



Guide for Managers

Leading change during and after a major reorganisation

SUPPORTING YOUR STAFF THROUGH CHANGE

A good practice guide to re-energise your team

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Introduction

In order to meet the changing requirements of stakeholders and customers, and in order to be able to face future business challenges, all organisations need to adapt and undergo some change. Change is often thought of as large scale organisational change for example, closing a site or restructuring a department. However change can also be smaller in scale such as changes to the way we work, the rotas we work or changes to our Standard Operating Procedures. Whatever the scale of the change, and whether directly affected or not, members of staff will experience an emotional response to it, either positive or negative, that may impact on how they feel about working at NHSBT and on how they carry out their duties on a day-to-day basis.

As a Manager, you have a crucial role in ensuring that motivation and engagement is maintained during periods of change that have the potential to be unsettling, even where the change may be welcomed by the staff affected. This is crucial so that the organisation can continue to provide its services that save and improve lives whilst at the same time supporting staff affected by the changes.

This practical guide has been formulated specifically to help Managers whose teams are affected by a significant organisational change, and as well as some theoretical information about potential responses and reactions to change, includes action points, tips and suggestions for handling particular conversations and situations that may or may not arise. The guide is not intended to support smaller scale changes that occur regularly in the workplace, however the tips and suggestions could be adapted and may provide a line Manager with a good *aid memoir* for handling such changes.

Finally, it is important for those leading change to acknowledge that the perception of the scale of the change is likely to be determined by the affected employees rather than the leader of the change. Many factors affect this, not least how frequently the staff involved have undergone previous change. A department that has not had any change over a long period of time is likely to view any change as significant (no matter how small the leader of the change views it) and so care much be taken in how to approach and plan the launch of the change in the first instance. Detailed advice and support is available from your Workforce team (HR and OWD).

Common reactions to change from an employee perspective

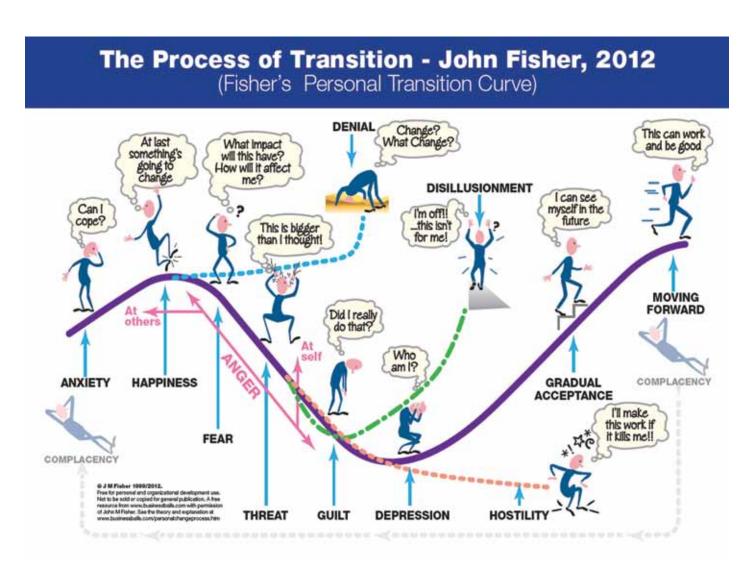
Some people find change to be very positive. It can mean an opportunity to work differently or create opportunities that did not exist previously. Some people take the opportunity to think about how their work relates to their current circumstances. As a result people may opt for retirement or redundancy if appropriate or available; seek to change career direction to do something they had thought about for some time or apply for a new position or grade. The experience, therefore, may be a very positive one and may complement what is happening in their own lives and that of a partner or spouse.

Other people may experience change differently. For example being personally put at risk or seeing colleagues being put at risk can create a set of negative emotions. A study conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) Managing Change: The role of the psychological contract 2005 found that the most commonly reported feelings are anxiety and anger.

It is not just employees who are eventually made redundant as a result of change that can be affected. The CIPD study stated that employees that remain in a job following a reorganisation/redundancy programme may often experience similar anxiety and anger symptoms to those actually affected by redundancy as well as feelings of guilt that they still have a job while colleagues don't – this is often termed as 'Survivor Syndrome' and it is important to recognise its potential existence, particularly in the period following a change.

This guide is designed to help leaders of change manage the more negative reactions to change that exist. Managing positive reactions to change is about the practice of good line management techniques. For support on these aspects please refer to the wider SHINE offering for practical development programmes.

