

# Barnsley Sleep Tool Kit

For Employer  
and Employees



**BARNSLEY**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

## Introduction

On 7 November 2017 residents of Barnsley, as part of the Director of Public Health Annual report, were asked to tell us about their physical and mental health through the completion of a diary. This provided us with an invaluable and unique insight into the daily challenges that affect our physical and mental health and a better understanding of what people think makes their health better or worse. Poor or lack of sleep was identified as a main theme from the diaries that were completed, and sleep therefore formed part of the report. A pledge was made that we would consider this issue and for us to provide practical advice and tips to assist with better sleep.

Did you know that we spend a third of our lives asleep? Regardless of your age or gender, sleep is crucial to your health and wellbeing. Unfortunately, too many people in Barnsley are suffering from a lack of sleep or poor sleep and we are not alone. In England, four in ten people aren't getting enough sleep while one in five people sleep poorly most nights. This represents the second most common health complaint after pain.

Most people know that a good night's sleep is the best way to recover after a hard day. But sleep is not just critical to recovery, it essential for maintaining cognitive skills such as communicating well, remembering key information and being creative and flexible in thought.

There is also a strong relationship between sleep and physical and mental health and not getting enough sleep has a profound impact on our ability to function. If it develops into a pattern, the cumulative impact is significant.

*From our Director  
of Public Health  
report 2017/18:*

“

I woke up at 1am and didn't go back to sleep until after 3.30am so when it was time to wake up I still felt tired. This happens to me regularly.

Gender unknown, 57

”

“

At one point today as I was driving I felt really fed up and tired and could have stopped and slept.

Female, 57

”

## How does poor or lack of sleep affect employees, and what can you do?

Research shows that there are links between a lack of sleep and high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. It also makes us more vulnerable to infection and raises the risk of accident and injury.

## Why can't I sleep?

There are many reasons why you might get less sleep than the recommended 7 - 9 hours a night. Work-related stress, working anti-social hours, illness and injury, getting older, money worries and personal loss are just a few of the issues that can keep us awake at night.

## How can you tell if lack of sleep is affecting you at work?

Common signs include a general deterioration in your performance, poor concentration or poor memory, as well as being in a poor mood and greater risk taking.

## Signs of sleep deprivation



## What can you do about it?

There are steps you can take if you feel you're showing signs of any of the above and think it may be down to not sleeping enough. This is where "sleep hygiene" comes in. Don't be confused by the phrase 'sleep hygiene', it's not about how clean your bedding is!

Rather, sleep hygiene is about creating the ideal conditions for a good night's sleep.

## Sleep hygiene

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



Progressive relaxation techniques can help you to relax and unwind at these times. A free audio guide for learning progressive relaxation techniques can be downloaded from: [mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/podcasts](http://mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/podcasts)

If sleep is still difficult there's a range of help available. Talk to your GP, a pharmacist or visit [NHS Choices](#) or [One You](#) for further information.

It's also important to speak to your employer if you feel that it's affecting your work life.



## How does it affect Barnsley? The impact on your business and workforce

Barnsley's businesses are increasingly aware of the impact of sleep deprivation on the health and wellbeing of their employees, and the knock-on implications for productivity. There are steps you can take to support sleep and recovery in your workplace.

It's important for businesses to create an understanding environment, where employees can be open with their managers about any sleep-related issues that are hampering them at work.

That way line managers and employees can identify the risks to health and wellbeing in your workplace together and gather the right information to help you put plans in place to manage risks. This can be especially important when changes to your work schedule or significant changes like organisational restructuring are planned.

Although we all make our own decisions at night when to lie down and go to sleep, there are lots of ways employers can support their workforce to get a better night's sleep, and ultimately help everyone to be healthier and achieve their potential in the workplace.

This includes recognising when changes to work can help remove some causes of sleep deprivation. When health and safety is a concern, such as handling heavy machinery, an employer may request that an employee consult with their GP before resuming duties. An employee might not even be aware that he or she is not sleeping enough and may not be able to pinpoint the reasons. This might be the first time an employee has considered the significance of sleep.

## Work-related causes



### Shift patterns

Shift work can create issues because it involves working against the body's natural rhythm.



### Working day/week

The 24/7 economy requires many of us to work longer hours than a generation ago. Even when our formal working hours have not changed substantially, we find it harder to disconnect from work because of our mobile devices and expectations of an immediate response, regardless of time of day or night. Encourage employees to disconnect work emails, call and texts between agreed hours and/or at weekends. Sharing out-of-hours calls across teams can also help.



### Stress

Work-related stress can have an adverse impact on sleep. The risk is greatest at times of change, or when there is uncertainty at work. Some stress can be positive, but stress that is persistent over longer periods is detrimental. It can make it difficult to rest and sleep and cause fatigue.



