR Division as appropriate

Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015

All civil servants can be confident that their rights under the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 are guaranteed and that no one will receive less favourable treatment because of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community.



How the CSEAS can help

- EAOs can act as a confidential⁹ sounding board
- If you are concerned about a member of staff you can suggest they contact the CSEAS for support



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources - are available at hr.per.gov.ie

- Circular 42 of 2001 – Gender Equality Policy for the Civil Service
- Circular 24 of 2002 – Diversity in the Civil Service – A policy on Equality of Opportunity

Legislation

- Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015
- Equality Act 2004

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

⁹ See CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie for details of confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality.

Workplace Critical Incidents

A workplace critical incident is defined as an event out of the range of normal experience – one which is sudden, unexpected and may have a physical or emotional impact. In some cases it may involve perceived or actual threat to life. Workplace critical incidents are challenging events that have the potential to create significant distress and can overwhelm one's usual coping mechanisms.



Familiarise yourself with your own Department/Office's Critical Incident protocols, if available.

Critical Incidents in the Workplace may include:

- Death/serious injury
- Assault
- Personal threat
- Robbery/fire/accident in the workplace
- Fraud

What is Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)?

It is a systematic approach to managing critical incidents. It includes:

- Assessment of the incident
- Identifying type of response/ support needed
- How it will be provided
- Follow-up support where required

What you as manager can do when a critical incident occurs in the workplace:

- Remain calm
- Contact emergency services if needed
- Communicate with those affected about what is happening and what you as a manager are going to do
- Assess what supports are required
- Nominate another staff member to assist and liaise with you, if required
- Report the critical incident to relevant personnel in your Department i.e. your manager, HR Division, your Health & Safety Officer/Unit
- Check if your Department/Office has protocols on managing critical incidents in the workplace
- You or your nominated staff member may contact the CSEAS for support. Provide information and details about the critical incident in order to co-ordinate an appropriate response in conjunction with the CSEAS.



How the CSEAS can help

- Arrange for an EAO, or team of EAOs to respond to the needs of the staff and management affected by the workplace critical incident
- Liaise with you, your HR Division, manager or your nominated staff member
- Determine the appropriate type of response in collaboration with you, your HR Division, manager or your nominated staff member
- Establish the follow-up action having assessed the critical incident and circumstances involved
- Provide short term support for the individual and/or group

Critical Incidents

Employee Assistance Officers (EAOs) in the CSEAS are trained in Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) and are available to provide psychological and emotional support to staff and management in the event of a critical incident occurring in the workplace.



Useful Resources

CSEAS publications listed here

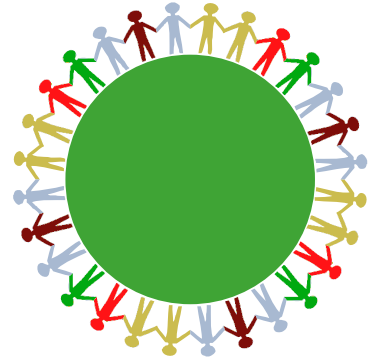
- Response to a Critical Incident in the Workplace
- Critical Incident in the Workplace: Self-Care Information

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Customer Engagement

Frontline staff or any staff member dealing with the public may face challenging situations when engaging with customers. There may be times when a member of the public/customer can become abusive or threatening. Some Departments/Offices have developed guidelines for staff and management for use in such incidents. **Check to see if your own Department/Office has protocols on dealing with and/or reporting such incidents for both on-site and off-site engagements.**



What you as manager and/or your staff can do where a customer is being abusive:

- Try to remain calm
- Allow the customer to speak
- Listen and empathise
- Let the customer know that you understand the issue
- Let the customer know what you can do
- Take note of any threats
- Let the customer know that what they are saying is offensive or threatening to you
- Let the person know that unless they stop the behaviour that you may have to end the interaction

What you as manager and/or your staff can do where a customer mentions self-harm or suicide:

- Try to remain calm
- Take the self-harm or suicide intention seriously
- Talk to the person and listen to them
- Explain that you feel they need some help and ask can you have someone call a family member or GP
- If you are concerned about your own, a member of staff or a client's safety/life you may need to call or ask another member of staff to call the emergency services
- Consider having relevant emergency numbers to hand, e.g. An Garda Síochána, Samaritans etc.

How you can support your staff member after these types of incidents:

- Ask the member of staff how he/she is feeling

Line Manager

In your role as manager, a member of staff may request assistance or look for support:

- when dealing with an abusive customer – this could take the form of a physical threat/assault or abusive conversation
- if a customer talks of self-harm or suicide

You may need to:

- step in and take over from a staff member
- advise your staff on how to deal with such situations
- support a staff member following an incident

- Ask what happened
- Make sure someone remains with the member of staff if they are upset
- It may be appropriate/necessary for the member of staff to go home. Make sure they get home safely – a taxi may be required, depending on the situation in hand.
- Follow up with the staff member to see that they are okay
- You can let your staff member know that the CSEAS can be of support and give them contact details



How the CSEAS can help

- Provide support and information for a manager dealing with any of the incidents as above
- Provide support to the staff member(s) affected by such incidents



Useful Resources

CSEAS publications listed here

- Response to a Critical Incident in the Workplace
- Critical Incident in the Workplace : Self-Care Information
- Responding to Difficult Phone Calls and Self-Care
- Suicidal Distress – Resources for HR Divisions/Line Managers

External Resources - available online

- An Garda Síochána
- Samaritans Free call 116 123 website www.samaritans.org available 24/7
- Pieta House 1800 247247

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Dealing with Stress



Stress is a part of life. However stress, in itself, is quite hard to define - it means different things to different people and affects individuals in many and various ways. Consequently individuals respond differently to the same events. Stress is the reaction of our body and mind to life's challenges.

Stress can impact in the workplace. Staff can bring personal stress to work, or attribute their stress to work events.

Positive stress can be experienced as an exciting or challenging situation in which some people thrive. It can motivate and have positive outcomes.

Challenging workplace demands may trigger a stress response e.g. meeting tight deadlines, learning a new skill or a job brief, long commuting times, power struggles, interpersonal difficulties, not taking regular breaks/annual leave etc.

Experiencing Stress

Just as your staff may feel stressed, so might you. It is important to recognise your own stress triggers. If you are feeling stressed, it can impact on those around you. It is very important that you monitor your own stress levels and seek appropriate support. None of us are immune to feeling stress but we can build our resilience and manage our stress. Please see the CSEAS booklet Understanding Stress available on the CSEAS website.

