## What counts as “excessive workload pressure”?

* Unrealistic deadlines, constantly rushing
* Expectation that people work long hours
* Expectation of excellence at all costs - 100% or more all the time
* Too many permissions needed (process/risk-averse/lack of trust)

## Why does this happen?

* Lack of staff/ staff covering for absences/vacancies
* Lack of clarity about work/roles/authority
* Blame culture/fear of speaking up
* Ineffectual managers/management
* Inefficient systems and processes

## What can be done to help alleviate this?

* Peer support/coaching/mentoring
* Planning
* Managing expectations of customers/colleagues
* Effective management development (to improve management practices)
* Role modelling by Seniors
* Use HSE standard to assess situation
* Grade big ideas and plans so we know what to focus on
* Make allowances for absences/vacancies, don't expect same level of service
* Try and avoid introducing more complexity with restructuring

## Discussion key points

**Monitoring workload stress** – our new Culture Index should help, this will replace previous staff surveys. Note that the HSE takes action where serious problems are found/reported.

* Use the new online tool (due for publication this term); [HSE standards](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/safety/guidance/managingmentalhealthandstress/); also [Workplace pressure risk assessment](https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/occupational-health/information-assessments/workplace/).
* **Psychological safety**: <https://hbr.org/2017/08/high-performing-teams-need-psychological-safety-heres-how-to-create-it.>
* And: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2021/05/28/fostering-psychological-safety-in-the-workplace/?sh=39363b494773>

**Working out-of-hours** – while sometimes this may be acceptable (and even expected in some roles) there remains the risk of “creep” where this becomes the norm and you never get the time back. There is the related issue of role modelling good practice for your team.

**Empowerment** – may help remove the time used in checking/double and triple checking. Trust is key (see below).

**Trust** – “Great leaders build up a healthy 'trust' bank balance - it is needed to be drawn upon at some point”. It’s easy to trust people when everything is going well, less so when things are faltering.

**Issues around identity and inclusion arising from hybrid working** – need to meet up on occasion, consolidate working relationships.

**Management** – is it the systems that managers use, the environment in which they operate or the managers themselves that are failing on occasion? Could mandating (in some way) training with vocational type accreditation (ie recognition of success in the workplace) help? Try the [Line manager competence tool](https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.htm).

**High workload culture** – might put people off from coming to work here.

**Prioritisation** – using an urgent/important matrix can help reduce complexity and overlap.

**Complexity/fragmentation of work** – perhaps need to build “consultation skills” in staff to cope? Can depts streamline what they do and free up time that way?

**Coaching culture** – can help with relationships and with trust and challenges.