There is a powerful research available eg JM Fishers personal transition curve that shows that people react to change in much the same way that they react to personal grief. The transition curve (Figure 1) shows that people respond to change by going through various phases such as shock, denial, anger, acceptance, moving on etc. Different people will move though these phases at different speeds and display emotions relating to each stage in different ways. The leader of change has an important role to recognise where their staff are on the transition curve at different stages of the change process. If you are able to identify where an employee is, you are more likely to be able to understand their responses and address their concerns. Where change affects more than a small group of staff it is important to acknowledge where the group are as a whole and within that where individual staff are on the transition curve. It is not easy to do but it is an important consideration when managing change.



Within the context of managing change there are several emotions that are typical reactions to major reorganisation which mirror the transition curve.

These include (but are not limited to):

Shock: The first emotion that may be felt by employees is shock or denial. This reaction is much like the initial phase people experience when dealing with death or another traumatic experience.

Anger: Extreme frustration, resentment and feelings of blame are typical responses from those in this phase.

Anxiety: Loss of control and uncertainty are the basis of this ongoing fear. This usually stems from feeling of not understanding the change, how it will affect them personally, what's happening with the change process. This can be made worse or alleviated by good communication leading up to and during the change process. If employees aren't provided with clarification about new roles and responsibilities, they are going to feel lost and not in control.

Grief: This includes feelings of guilt, loss and mourning, this can be for the job that they have lost or for those who remain in work they will often wonder why they were spared. They mourn the connection they have lost with co-workers that they came to count on.

Hopelessness: Many who remain after change may begin to wonder whether it's only a matter of time before they lose their jobs, when will the next change happen – what's the grand plan?

Acceptance: Employees will move to a phase of acceptance once they understand the change and how it affects them. This is helped by removing the concerns they may have as the process develops.

Moving On: in this phase employees will have accepted the change and will move on to fulfil the new role and actively seek to make it work.

Where employees enter the transition curve, and how long they remain in each phase can be aided by good management of the change process, principally good, reliable but accurate communication.

Emotions drive employee behaviour

When reorganisations take place organisations are striving for improvements in business results. They do so to enhance the performance or ensure the survival of their organisations. They hope to see improvements in productivity which will translate into improvements for the organisation as a whole.

The emotions experienced by employees who remain unhappy in the aftermath of organisational change can have a negative impact on these expectations. Feelings of shock, anger, anxiety, grief and hopelessness, if not addressed, can result in behaviours that may not be conducive to increased productivity.



Some employees can demonstrate a lack of engagement, focus and direction after major reorganisation. Some employees can spend a lot of time seeking role clarity in an effort to reduce ambiguity and regain control.

The negative impact of reorganisation may often lead to employees engaging in more politicking, negative networking and job search activities, all designed to secure a stable position in case their jobs are at risk in the future. In addition to decreased productivity and drops in service levels from employees feeling this way their behaviour can cause indirect damage to other employees/departments who may have already accepted the change and moved on. They may start to question themselves for feeling positive or accepting of the change and may be drawn back to the more negative thoughts and behaviours being displayed by colleagues. This has the potential to cause inter-team difficulties that may not have existed prior to the change or which could be handled by management interventions at appropriate times.

Over time, high levels of stress can create higher rates of illness, on the job injuries and mental health issues.

Leading through change: Four good practices to remember

Managers who have to deliver the difficult conversation, and who are themselves affected by the change often wonder how to maintain morale. They may ask themselves 'how can I help the team accomplish its goals especially when people are disengaged, unfocused or demoralised'?

They often have to do this when they themselves are trying to work out the consequences of the change for themselves. It is important to avoid ignoring employee emotions and going directly to trying to control employee behaviours. We would like to believe that all staff will show up to work with a positive attitude and dedication to their work but this is often not the case if they do not address the emotional impact of reorganisation.

When emotional reactions are left unaddressed or are addressed in a negative manner employees may fall into a state of distrust, detachment and disengagement.

As a Manager you will want to create a positive impact where you can help employees deal with the change and manage their reactions to the change. It is also important to remember that you will be also managing your own emotions as the degree to which you use behaviours that reduce or help employees manage their feelings of shock, anger, distrust, anxiety, guilt and hopelessness will impact on how effective you are at leading change in difficult times.