What you as manager can do to support staff:

- Listen when a member of staff comes to you to talk about stress
- Recognise/acknowledge when a member of staff is showing signs of stress
- Where the stress is attributed to work
 - Assess the situation with the person
 - See if there are possible work adjustments
 - Check if training or upskilling might assist
 - Create a positive working environment
 - Ensure that staff in your area are aware of their individual responsibilities in creating a positive working environment. A disrespectful working environment can be extremely stressful.
 - Address any conflict that may arise in the workplace as early as possible

Stress

Stress is not an illness and it cannot be totally eliminated from our lives. However, mismanaged stress or ongoing stress over a period of time can lead to physical and/or psychological illnesses if it is not addressed. We can learn ways of understanding how stress affects us individually and find new ways of managing it effectively so as not to cause long term damage or burnout. The signs and symptoms of stress can be physical, behavioural, emotional and/or psychological.

- Where personal stress is impacting at work
 - Be empathic when staff are experiencing personal difficulties e.g. after a bereavement, going through a separation etc.
- Encourage the staff member to seek help as early as possible and suggest that they avail of the CSEAS



How the CSEAS can help

- You can consult with the CSEAS for advice where there are concerns about a member of staff suffering from stress
- If you are concerned about a member of staff suggest that they contact the CSEAS for support
- The CSEAS can meet with a staff member to (i) identify what is causing the stress (ii) discuss the effect it is having (iii) explore ways to effectively manage the stress



Useful Resources

CSEAS publications here

- Stress Awareness
- Personal Action Plan
- Building Personal Resilience
- Understanding Stress
- Webcast on Stress Awareness and Management
- Reducing Stress in your Life

External Resources - available online

- Your Mental Health

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Stress cannot be avoided but it can be managed

Stress is a fact of life - it need not be a way of life!

Bereavement and Loss

Bereavement can be experienced in the workplace in a number of ways; staff can be bereaved by the death of a family member, a close friend, or a work colleague. Sudden death can occur in tragic circumstances e.g. suicide, road traffic accident or murder.

A supportive workplace can help a bereaved staff member upon his/her return to work and also assist those affected by a workplace death. You may wish to refer to the CSEAS publication *Helping the Bereaved at Work*



What you as manager can do when a staff member is bereaved:

- Sympathise with the bereaved staff member
- Attendance at funeral ceremonies may be appropriate
- Acknowledge the return of the bereaved staff member to the workplace
- Allow the bereaved person to talk about their bereavement if they want to. Repetition of details of events around the death and funeral are common and perfectly normal.
- Some people prefer not to talk. Acknowledge this but assure your staff member that you are there to support them.
- Allow the bereaved person time to adjust
- There may need to be some flexibility around work duties e.g. if on a public counter, telephone duty
- How long an individual grieves can vary depending on the relationship to the deceased and the personal needs of the individual
- Check if your own Department/Office has a policy on bereavement

Bereavement

Bereavement and loss are an intrinsic part of life. We will all experience bereavement and loss during our lifetime. It may be bereavement as a result of a natural, accidental or sudden death, suicide, murder, miscarriage or neo-natal death.

There are other forms of loss outside bereavement, such as the breakdown of a marriage or relationship; suffering with a degenerative illness; being badly injured as a result of an accident with long term consequences; emigration etc.



How the CSEAS can help

- Contact the CSEAS if you wish to discuss how you can support your staff
- Inform staff about the CSEAS and the contact details of the relevant EAO so that they can choose to avail of one-to-one support
- Avail of CSEAS one-to-one support yourself if you need to
- Where a death in the workplace is sudden or in extremely tragic circumstances e.g. suicide or road traffic accident, the CSEAS can support you in responding to this critical incident. For further information see section on Workplace Critical Incidents in this guide.



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources are available at hr.per.gov.ie

- Circular 01/2017 Bereavement Leave in the Civil Service

CSEAS publications listed here

- Bereavement - Coping with Grief and Loss
- Helping the Bereaved at Work
- Personal Affairs Checklist
- Death in Service

External Resources

- Irish Hospice Foundation
- Barnardos
- Rainbows

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

When a Work Colleague Dies

Death in service occurs where a serving staff member dies while still being employed in the Civil Service. This death can be due to natural causes, illness, an accident or injury at work, suicide or murder. The nature of death can have different impacts both on you and on your staff. As a manager you will need to be proactive in providing support.

What you as manager can do when a staff member dies in service:

- It is important that line managers take a proactive approach when a staff member dies
- Check if your own Department/Office has a policy on bereavement
- Seek guidance from your manager, HR and/or CSEAS
- Inform HR Division and HR Shared Services (PeoplePoint)
- Ensure that colleagues are made aware of the death. The news may trickle from one to another depending on how the news first breaks.
- It may be appropriate to bring colleagues together to inform them
- You may want to have your manager present
- Colleagues may wish to gather together to talk about what has happened, share their loss and support each other
- In the aftermath, check in with staff members to see how they are coping
- Be aware that the death may impact on some staff more than others depending on their relationship with the deceased, their own personal circumstances and the nature of the death
- It may be appropriate to have an Employee Assistance Officer on-site to provide support to staff. Discuss this with the CSEAS.
- Where appropriate, attendance of some staff at funeral ceremonies might be facilitated
- Remember too, that you may also be affected by the death – look after yourself and seek support



Death of a Colleague

Normal reactions can include:

- Shock
- Sense of disbelief
- Anger
- Fear
- Guilt
- Echoes of personal bereavements
- Heightened emotions
- Strong sense of missing the person
- Reaction to the empty desk
- Worry about the assignment of a new staff member

- Remember that a gap is left when a colleague dies. A sensitive approach is best when a new staff member is appointed or an existing staff member is reassigned.
- Make contact with the family of the deceased as appropriate
- Bear in mind that family members of the deceased staff member may contact you as manager. You may need to refer them to your HR Division or HR Shared Services (PeoplePoint), or liaise with your HR Division on their behalf.
- You may need to facilitate the family of the deceased in collecting personal belongings from the workplace



How the CSEAS can help

- Contact the CSEAS if you wish to discuss how you can support your staff
- Consider if it is appropriate to have an EAO from the CSEAS on-site as a support
- Staff may wish to avail of one-to-one support from the CSEAS
- Avail of CSEAS one-to-one support yourself, if required
- The CSEAS can provide practical support to the family of the bereaved person. As a manager you can make this information available to the family.
- At any time, the CSEAS can deliver appropriate presentations on bereavement
- Where the death is sudden or in tragic circumstances, e.g. suicide, road traffic accident, etc., the CSEAS will be able to support you in responding to this as a critical incident
- See the section Workplace Critical Incidents in this guide for further information on managing critical incidents in the workplace



Useful Resources

CSEAS publications listed here

- Bereavement – Coping with Grief and Loss
- Helping the Bereaved at Work
- Responding to a Staff Member in Suicidal Distress
- Suicidal Distress resources for HR's and Line Managers
- Death in Service
- Also refer to the Section Workplace Critical Incident in this guide

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Supporting a Staff Member who is in Suicidal Distress

In your role as a manager you might find yourself in a situation where one of your staff members is in suicidal distress and in need of immediate support and help. It can be challenging dealing with a staff member presenting in this way, however, with the right information, support and guidance, this situation can be managed in a sensitive and effective way.



