

A Manager's Guide to the **Employee Assistance Service**



Introducing the EAS

Welcome to your guide to **Spectrum.Life's EAS**. This booklet will help you understand the service so that you, your staff and their families can all gain the maximum benefit from it.



What is Spectrum.Life's Employee Assistance Service?

Our Employee Assistance Service, or EAS, is a proactive, behavioural risk management tool for your organisation

Our EAS provides employees with easy access to a wide variety of mental health, as well as practical, services to help them through a range of personal or work related issues, while equipping them with the tools they need to proactively protect and manage their own mental health.

The EAS can also support you, as a manager, through any of your own personal issues and help with any unique issues you may face as part of your role. The EAS also offers help and guidance around managing staff better when there is an issue you feel unable to deal with by yourself.

Having access to an EAS means employees can reach the help they need directly, as and when they need it, with little or no input needed from you. While relieving a huge amount of pressure from you, this will also help you to ensure that you are fulfilling your duty of care to your employees while at the same time protecting your organisation against potential future litigation.

This booklet will help you fully understand the EAS its features and benefits, how it works and how to refer an employee to the service when appropriate.

How is the EAS reached?

ROI Free Phone: 1800 814 243

WhatsApp: 087 369 0010

SMS: 087 145 2056

Email: EAS@spectrum.life

Through the EAS portal with live chat and call back function

What does Spectrum.Life's EAS offer?

- Support to employees, in addition to family members including a spouse, civil partner or dependent, where the family member can be described as a person over the age of 18 and residing at the family home.
- A telephone helpline, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year
- Immediate access to confidential telephone counselling
Ability to access the service through an engaging web portal and app, live chat, SMS, WhatsApp
- Referral on to face-to-face, phone or video counselling when appropriate
- Clinically led Online CBT courses and support

Common Queries from Employees

When should I use an EAS?

The EAS can help with a wide variety of problems. Our fully qualified team of counsellors and experts are highly experienced in personal and work related issues and can support anyone suffering with issues including, but not limited to:

- Depression, anxiety, stress
- Grief and bereavement
- Addictions
- Relationship and marital problems
- Work stress and work-life balance issues
- Life transitions such as career progression

Who will I speak to?

When contacting the EAS you will get straight through to a fully qualified, accredited and experienced counsellor who will work with to ensure you get the most appropriate help with whatever issue you are having.

Our counsellors can understand the root causes of an emotional issue and help with onwards referral to the service most appropriate.

What happens on the initial call?

On first contact, the Case Manager will explain what the service can provide and its confidential nature. The only information that must be given is the name of the company to initially access the service.

If follow up referral is necessary, in order to set up an employee's case file, the Case Manager will gather some additional information from the employee such as name, date of birth and contact details.

This information is stored securely and is never shared with an employer or colleagues. It is only ever shared when absolutely necessary with qualified and accredited professionals and the employee will always be made aware of this beforehand.

The information is gathered for a couple of reasons, such as:

- To check employee's eligibility for the service.
- So that the team will be able to find and access the contact details and can get in touch with the employee if needs be.
- To enable the Case Manager to create and keep a full record of all of an employee's contact with the service to keep track of their case, referral etc. and ensure they are receiving all of the care they need as promptly and efficiently as possible.
- So that in the event of the Case Manager being unavailable when the employee is looking for help, the other members of the team will have the details of the case at hand and will be able to provide the employee with the most up to date and accurate guidance.
- So that wherever appropriate, the Case Manager will be able to share the necessary details with the relevant professional the employee is being referred to e.g. counsellor, legal expert etc.

Is the service confidential?

Confidentiality is the foundation of our EAS. The service is always completely confidential.

When an employee calls, the only information that must be given is the name of your company to initially access the service. You choose what information you share, and no details will be given to anyone unless you instruct us to do so.

As outlined, to arrange a follow up or referral, additional information provision is necessary. The only information that we would ever provide to your company is anonymous statistics, to enable your company to know how the service is being used. We will never give any information that may cause anyone to be identified and personal details don't have to be supplied to access the service.

All of our counsellors and extended team are bound by professional standards and a strict code of ethics regarding confidentiality and the disclosure of details of individuals who have contacted them.

The only limits to confidentiality are if the individual discloses that they may be at risk to themselves, an identified adult or a child. In these situations we would need to let other professionals know, but this will be discussed with the individual if anything like that comes up.

How do I get referred for counselling?

Following initial assessment, based on your preferences and suitability, the counsellor is informed enough to allow for a sophisticated matching of you with the relevant type of counselling be it face to face, video or phone, with the most suitable counsellor available.

On referral, contact from a counsellor will be made within 24 hours and they will offer an appointment within 5 days and will arrange the first session at a time that suits you.



EAS Support for Managers

Support for Managers with Day to Day Personal Issues

Managers face unique stressors when looking after their team members including handling team changes, conflict management, dealing with difficult team employees, or dealing with stressful workloads.