Below we outline four good practices for Managers to use when involving and supporting staff through change:

- 1. Increase your visibility and approachability.
- 2. Emphasise candour and transparency.
- 3. Understand and accept reactions to change.
- 4. Match your actions to employee emotions.

Effective leaders use
emotions to their advantage. You
can never really manage anyone else's
behaviours but you can manage your own
behaviours in such a way that it is likely to create
in the other person the kinds of emotions that will
see from your own team members...

Daniel Goldman

If you are a Manager who has to deliver the difficult messages about the change, the chances are you are probably experiencing one or more of the following thoughts and emotions yourself:

- From a legal perspective I'm anxious because I'm not sure what I should or shouldn't say.
- My boss hasn't given me enough answers or information, so I don't have much to share. I'm frustrated because I know I need to be talking to my people but I don't know what to say.
- The reorganisation has happened and there is nothing we can do about it. I didn't have any control over how things happened and there's nothing I can do now to make it better.
- The emotions that people are feeling make me uncomfortable. I'm not a counsellor and I don't know how to deal with the issues.
- To be honest I feel really sad and guilty about having to deliver these difficult messages particularly when this means that certain staff will lose their jobs.

As a Manager, and as a person, you have every right to those thoughts and feelings. You may too be a 'survivor' of the reorganisation and it's natural for you to have doubts, questions and anxiety. Just like your employees you are also going through the difficulty of change and you need to process emotions.

However as a Manager it is important that you don't allow your emotions to unduly influence your behaviour. It is important to remember that it is completely normal to experience these emotions but don't allow them to drive you towards behaviours that will prevent you from effectively leading your team forward. Obtain support for yourself from your Line Manager, Human Resources, Change Coach or NHSBT's Employee Assistance programme (where there is a special section for Managers).

1. Increase your Visibility and Approachability

When helping people respond during and after a reorganisation the first key to re-energising the team is being approachable. In reality given the nature of our geographically spread services, however, during and after a major reorganisation most of us are not nearly as visible or accessible as our employees need and want us to be.

There are many understandable reasons. We lack information, are not sure what to say or how to say it and are uncomfortable with the difficult questions that may be asked if we closely connect with our people. Do not let any of those points stop you. The simple act of taking time to connect is more important than the specifics of what you say and how you say it. People need to know that you are accessible and willing to talk.

Keep an open door policy

In difficult times leaders are often accused of hiding behind close doors. As a general rule, however, leader visibility should increase drastically. Instead of waiting to hold meetings until all of the details have been worked out, it is important to be approachable during the time when options are being weighed and decisions are being made.

For example you could:

- Host local staff forums.
- Host regular staff teleconferences.
- Host individual one 2 one surgeries and invite staff to see you at allotted times.
- Opt to talk through the consultation document.
- Visit your teams regularly and asking staff questions about how they are feeling about the change announcements check in with your staff on a regular basis.
- Remind staff of your work phone number and reiterate that they can call you at any point to discuss their concerns.

Communicate face-to-face as much as possible and follow-up with other communication methods

Avoid the temptation to rely on emails and memos. Research has shown that face-to-face and voice to voice interactions enhance trust and clarity. Admittedly, when you engage your people in two way communication you may hear questions you're not prepared to answer. Remember that this is ok and that communication is far more important than having all the answers.

For example you could:

- Go back to the floor (spend the day supporting your team member to do their role if possible).
- Do visible 'walk abouts' at your team premises if it is possible to do so.
- Host weekly briefings face-to-face with staff to provide staff with regular updates.
- Host regular face-to-face questions and answer sessions with your staff during the change process.
- Commit to following up and answering any questions that you do not have the answer to.
- Ask people regularly how they are feeling to gauge how people are responding in order to gauge the temperature of your team.

2. Emphasise Candour and Transparency

In times of uncertainty, rumours in organisations tend to multiply. If left unaddressed, the rumours momentum builds and can lead to distrust, particularly if it is unfounded. In order for employees to trust their management teams leaders must be candid about what is going on. Transparency is **absolutely essential** if you want to build trust – a component critical to managing and leading people during tough times.

- Re-emphasise the rationale for the change and be open and honest with your employees about what you know and more importantly what you don't know.
- Commit to finding out exactly what the proposed changes mean and how it may or may not affect people and tell your staff.
- Show empathy and reiterate to staff that you understand how they are feeling and the emotions that they are experiencing.
- Share whatever you can as soon as you can, do not withhold information share the information and communicate the facts in a timely manner.