What you as manager can do when a staff member talks about suicide:

- Remain calm and don't panic
- Take the mention of suicide seriously
- Ask your staff member to tell you what's wrong
- Ask the question "Have things got so bad that you are considering taking your life?"
By asking this question you are not reinforcing the idea of suicide in your staff member's head – they may have been considering suicide as an option to resolve their current problems.
- Assess the situation taking into account the risk factors and warning signs (see overleaf)
- Consider your intervention taking account of the particular situation
- You may need to contact emergency services and/or next of kin
- You may need to consult with your manager, HR Division and/or CSEAS to decide how best to proceed

Suicide:

Suicide is not limited to any one particular group and can potentially affect any one of us. Many people who are suicidal want to end their pain and suffering rather than their life. If you are concerned that you are at risk of suicide, or that someone else is, it is important to talk about what is going on with someone you trust.

Although it is not possible to predict suicide, there may be some indication that a person is considering taking their life. The tables overleaf highlight risk factors and warning signs. These lists are not exhaustive.

RISK FACTORS

- Previous suicide attempt or other act of self-harm
- Expressing suicidal ideas/thoughts
- Uncharacteristic language
- Recent hospitalisation for suicidal ideation
- Recent and major life changing events
- Untreated mental health issues
- Impulsive or risk-taking behaviour
- History of substance abuse

WARNING SIGNS

- Recent unusual behaviour or mood change
- Loss of interest in one's self appearance
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Distracted and less communicative
- Emotionally withdrawn or distant
- Emotional outbursts - tearful/angry
- Deterioration in work performance
- Friends/colleagues raising concerns
- Giving away personal possessions
- Sudden improved mood after a period of low mood

Confidentiality and Suicide

Be aware that confidentiality can sometimes be sought by the staff member who is in suicidal distress, about his/her suicidal intention. Where appropriate, let the staff member know that confidentiality is not guaranteed as it may be necessary to disclose their suicidal intention to a third party to ensure their safety. A judgement call will be required in this regard. Getting help for your staff member should, in so far as is practicable, be negotiated and agreed.

When faced with this situation be mindful that you, as line manager, may need additional support. When consulting with third parties, be mindful of the dignity of your staff member who is in suicidal distress.

Supports

- Your manager – talk to your manager to explain the situation
- Your HR Division
- Next of kin contact details may be required from HR as they may need to be made aware of the situation
- Contact with the CMO may be required – discuss with your HR Division
- CSEAS can be contacted for support and guidance at any stage in managing this situation

- An Garda Síochána/Emergency Services – where necessary
- GP – when appropriate. Encourage contact with the GP.
- SafeTALK training (suicide awareness) provided by HSE

Supporting a staff member who is in suicidal distress can be particularly challenging. It is important to look after yourself when this situation arises.

The CSEAS is there to support you in managing your own self-care, during and after you have assisted the staff member concerned. It is strongly recommended that you:

- Speak with your own manager and/or the CSEAS after the event
- Keep a structure and routine to your working day
- Maintain your usual work/life balance
- Use your own support network



How the CSEAS can help

- Provide advice on how to sensitively manage a situation when a staff member presents in suicidal distress
- Offer support to assist both you and the staff member concerned
- Discuss referral options to the CSEAS where there is a risk to life e.g. suicidal intent
- Remember you can contact the CSEAS and speak with the on-duty EAO during normal office hours



Useful Resources

CSEAS publications listed here

- Information for those affected by Suicide
- Information for those in Suicidal Distress
- Responding to a Staff Member in Suicidal Distress
- Suicidal Distress - Resources for HR Divisions/Line Managers
- Refer to the Section Workplace Critical Incident in this guide

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Alcohol/Drug Misuse

The misuse of alcohol and/or drugs, in general, causes problems for both the dependent person and others, including work colleagues. Dealing with alcohol and/or drug misuse problems in the workplace can be a difficult and frustrating experience. Line managers have responsibility for overseeing job performance, while balancing a duty of care in compliance with the relevant policies. This task isn't easy and is challenging for managers but it is important to take the first step which is identifying **any patterns** of **inappropriate** behaviour and any **deterioration** in work performance and/or attendance.

What are the possible signs of alcohol/drug misuse in the workplace?

The checklist below, which is not exhaustive, highlights signs of alcohol and drug misuse. It is equally applicable to situations where other potentially addictive behaviours become apparent and problematic e.g. gambling, misuse of the Internet. (For further information on these process addictions, please see the Section Gambling Problems, Gaming Addiction and Internet Misuse in this guide).

Possible signs that a staff member may be misusing alcohol/drugs:

- Deteriorating work performance
- Above average recourse to sick leave – certified and self-certified; particularly absences after breaks e.g. weekends, annual leave, social events
- Regular pattern of late attendance
- Misuse of the flexi-clock
- Frequent long lunches
- Increased number of excused absences during the period of duty
- Constant use of medication, lozenges, antacids and mouth fresheners
- Smell of alcohol
- Signs of persistent drinking, visible tremors, hangover, bloodshot eyes, persistent odour of alcohol from breath
- Signs of drug misuse e.g. glassy eyes, mood swings
- Sudden outbursts and arguments with other staff members

ALCOHOL

Enabling Behaviour

Be aware that enabling behaviour can occur in the workplace. Enabling is different from helping and supporting in that it allows the enabled person to continue their addictive behaviour.

Examples of enabling - colleagues covering up by doing the staff member's job for them, turning a blind eye. Denial and/or minimisation of alcohol/drug misuse problems in the workplace only exacerbates the problem and denies the staff member the opportunity to effectively deal with and seek appropriate help for their alcohol and/or drug dependency. Enabling behaviour prevents the staff member from experiencing the full impact and consequences of their behaviour.

Please note: Alcohol/drug dependency is regarded as a disability within the meaning of the Employment Equality Acts 1998 - 2015. The Civil Service Alcohol & Drug Misuse Policy (Circular 08/2009) allows for reasonable accommodation to be provided in such cases.