### Work relationships

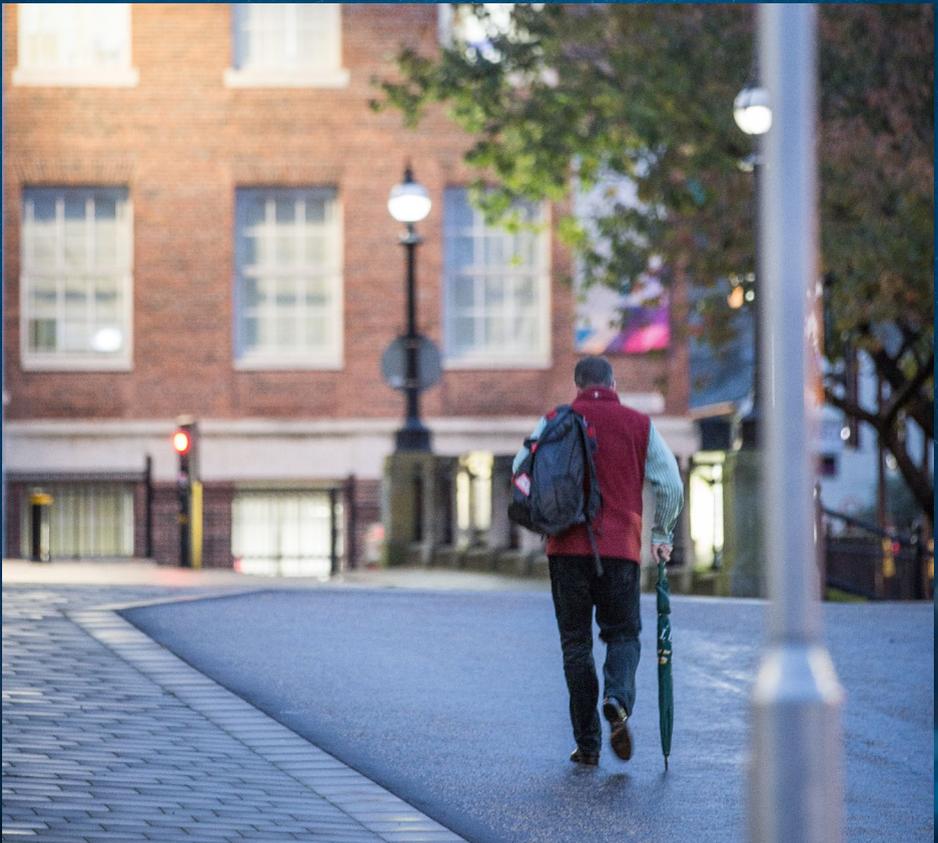
Work is central to many people's lives, and relations with colleagues have a significant bearing on wellbeing. A difficult relationship with a line manager or bullying by colleagues can cause stress, which carries over into a person's home life, disrupting sleep.

## Actions for Barnsley employers and managers

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

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

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



## Prevention: creating the right culture and providing support

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

## Early intervention: recognising and addressing sleep deprivation

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



## Recovery: helping employees to recuperate

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

## Resources for employers and employees

NHS Choices information on better sleep and how to get it can be found on their website: [nhs.uk/live-well](https://nhs.uk/live-well)

HSE – Stress Management Standards [hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/](https://hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/)

Mental Health Foundation – How to sleep better guide can be found at [mentalhealth.org.uk](https://mentalhealth.org.uk)

Alcohol advice: [humankindcharity.org.uk/service/barnsley-recovery-steps](https://humankindcharity.org.uk/service/barnsley-recovery-steps)

Smoking cessation: [barnsley.yorkshiresmokefree.nhs.uk/](https://barnsley.yorkshiresmokefree.nhs.uk/)

Healthy eating: [nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/eat-better/](https://nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/eat-better/)



### Pzizz

Category: Sleep

Free

The Pzizz app helps you quickly quiet your mind, fall asleep fast, stay asleep, and wake up refreshed.

It uses beautiful “dreamscapes” – a mix of music, voiceovers and sound effects designed using the latest clinical research – to help you sleep better at night or take power naps during the day.

Visit Website - <https://pzizz.com/>



### Sleepstation

Category: Sleep

Free

Sleepstation is a 6-week online course for people who struggle to fall asleep or stay asleep through the night. The course is tailored to your needs, using the information you provide, and gives you access to a team of sleep experts who will offer helpful advice and support throughout

Visit Website - <https://sleepstation.org.uk/>

\*\*Information included in this resource pack has been replicated with permission from Public Health England.

This toolkit is linked to Town Spirit. We want to work better together. If everyone in Barnsley does just one thing, together we can make our borough a more welcoming place where people want to live, work and visit.

**#Liveit** helps us to support the most vulnerable people, making sure they can access support at the earliest possible stage. Own it by keeping your employees, your own and your family's health at its best, asking for support when you need it and looking out for your friends and neighbours.

# Liveit

Looking after  
yourself and others

# Town Spirit

Working together for a better Barnsley



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Metropolitan Borough Council