All too often leaders attempt to shield employees from bad news. As leaders it is important to remember to give your people credit for being able to handle the truth. They know that things are tough and if you are not communicating with them face-to-face they may make false assumptions that fuel the rumour mill and lead to more anxiety. In addition if you aren't talking to your people, their trust in you will diminish. Employees do not want the truth to be sugar coated, so tell people as much as you can rather than trying to withhold information for their benefit.

If you don't have the answers say so and convey when you expect to find out.

When you do not have the absolute answers, communicate possibilities. Between the news and the rumour mill there is not much your people haven't heard or guessed. Talk as honestly as possible about what you know and what you do not know.

It is better to say something along the lines of "I don't know what we will do about X but I commit to letting you know as soon as I do" than it is to say nothing at all.

Be patient and willing to repeat key messages.

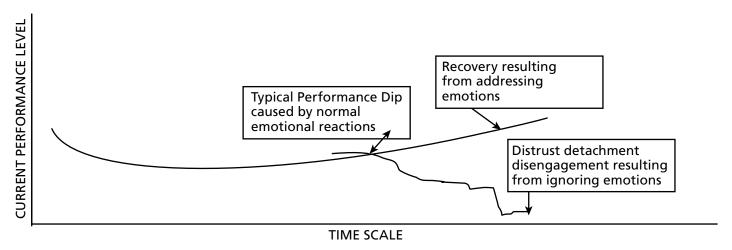
At times it might be frustrating when employees ask 'why' over and over again. Remember that your team members are in different emotional states at different points in time. Sometimes they need facts. Sometimes they need to vent. Sometimes they need support. Recognise that "why" may mean many different things. Have the patience to respond to questions, even when you feel like you are repeating yourself. **Repetition** and **reinforcement** are critical aspects of effective communication and effective communication is a critical aspect of leading change.

If you aren't saying the same things over and over again and aren't a bit bored with yourself it may be that you aren't repeating yourself enough.

3. Understand and accept reaction to change

Whenever a major reorganisation takes place, everyone involved is forced into a disturbing state of uncomfortable and disruptive change.

As was outlined in an earlier section staff will have different reaction to change and helping them through the stages of the cycle is important.



If people on your team are having difficulty managing their emotional reactions to change you can't force them to readily accept the change. Therefore you will need to support them to first deal with their emotions before they can fully accept and understand the change.

Remember your team need time and opportunities to vent their frustrations and process their emotions, this can be a normal and healthy part of the process. The more that Managers attempt to repress their employees' concerns and rush them back to business, the more angry and upset their employees are likely to be.

4. Matching your actions to employee emotions

In the sections on the previous pages we described four general pieces of advice to ensure that you're helping your organisation recover during and after a major reorganisation.

These are:

- 1. Increase your visibility and approachability.
- 2. Emphasise candour and transparency.
- 3. Understand and accept reactions to change.
- 4. Matching your actions to employee emotions.

Leading and developing your team post change

Research suggests that the best strategy for helping people to recover after a major reorganisation is one where the Manager actually matches his or her actions to the emotions employees are experiencing both during and after the change process. This does not mean mirroring the employee's emotions, anger with anger. Rather this means understanding what need underlies the employees' behaviour and meeting that core need so the employee is able to move on.

The table below illustrates this point.

Dominant feelings	Employees' need	Manager's role
Shock	Information	Communicate
Anger	Opportunities to vent	Show concern
Anxiety	Clear direction and sense of purpose	Emphasise clarity
Grief and Hopelessness	Support	Counsel
Understanding and Acceptance	Feedback and Encouragement	Coach

The following tips below provide a specific action plan for re-energising your workforce by matching your actions to the emotions your staff may be experiencing.

Shock

The initial reaction to an announcement of change which may mean people will be put at risk is often disbelief or shock.

- "How can this be happening?"
- "There has to be another way... surely we can make it through without having to let people go"
- "I still can't believe Chris isn't here"
- "How could they let Terry go after he dedicated himself to this company for twenty years?"

Action: Respond to shock by increasing communication

Employees need to hear what, when, why, over and over again. Numerous research has shown that employees are more likely to go the extra mile and recommend their organisation if they are satisfied with ways in which leaders communicate difficult decisions.

Key Manager actions for addressing shock:

- Explain the reason for the reorganisation.
- Check for understanding.
- Provide the opportunity for questions.
- Repeat the explanation using a variety of methodologies.