- Pattern of borrowing money from colleagues
- Increasing complaints from other staff members or other persons, i.e. customers
- Various minor accidents, infringements or violations of drink-driving laws
- Deteriorating personal appearance – unkempt, poor personal hygiene etc.

What you as a manager can do when dealing with alcohol/drug misuse in the workplace:

- For guidance, read the **Civil Service Alcohol & Drug Misuse Policy**
- Discuss the situation with your manager/HR
- You may wish to seek guidance from the CSEAS
- Monitor the observable, i.e. work performance, attendance, behaviour
- Document your observations including dates, witnesses, etc. Do not diagnose.
- Take an early opportunity to meet with the staff member in the context of what you have observed – be specific and factual. Provide your staff member with a written report of your meeting.
- Show understanding and concern
- Be objective, consistent, firm and calm
- Secure a commitment from the staff member to improve work performance and/or attendance – set a review date to meet again to discuss progress or lack of progress
- Ensure a follow up review meeting takes place
- Suggest to the staff member to contact the CSEAS for help and support, where assessment and treatment options can be discussed. (The fees covering external professional alcohol/drug treatment programmes are borne by the staff member).
- Where it is acknowledged that alcohol and/or drug misuse is a factor, inform the staff member that help and support towards recovery is encouraged and facilitated under the **Civil Service Alcohol & Drug Misuse Policy**. Provide the staff member with a copy of the Policy.
- It is important to note that, should a staff member not improve their attendance, performance, behaviour and refuse to seek help under the **Civil Service Alcohol & Drug Misuse Policy**, he/she will be subject to normal disciplinary procedures under the **Civil Service Disciplinary Code**
- Remember your responsibility to have due regard to the privacy of an individual's personal data. Be clear on what will happen with the information if someone discloses something about themselves to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Acts 1988 - 2018. All personal information is subject to GDPR.

Supporting a staff member in recovery from alcohol/drug misuse

In the event that a staff member agrees to avail of professional help for their alcohol/drug problem, your role as line manager is vital in supporting their recovery. Upon their return to work your focus needs to remain on the staff member's job performance, attendance and compliance with work rules regarding alcohol and drug use. When you become aware of your staff member's alcohol/drug problem, you need to know how best to support the staff member in their recovery. The CSEAS can provide you with information and guidance in this regard to support both you and your staff member.



How the CSEAS can help

- Contact the CSEAS for guidance and support in managing the situation and for options on how to progress
- Suggest to the staff member to contact the CSEAS for help and support, where possible options for treatment can be discussed



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources are available at hr.per.gov.ie

- The Civil Service Alcohol and Drug Misuse Policy (Circular 08/2009)
- Civil Service Disciplinary Code

CSEAS publications listed here

- Substance Misuse & Addiction
- Effective Communication
- Anger Management

External Resources

- Alcoholic Anonymous Ireland
- Al-Anon Alateen Ireland - support for families and friends of problem drinkers
- Narcotics Anonymous Ireland

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Gambling Problems, Gaming Addiction and Internet Misuse

GAMBLING
ADDICTION

Gambling

Gambling can progress from a fun harmless diversion to an unhealthy obsession with serious consequences. Gambling addiction can happen to anyone. Whether a person bets on sports, scratch cards, roulette, poker, slot machines, in a casino, at the racecourse or online a gambling problem can put strain on a relationships, interfere with work and can lead to major financial problems.

If a member of staff has a gambling problem, it can have an impact in the workplace in several ways.

- Worries about financial problems causing sleeplessness leading to tiredness at work
- Absenteeism from work
- Moodiness, irritability, depression
- Borrowing money/phone(s) from colleagues
- May include a higher risk of fraud or theft occurring in the workplace

Gaming Addiction

A gaming addiction is a behavioural addiction, similar in nature to a gambling addiction, but relates to gaming activities. Specifically, a gaming addiction can be defined as an excessive or compulsive use of computer games or video games to an extent that the behaviour adversely affects a person's everyday life.

Four phases of Gambling

- Recreational
- Problematic
- Compulsive
- Pathological

When gambling becomes problematic, compulsive or pathological it can impact negatively on others including family members, friends and work colleagues. Because of its hidden nature, gambling can be very difficult to spot in the workplace.

Warning signs in the workplace of problematic gambling or gaming may include:

- Declining productivity – problem gamblers or gamers may spend late nights at casinos or gambling online at home. This can cause regular fatigue at work.
- Misuse of the flexi-clock
- On-the-job absenteeism i.e. long absences away from the desk while clocked in
- Frequent late attendance and/or leaving work early
- Frequent long lunches
- Frequent sick leave absences
- Internet or telephone misuse – problem gamblers might use phones or the internet excessively in work to apply for loans or place bets etc.

- Pattern of a staff member borrowing from or owing money to colleagues
- Pattern of taking leave days in isolation (which may coincide with horse racing festivals or other gambling events)
- Pattern of a staff member appearing preoccupied or distracted – problem gamblers often daydream about previous bets or the anticipation of the next betting opportunity
- Debts – financial problems

Internet Misuse



It is generally agreed that people who misuse, or are addicted to the Internet have trouble fulfilling personal and professional obligations because of their online activities. Their use of the Internet can cause a strain on relationships with family, friends and work colleagues. It can also impact on their ability to perform well at work. People who are addicted to the Internet often experience negative emotions or withdrawal symptoms when their Internet access is restricted. People can become preoccupied with thoughts about their online activity or anticipation of their next online session.

Internet Addiction may also be called Computer Addiction, Problematic Internet Use (PIU), Internet Dependence, or Pathological Internet Use.

Types of Internet Addiction include:

- Internet compulsions including compulsive online gambling or shopping
- Cyber relationships which take over from normal personal relationships
- Constant web surfing
- Compulsive online gaming
- Cyber sexual and internet pornography

Internet Misuse in the Workplace

Internet misuse in the workplace is the overuse or inappropriate use of the internet while at work, in contravention of the Department's/Office's regulations on Internet use.