Suggested Manager responses:

- "I understand that this is a difficult time... I really do but the reason for the change is due to xxx... This change means that xxx is going to happen and in the long-term it will mean xxx for our team and for the organisation."
- "Can I just check that I have been clear in what I have just told you? Please let me know if you
 would like me to clarify anything for you?"
- "Please feel free to ask me any questions and I will do my best to answer them. If I can't provide
 you with the response you are looking for I will make sure I find out and get back to you by xxx."
- "Please come and see me at any time my work number is xxx if you want any clarification about anything. Please do not hesitate to contact me on xxx."

Anger

More often than not anger toward management/leaders quickly follows shock, ie:

- "I doubt if management even looked at alternatives. They only care about the bottom line."
- "I'm out of here as soon as I find another option. There is no way I'm giving any more to people who would do something like this."

At this point it is important for Managers to understand that anger is natural and healthy. There may be times when anger is directed at you. Try not to take it personally. Remember that anger is an important part of the process and it is better for anger to be expressed than buried.

Action: Respond to anger by expressing concern

When faced with anger, Managers often react with anger themselves. Resist this tendency and focus on making time and space for employees to express their feelings. Naturally Managers have the ability to influence when and where it is appropriate for employees to vent. Venting in a one 2 one meeting is one thing but venting in a meeting with a customer is not for example.

Key Manager actions for addressing anger:

- Help others vent in an appropriate forum.
- Listen with empathy.

Suggested Manager responses:

- "I want you to know that I really empathize with you, it's ok to express your anger at this moment in time as it is a very difficult time for us all."
- "I want you to know that the changes that are being proposed are as a result of detailed proposals that have been well thought through. The proposals haven't been decided overnight. You still have an opportunity to put forward your views on alternative ways in which we could make changes for the better/on how to make things better in the long-term."
- "We do care about our staff but at times, leaders have to make difficult and uncomfortable decisions that unfortunately will affect our staff but I can assure you these changes will be for the best in the long-term as it will mean xxx."

Managers: make this your mindset:

I'm going to have another meeting today. It will take a few minutes out of the day but so what – it's worth it. I've got to keep everyone talking and venting and I want them to do it for me. That way I will have a good handle on where everybody is and how much they understand or do not understand and what I can do to help. If and when people express anger, I'll be sure not to take it personally. Expressions of anger are a natural part of the process and I will not attempt to skip over them. In fact I will take it as a good sign that people are actually speaking up and working through their concerns.

Anxiety

Typical reactions heard are:

"I wonder if this was just part one and there are more planned redundancies?"

"I keep wondering if I will be next."

"I don't know what I would do if I lost my job."

As feelings of shock and anger wane Managers may expect their staff to renew their focus on work but this is rarely the case. After change but particularly major change it is often the case that people feel like they are walking on egg shells. They may be wondering if there are more rounds of cuts and if they will be next.

In order to promote productivity you need to help your employees figure out what to focus on and what actions to take. At this stage it is critical for Managers to address the anxiety by providing **clarity**. Managers need to get people on the same page about goals, roles and expectations.

Action: Emphasise clarity to address anxiety

Since uncertainty is the most difficult part of any change make every effort to reduce the unknowns. As a leader you can help employees gain a sense of control by focusing on things they can influence, such as customer service and personal productivity. Involve them in helping to make decisions about how to move the work group forward. In addition look for opportunities to remind employees of the greater purpose behind their work and the organisation.

Key Manager actions for addressing anxiety:

- Provide clear direction.
- Communicate expectations.
- Help employees focus on elements they can influence or control.
- Be honest about what you do and don't know.

Suggested Manager responses:

- "I would like to reiterate to you what this change is all about and what this will mean in the long-term, for example where we are heading and what this means for our team in the future."
- "As you are a part of the team you have a vital role to play in helping to make our team the best team in the organisation and we really cannot achieve anything without your full support and cooperation. "I am expecting you to support me as your Manager and I will do everything I can to support you and to help you adapt to new ways of working.""
- "You must ensure you raise your concerns during the consultation phase. Make sure that your views are fed into the process."
- "I do know xxx and I have told you about this. I don't know about xxx but I can assure you that I will find out and get back to you as soon as possible."

Grief and Hopelessness

Typical reactions that might be heard:

- "It is so sad to see all of these empty desks and cubicles, it feels like a completely different place."
- "How on earth are we going to get anything done with half the staff? It's impossible."
- "I had to take sick leave yesterday. I just feel sad and sick when I come into work now."