Impact of Gaming Addiction

- **Preoccupation or obsession with internet games**
- **Withdrawal symptoms when not playing internet games**
- **A build-up of tolerance—more time needs to be spent playing the games**
- **Failure in trying to stop or curb online gaming**
- **Loss of interest in other life activities, such as hobbies**
- **Lying to others about the true extent of online gaming**
- **Playing games online to relieve anxiety or guilt – escape or avoidance**
- **Negative impact on relationships**

Misuse of the Internet in the workplace can occur where a member of staff is:

- Accessing inappropriate websites
- Receiving or sending excessive personal emails/accessing other social media accounts
- Spending an excessive amount of the working day online for personal reasons

What you as manager can do:

Gambling and Gaming

- Where a staff member's pattern of behaviour suggests that there may be a gambling or gaming problem, you will need to consider how you are going to address this
- Focus on the workplace performance, attendance and/or behaviour that is causing concern
- You may need to discuss the situation with your line manager or HR Division for guidance
- Addressing the issue with the staff member needs to be handled in a private and sensitive way. Refer to the section on Having a Difficult Workplace Conversation of this guide.
- If it becomes apparent that the staff member has a problem, you can suggest availing of the CSEAS for help and support. The CSEAS will explore options with the individual in seeking the appropriate help.
- Follow-up meetings will be necessary to ensure the expected improvements are in place and if they are not, there needs to be discussion about what action needs to be taken next

Internet Misuse/Addiction

- Familiarise yourself with your organisation's Internet Content Access Policy
- You may suspect or have evidence that internet abuse is occurring. Discuss any concerns you may have with your own line manager.
- Consult with your line manager and/or your HR Division in relation to implementation of the organisation's Internet Content Access Policy if there are suspected/evidenced office misuses
- Addressing the issue with the staff member needs to be handled in a private and sensitive way. See section Having a Difficult Workplace Conversation in this guide.
- Depending on the nature of the Internet abuse (e.g. accessing child pornography) the involvement of An Garda Síochána may be required. Consult with your line manager and HR Division.
- Suggest to the staff member that they avail of the CSEAS for help/support



How the CSEAS can help

- You can consult the CSEAS for guidance on dealing with the issue.
- The CSEAS can talk through your concerns with you and act as a sounding board
- You can encourage the staff member to seek help and support from the CSEAS



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources are available at hr.per.gov.ie

- Civil Service Disciplinary Code

CSEAS publications listed here

- Effective Communication
- Information Guide on Mental Health & Well-being in the Workplace
- Anger Management

External Resources - available online

- Gamblers Anonymous

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Health Issues

As manager you will have responsibility for managing staff who experience health issues, therefore you need to be familiar and comply with the Sick Leave Policy and Regulations. Physical or mental health issues can result in either short or long term sick leave absences from the workplace. (See the sidebars for information).

No one knows when their health is going to be affected. Sick leave absences can impact not only on the individual, but also on the workplace.

Information under the following headings may be helpful to managers:

- **Dealing with sick leave absence(s)**
- **The role of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO)**
- **A staff member who appears ill in the workplace**
- **A staff member returning to the workplace after a sick leave absence**

Dealing with Sick Leave absence(s)

- When a staff member is absent on sick leave, the manager has a role in supporting them as well as managing the business needs of the section during these absences. This support will include regular contact with the staff member while they are on sick leave as per paragraph 3.4 of Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave in the Civil Service.
- Be aware of your responsibility to raise a case on HRSS (PeoplePoint) when you are made aware that a staff member is absent due to sick leave
- Be aware of the procedures for Extended Sick Leave under the Critical Illness Protocol, para. 3.10 of Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave in the Civil Service

The role of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO)

- For Departments/Offices within HR Shared Services (PeoplePoint), the CMO referral will most likely be initiated by HR Shared Services (PeoplePoint) who will request the relevant HR Division to complete the CMO Case Referral Form. It is important that this contains relevant background workplace information and is completed in full.

HEALTH

Mental Health

Mental health issues can include the following:

- **Depression/post-natal depression**
- **Anxiety**
- **Stress**
- **Psychosis**
- **Schizophrenia**
- **Bi-polar disorder**
- **Panic attacks**

Life events can impact on our mental health, e.g.: bereavement, financial difficulties, physical ill health and any major life change.

- Long term absences must be referred to the CMO after a maximum of 4 weeks – this is non-discretionary. Absences attributed to work-related issues should be referred after 2 weeks. Absences following special leave (e.g. maternity leave) should be referred straight away.
- Repeated short term absences should only be referred to the CMO where the staff member has had a sick leave review meeting and they are attributing their ongoing absences to a ongoing chronic medical condition. The CMO needs to be provided with details of this sick leave review meeting on the CMO case referral form.
- Local HR may also initiate CMO referrals
- See Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave in the Civil Service

Physical Health issues

A chronic physical illness is an enduring health problem that will not go away e.g.:

- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Arthritis

Less chronic conditions include:

- Cold
- Flu

A staff member who appears ill in the workplace

- A staff member who appears to require medical attention while on duty should not be allowed to remain in the workplace (refer to paragraph 3.5 of Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave in the Civil Service for direction)
- Where a staff member has to be sent home due to ill health, arrangements may include either you accompanying, or arranging for somebody to accompany, the staff member home. In some situations a taxi may be more appropriate. Where medical attention is urgently required, contact with emergency services, the staff member's GP or next of kin may be appropriate.
- Remember to consult with your manager and/or HR Division for support where these situations arise
- If a staff member lives alone, consider whether or not you need to notify his/her next of kin
- Where a staff member is sent home due to a health issue, the line manager should contact their HR Division to discuss a possible referral to the CMO, if appropriate
- A staff member behaving in an unusual manner could possibly be attributed to the side-effects of medication or ongoing illness which may or may not have been disclosed to you. This needs to be discussed with the staff member in a sensitive manner. Please see the section Having a Difficult Workplace Conversation in this guide.
- In the event of a staff member becoming ill and who does not agree to leave the workplace, the line manager can consult with their own manager, HR Division, and/or the CSEAS for guidance on how to proceed. The need to contact other parties may arise, e.g. the staff member's next of kin, GP or other sources of support.

A staff member returning to the workplace after a sick leave absence

- Referral of the staff member to the CMO by HR may be required in advance of the staff member returning to the workplace if there is a concern about their fitness to resume duty. This is to establish fitness to return to work.
- Managers are required to conduct a return to work meeting, in line with paragraph 2.3 of Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave in the Civil Service
- Where a staff member is returning to work on a phased basis, the impact on business needs and other staff members should be dealt with in a sensitive way
- A staff member may be diagnosed with an illness which allows them to continue to attend work. It is important that you as manager have a discussion with the staff member as to how this can be accommodated.
- Guidelines for managers regarding the provision of reasonable accommodation(s) for a staff member with a disability are available in the section on Disability in this guide.



How the CSEAS can help

- You can consult/seek information from the CSEAS on any sensitive issues
- The CSEAS can offer you support and advice in dealing with staff health issues which arise in the workplace
- Remember you can suggest to a staff member to make contact with the CSEAS for individual support



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources are available at hr.per.gov.ie

- Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave in the Civil Service
- Civil Service Code of Practice for the Employment of People with Disabilities
- see hr.per.gov.ie/disability

CSEAS publications listed here

- Information Guide on Mental Health & Well-being in the Workplace
- CSEAS as a Resource for Managers
- Good Mental Health in the Workplace

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Mental Health

Maintaining and fostering positive mental health in the workplace brings benefits to all concerned.

At some stage in their career, staff may be affected by challenges to their mental well-being. The extent to which staff are affected may differ greatly. It might occur following a change in personal circumstances or it could be triggered by another health issue.

Engaging with staff experiencing mental health issues needs to be done in a sensitive manner. As a line manager you are not expected to be an expert in the area of mental health. However, you may observe behaviours that may alert you to difficulties that a member of your team may be experiencing.

Line managers are well placed to identify changes in a staff member's behaviour. This may be indicative of an emerging problem. If you notice any behaviour which may be causing concern it should be addressed as soon as possible. Early intervention is preferable to ensure that the appropriate supports are offered to assist the staff member. You may need to have a conversation with the staff member about what you have observed. See the section Having a Difficult Workplace Conversation in this guide.

Where staff are absent due to mental ill health, the previous section of this guide "**Health Issues**" provides guidance on (i) dealing with sick leave absences (ii) the role of the Office of the CMO (ii) a staff member who appears ill in the workplace and (iv) a staff member returning to the workplace after a sick leave absence.

What you can do when you have concerns about a staff member's mental well-being:

- Monitor the situation
- Remember people can be sensitive about disclosing their mental health issues
- Consult with your immediate manager, HR Division, CMO or CSEAS for guidance in advance of speaking to the staff member about your concerns for his/her health
- Engage with the staff member as soon as is practicable
- Create an environment that facilitates disclosure
- Speak to the staff member about what you have noticed or observed
- Remember that people may not realise or accept that their behaviour is a cause for concern
- Provide reassurance and offer practical information where available



Mental Health

Mental health issues can be defined as the experience of distressing psychological symptoms to the extent that normal functioning is impaired and some form of help is usually needed for recovery. Examples of such symptoms include anxiety, depressed mood, obsessional thinking, delusions and hallucinations.

- Listen without making judgements. Do not try to diagnose.
- Ask how the person is feeling
- Ask how he/she can be helped
- Avoid confrontation even if he/she becomes agitated or aggressive
- Ask the staff member if they would like contact to be made with anyone on their behalf
- Respect confidentiality
- Be cognisant of the language you use around mental well-being
- Consider suggesting the availability of the DLO where appropriate
- Ask the staff member if he/she would like to avail of the CSEAS
- If appropriate, you may need to suggest to the staff member that they seek medical assistance – see the next section for guidance on supporting a person that you feel requires medical attention

When you think that a staff member may require medical attention

Where a staff member becomes mentally unwell while on duty, you can refer to Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave in the Civil Service for direction. It may also be necessary to seek the advice and support from your own manager, HR Division, the CMO and/or the CSEAS. Paragraph 3.5 of Circular 05/2018 refers:

“No civil servant who appears to require medical attention should be allowed to remain on duty in the workplace. Where a civil servant’s well-being becomes a concern, their Line Manager should make appropriate arrangements for that civil servant to either return home or receive appropriate medical attention. HR Units should provide support for Line Managers in such circumstances where required.”

When suggesting to a staff member that he/she should seek medical advice consider the following, depending on the circumstances:

- Consult with your manager and/or HR
- Advise your staff member of your concerns regarding their current state of health
- If required, ask the staff member for permission to contact a family member/next of kin
- Encourage the staff member to make contact with the CSEAS
- In the event that a staff member becomes ill and does not agree to leave the workplace you can consult with your manager, HR Division, the CMO and/or the CSEAS for guidance on the appropriate action. The need to contact other parties

may arise, e.g. the staff member's next of kin, GP or other sources of support.

- In consultation with HR, a referral of the staff member to the CMO may be necessary in advance of the staff member returning to the workplace if there is a concern about their medical fitness to resume work. This is to establish his/her fitness to return to work.



How the CSEAS can help

- Contact the CSEAS confidentially for guidance and support in managing the situation
- When the member of staff returns to work, it may be helpful for them to contact the CSEAS for on-going support. You can suggest this to the member of staff.



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources are available at hr.per.gov.ie

- Circular 05/2018 Arrangements for Paid Sick Leave in the Civil Service

CSEAS publications listed here

- Good Mental Health in the Workplace
- Information Guide on Mental Health & Well-being in the Workplace
- Understanding Stress
- Stress Awareness

External Resources

- Mental Health Ireland
- Your Mental Health

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Financial Difficulties

Financial difficulties can arise for any staff member as a result of various life events e.g. long term sick leave, salary overpayment, a reduction in income, unemployment in the household, personal indebtedness etc. These issues can lead to worry and stress for an individual and the impact may become evident at work. If the impact of financial worries is having an effect on a staff member at work, the manager may need to talk, in a sensitive manner, to that staff member.

For more information please see the section on Having a Difficult Workplace Conversation in this guide.

In the event a staff member discloses to you that he/she is experiencing financial difficulties, **what you as line manager can do:**

- Listen with empathy to your staff member if he/she approaches you and wishes to discuss the matter
- Explore what practical support may be of help to your staff member, if appropriate
- Ensure confidentiality in so far as practicable. Suggest that he/she contact the CSEAS who will be able to provide information on financial support e.g. Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), the Public Service Friendly Society (PSFS), Citizens Information etc.
- Consult with your line manager or your HR Division if you have concerns



Financial problems can impact a staff member's ability to perform effectively due to:

- Lack of focus at work due to excessive worry or increased stress levels
- Pattern of sleepless nights causing excessive fatigue
- Low mood or depression
- Sense of hopelessness with possibility of this leading to suicidal ideation



How the CSEAS can help

- Be a sounding board for the line manager
- For consultation and advice where the manager is concerned about a staff member
- You can suggest and encourage the staff member to seek support from the CSEAS if appropriate



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources

For those who are members, the following services may be of assistance:

- Public Service Friendly Society - **psfs.ie**
- Civil Service Credit Union - **cscu.ie**
- CANA Revenue Credit Union – Revenue staff only - **canacu.ie**

CSEAS publications listed here

- Managing your Money: Budgeting Information and Assistance

External Resources

- Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)
- Insolvency Service of Ireland
- Citizens Information
- Competition and Consumer Protection Commission

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Personal Hygiene Issues

Just as deteriorating work performance or a poor attendance record are issues for local management to address with a staff member, so too is the issue of personal hygiene where there is a complaint or you notice an issue. Poor personal hygiene can cause discomfort and an unpleasant working environment for colleagues.