Sentiments like this mean that your people are overwhelmed by feelings of grief and hopelessness. If management ignores these emotions, then worry, sorrow and hopelessness will hinder employee performance and decrease productivity.

Action: Coach employees to reduce grief and hopelessness

Key Manager Actions for addressing grief and hopelessness:

- Share your own emotions.
- Help others express their emotions.
- Listen.
- Be sincere; do not try to downplay what you and others are feeling.

Suggested Manager responses:

- "I know this is difficult for you it's really difficult for me too. What outcome do you want to see going forward and how do you think it can be achieved? How would you have approached the situation?"
- "Can you tell me what you are feeling right now? Are you happy to share this with me at this moment?"

Understanding and acceptance

Typical reactions might include:

"It's awful that so many people are at risk. But I know the economy has hit everyone in our industry."

"I see a positive future for us all if we can all pull together."

"Lots of things are changing but I'm beginning to see some positives coming out of it."

Wouldn't you like to be able to hear something like this from your employees? Taking the steps described in this guide will increase the chances that your employees will reach a point where they are emotionally and rationally able to move on and focus on the future. It is a well known fact that most employees that receive support are able to ultimately understand and accept the necessity of the redundancies.

It is at this point that Managers should be emphasising how the organisation will move forward and grow. You have to help people understand that at some point in the future the organisation will be different and better with everyone's determination and buy in.

Action: Focus on the future to help employees move on

Research has shown that positive emotions like hope and optimism encourage creativity and innovation among your workforce and these are qualities that as Managers you need to foster within your team to help cope with the reorganisation as best you can.

Key Manager Actions for addressing understanding and acceptance:

- Convey realistic optimism and hope.
- Involve others in discussion about the future.
- Engage employees in action planning.

Suggested Manager responses:

"I know it is a really difficult period and quite a stressful time but we have to be positive and believe that we will come out the other side."

"Let's get together and discuss what the new world is going to look like. We really need to look for the positives rather than focusing on the negatives as we can't change what has happened."

"We need to move forward – we can't remain in the past. What happened has happened and we now need to focus on the future and how we can make things better for the team."

"We really need to have an away day to focus on the future structure, our roles and responsibilities and what our contribution is going to be in terms of taking the organisation forward. This is actually quite exciting!"

Summary of key points

This guide has been developed to provide Managers with practical tips on what they should do during the change processie when change has recently been announced and the actions they should take that will help them re-energise and engage their teams in the long-term after the change has taken place.

There are four key points that all Managers should remember in relation to managing change and involving staff during the change process.

These are:

- 1. Increase your visibility and approachability.
- 2. Emphasise **candour** and **transparency**.
- 3. **Understand** and **accept** reactions to change.
- 4. **Matching** your **actions** to employee **emotions**.

It is also important to remember the following points with regard to typical employee emotions and how to handle these in the table below.

Dominant feelings	Employees' need	Manager's role
Shock	Information	Communicate
Anger	Opportunities to vent	Show concern
Anxiety	Clear direction and sense of purpose	Emphasise clarity
Grief and Hopelessness	Support	Counsel
Understanding and Acceptance	Feedback and Encouragement	Coach

NHSBT support and further resources

Redeployment Team – Laura Unitt – HR Change Consultant – 82100

Change Coaches available through – Abina Bastin – Staff Engagement Consultant – 80658

All NHSBT learning and development sits under the Shine umbrella http://nhsbtweb/resources/about NHSBT/shine/

Shine programmes – rolling calendar and application form http://nhsbtweb/resources/training/learning & development/index.asp

Application for funding for external courses if on the at risk register http://nhsbtweb/group services/human resources/activity map/development process/applying for external funding/additional retraining.pdf

Application for funding for courses and conferences if not on the at risk register http://nhsbtweb/group_services/human_resources/activity_map/development_process/applying_for_external_funding/index.asp

View all NHSBT vacancies http://ndcsb078/on-line_applications/national_vacancy_bulletin/display/default.asp

Employee Advisory Resource – Employee Assistance Programme – 24 hour

Workplace Options – The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a confidential service for you to help maintain a healthy balance between work and life, available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

If you would like to use the Programme:

Call: **0800 243 458**

Call (outside the UK): +44 (0)208 987 6550

Minicom users: 0208 987 6574

Email: assistance@workplaceoptions.co.uk

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