Poor personal hygiene can cause discomfort and an unpleasant working environment for colleagues.

The most common presentation of a personal hygiene issue is body odour. Please see the sidebar 'A Word of Caution'. Addressing this issue with a member of staff is not easy. A line manager who is in this situation can use the guidelines below to address the issue with a member of staff. It must be handled sensitively and effectively in order to minimise embarrassment.

What you as manager can do:

- It may be helpful to discuss the situation confidentially with your manager and/or HR Division
- Given the sensitivity of this issue it may be helpful to contact the CSEAS for support in advance of speaking to your staff member
- Consideration could be given to have a manager of the same gender talk to the staff member concerned
- Any discussion should be held in private and free from interruption. For more information please see the section 'Having a Difficult Workplace Conversation' in this guide.
- In speaking to the staff member, try to reassure them of the positive aspects of their work performance. Indicate to the staff member that you are aware it is a sensitive issue to raise but as manager you have to address it.
- Tell the staff member what has been observed by you or others. Be prepared that you may be asked who brought it to your attention. You will need to address this in advance with the person who raised it.
- Outline the issue clearly. Be aware that medical conditions or medications can result in body odour. Ask your staff member if they are aware of the issue. A medical condition may be disclosed by the staff member.
- Allow time for the staff member to respond. If they become angry or upset, try to diffuse this by explaining that you are raising the issue out of concern.

A Word of Caution

What can appear as a personal hygiene problem may be attributable to other causes, e.g. some medical conditions such as trimethylaminuria, (fish odour syndrome), hyperhidrosis disorder, (excessive sweating), palmoplantar hyperhidrosis, (excessive sweating of the palms or soles of feet), halitosis (bad breath).

Be aware that some synthetic materials, particularly those used in footwear can have an unpleasant odour.

Where personal hygiene issues arise they should be addressed in a sensitive manner.

- Do not get into an argument. Help the staff member to explore possible reasons. Explore solutions in a sensitive manner.
- If no reason is apparent, it may be appropriate to encourage a visit to the GP
- In concluding the discussion, say that you will have another meeting in a few weeks' time to see how things are progressing. Indicate that you are available for a follow-up discussion at a mutually suitable time.
- Consider the timing of this conversation e.g. it would not be a good idea to have it late on a Friday evening



How the CSEAS can help

- In advance of speaking with your staff member you may wish to consult with the CSEAS for support and guidance
- Following your discussion with the staff member, if appropriate, remind them of the availability of the CSEAS



Useful Resources

CSEAS publications listed here

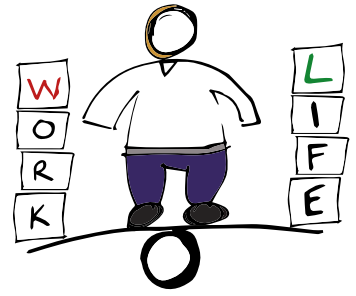
- Personal Hygiene
- Effective Communication

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Life Stages

During the course of our careers, life events and life stages can impact on working choices as indicated in the panel below. The Civil Service offers a range of work/life balance options to assist those making lifestyle choices.



This time can be exciting for some and challenging for others. It may involve significant change and adjustment for the individual. It can also affect the workplace and work colleagues. Planning and preparation will be needed.

As manager, you will be considering any work/life balance applications and managing any resulting change in the workplace. Sensitivities can arise. It can be quite an emotional time for the individual making the working life choice. While supporting the individual, you will also be managing the consequential impact on the workplace. This may include a reduction in staff resources, additional responsibilities to be assigned to remaining staff, workforce planning considerations and the overall impact within the office.

What you as manager can do:

- Listen when a staff member is considering a change in their working life
- You may have to make a decision, possibly in consultation with your manager and HR Division, on the staff member's request e.g. work-sharing request
- For business reasons it may not always be possible to approve requests
- Informing staff of unfavourable decisions may not always be easy (see section Having a Difficult Workplace Conversation in this guide)
- In situations where the staff member may be absent or leaving the workplace, be sensitive in how you manage the subsequent vacant position
- While we all know we can be replaced, even if it is a temporary measure, it can be a sensitive issue for the individual and needs to be well managed
- As a manager you may be hoping for an overlap between the staff member moving on and his/her replacement. Again, this needs to be sensitively managed.

Life stages include

- Caring for children
- Eldercare
- Care for others
- Career Break
- Promotion
- Retirement
- Resignation

Sensitive and practical issues arise that may need to be considered and addressed by the manager.

Practical supports for staff members

- HR Shared Services (PeoplePoint) for information on relevant circulars, forms and documents
- Remind the staff member of adequate notice requirements (set out in the relevant circulars)

- HR Division
- For those planning to retire, remind them that there are pre-retirement courses available which they may be able to attend. Further information is available from HR Divisions.
- Remember the CSEAS is available to provide support to staff who feel they need to talk over proposed work/life changes



How the CSEAS can help

- The manager can consult with the CSEAS for advice where they are concerned about a staff member
- The manager can suggest and encourage the staff member to seek support from the CSEAS if appropriate



Useful Resources

Civil Service Resources

- HR Shared Services website for information and relevant application forms **peoplepoint.gov.ie**
- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for information on Carer's Benefit/Allowance, Maternity Benefit, Pension entitlements, requests for copy of a PRSI record for pension purposes - **www.welfare.ie**
- Pre-retirement courses – check with HR Divisions
- Irish Civil Service Pensions Information Centre - **www.cspensions.gov.ie**

CSEAS publications listed here

- Planning for Retirement, How the CSEAS Can Help
- Personal Affairs Checklist

REMEMBER!

Your supports as a line manager - see Section 1
Your own self-care - see Section 2

Section 4: Health and Well-being in the Workplace

The Healthy Ireland vision for healthy workplaces is that:



“Workplace policies and practices in Ireland support everyone to enjoy physical and mental health and well-being to their full potential and well-being is valued and supported at every level of the organisation.”

Employers are expected to play a role in promoting healthy workplace policies to encourage the physical, mental and social well-being of their employees.

People managers have a key role to play in this positive approach to both the physical and mental health of employees.

People Managers can:

- Create a culture of positivity through their own workplace behaviour
- Familiarise themselves with relevant Civil Service policies and guidelines such as the Dignity at Work, Managing Sick Leave, the Civil Service Alcohol and Drug Misuse Policy
- Stay abreast of workplace health initiatives
- Encourage staff members to engage in all health and well-being opportunities that are offered in the workplace

CSEAS Supporting Healthy Workplaces

The CSEAS has a role in providing proactive initiatives to help staff and management maintain overall good health and well-being in the workplace. Some of these initiatives include:

CSEAS Website (www.cseas.per.gov.ie)

The CSEAS website contains a wealth of information on how to maintain good physical and mental health in the workplace. You can follow the CSEAS on Twitter @IRLCSEAS for up-to-date news and information on relevant topics.

CSEAS Connect

The CSEAS ‘Connect’ Newsletter is published bi-annually providing advice and information on health and well-being topics. All editions of the CSEAS Connect Newsletters are available on the CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie

CSEAS Communications via HR Divisions

At various times of the year e.g. Mental Health Awareness week, Suicide Awareness week, the CSEAS circulates information through HR Divisions on relevant health and well-being topics.

CSEAS Leaflet Series

The CSEAS has published a comprehensive suite of information leaflets on workplace issues which are mentioned and referred to in this guide. These leaflets are available to read or download from the CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie

Delivery of Presentations by the CSEAS

At the invitation of HR Divisions and/or local management, the CSEAS can deliver presentations on a variety of topics e.g.

- Introduction to the CSEAS
- Building Personal Resilience
- Conflict Resolution Skills for Line Managers
- Stress Awareness and Stress Management
- Good Mental Health and Well-being in the Workplace
- Effective Communication
- Harmony at Work
- Self-Care for HR staff
- Coping with Bereavement and Loss
- Mindfulness
- Work/Life Balance
- CSEAS as a support for Line Managers

CSEAS Stakeholder Engagement

Attendance at Civil Service Union Conferences

Each year the CSEAS is in attendance at the Annual Delegate Conferences of all the Civil Service Unions. This initiative provides an opportunity for the CSEAS to meet with staff members across all grades and showcase the wide variety of CSEAS information and support available.

On-the-Ground Linkages

EOs seek to network and be visible across the Civil Service to promote the CSEAS and encourage Service usage.

Section 5: Civil Service Employee Assistance Service

What is the CSEAS?

The CSEAS is the Employee Assistance Programme for the Civil Service. Under central management within the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, it is an important shared service element of the Human Resource (HR) structure in the Civil Service. It plays a key part in an ethos of promoting employee wellness and organisational effectiveness.

Provision of a Service of this nature arises from a recognition that staff are a valued resource, whose continued well-being contributes to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Civil Service. The CSEAS provides a wide range of confidential⁹ supports to staff and management designed to assist employees to manage work and/or life difficulties, which, if left unattended, could adversely affect work performance and/or attendance and quality of life.

Staffing

The CSEAS is staffed by a team of Employee Assistance Officers (EAOs), CSEAS Manager and an Admin Support Officer.

The CSEAS HQ is in Dublin and there are 5 regional offices (hubs).

For individual EAO contact details please click on Meet Our Team on the homepage of the CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie

How the CSEAS can help the Manager

Managers can avail of personal support from the CSEAS when they themselves are facing their own work or life challenges.

In the context of their manager role the CSEAS can offer:

- the opportunity for managers to discuss staff welfare issues, without the manager identifying the staff member concerned
- guidance and help in exploring options to address the situation
- consultation in preparation for difficult workplace conversations

⁹ See CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie for details of confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality

How a Staff Member can Engage with the CSEAS

Self-Referral

Self-referral

A staff member can self-refer to the CSEAS by contacting the Service directly. There is no feedback to management in such instances, unless agreed/requested by the staff member.

Suggested Referral

Suggested referral

- A staff member may disclose to their HR Division or line management that they are experiencing personal and/or work-related challenges. In the course of discussions, it may be suggested to the individual that contact with the CSEAS may be helpful.
- Work colleagues, trade union representatives and/or others who have a concern about a staff member may suggest the CSEAS as a source of support
- At appointments with the CMO, it may be suggested that contact with the CSEAS may be helpful

If a staff member contacts the CSEAS as a result of any of these suggestions, this is considered a self-referral. There will be no feedback to a third party unless the staff member gives his/her consent.

The CSEAS cannot confirm attendance to the party who suggested that the staff member avail of the CSEAS.

The CSEAS can provide letters of attendance directly to the staff member if requested.

Management Referrals

The CSEAS accepts management referrals from HR Divisions or line managers in the following situations **only**

- Where there is a threat to life e.g. suicidal intent
- Where the referral has been recommended by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer

The CSEAS Management Referral Form for use in these situations only is available on the CSEAS website **www.cseas.per.gov.ie**

Confirmation of engagement following management referrals

Where a staff member is referred to the CSEAS by HR Divisions or line management in either of the two situations mentioned above, confirmation of attendance/engagement will be made available to the referring party. Further feedback from the CSEAS, if any, will be provided with the advance consent of the staff member. If an individual chooses to avail or not avail of the CSEAS, this will be relayed to the referring party.

CSEAS clients can request letter of attendance for all CSEAS appointments

CSEAS Confidentiality

Information and personal data disclosed by individuals, including disclosure of a disability, to the CSEAS will not be shared with the individual's HR Division/line manager or any other third party outside of the CSEAS, without the prior knowledge and consent of the individual (exceptions are listed below). This is in keeping with normal professional standards.



Self-disclosure, as appropriate, will be encouraged in the individual's best interests. For example, if an individual tells his or her employer about a previously undisclosed disability, "reasonable accommodations" may need to be considered. This may assist in alleviating any difficulties due to the staff member's disability.

Exceptions to Confidentiality

- Life-threatening situations to the individual, other parties or the public
- Where there is a statutory responsibility to report
- Where required by a court or legal process to do so
- Where non-disclosure of information could compromise the CSEAS
- Where the CSEAS becomes aware of a breach in criminal law, disclosure may be necessary

CSEAS Records

The office of the CSEAS:

- Holds records of engagements with CSEAS clients in compliance with Data Protection Regulations
- Recognises the need to treat all client data in an appropriate and lawful manner
- Is committed to complying fully with the Data Protection Acts 1988 – 2018 and EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR)

See the CSEAS GDPR Statement here on the CSEAS website www.cseas.per.gov.ie

Seirbhís Chúnaimh
d'Fhostaithe na Státseirbhíse



Civil Service Employee
Assistance Service

CSEAS
PEOPLE MANAGERS' GUIDE