Our EAS will be available 24/7 to support and advise you when it all gets too much and you are struggling to cope with the pressures of your management role. Our counsellors can discuss possible ways that you could lessen the impact these stressors are having on your mental health and refer on to further support services whenever needed.

Support with Management Issues

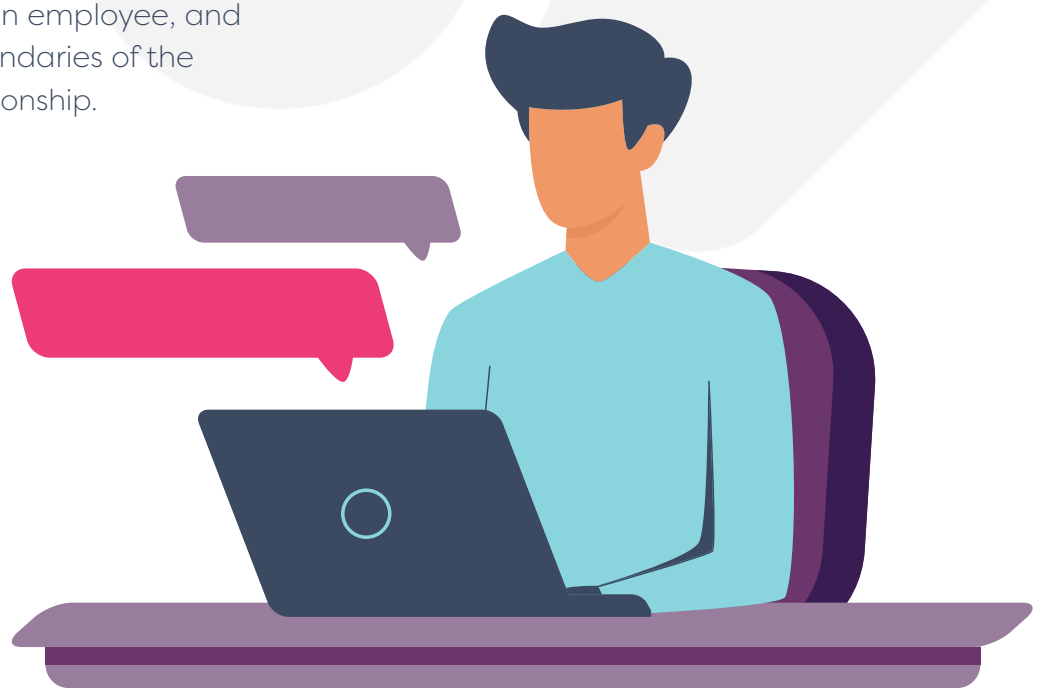
A particularly useful feature of our EAS is the support it can provide to help managers in dealing with employees when there is an emotional component to an issue causing concern.

We have found that some managers find it particularly difficult to manage situations that involve counselling an employee, and this can also blur the boundaries of the manager-employee relationship.

Our counsellors can help coach a manager in the best way to deal with others and, if necessary, facilitate a referral to the EAS so the counsellor team can assist the employee directly.

This support can range from guidance on how to handle performance issues, discipline and grievance situations, managing change within their teams, breaking bad news to employees, how to support an employee who is having problems at home, or how to handle interviews where an employee may become emotional.

Our counsellors can provide professional guidance on what to say and what not to say. They can help a manager appreciate different perspectives of their employees, and give practical guidance and advice on how to deal with the situation. Often managers find that just speaking to an external person in a confidential setting is a great source of pressure release.



Managing Stress in the Workplace

Workplace stress is becoming a major health and safety concern for employees and employers alike. The profile of stress in the media has led to an increase in awareness of the negative effects that stress can cause and the number of workplace stress litigation claims are on the increase.

Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, companies have a duty to take measures to control that risk.

For example, the Irish High Court has indicated in a recent judgement that an employer who offers a confidential advice service with referral to appropriate counselling or treatment service is unlikely to be found in breach of duty.

However, if you are aware that an employee is struggling to cope at work, the onus is on the organisation and managers to actively provide support and make accommodations to help that employee cope better. Most managers don't know what to do in these situations and feel ill prepared to manage them effectively.

Understanding Stress

A definition of stress is “the adverse reaction a person has to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed upon them”. There is a difference between pressure and stress. It is important to recognise that some pressure, is good and helps us to perform at our best, but too much can lead to poor performance and negative health effects.

Pressure & Performance

Pressure is inevitable. While it can stimulate individuals to achieve, grow and learn it can also lead to periods of stress. The ways in which people respond to pressure impacts directly on their performance and wellbeing. It is vital to manage pressure effectively and as managers, it is important to recognise and understand how pressure affects employees. Too much or too little pressure can be harmful.

Early Warning Signs

One of the most effective ways of managing pressures on your team is to be aware of some of the early warning signs of excess stress. Here are some things to watch out for:

Physiological

- Weight loss or weight gain
- Frequent colds or flu
- Increase in frequency of lateness
- Increase in accidents
- Decrease in attention to personal hygiene/care

Cognitive

- Prone to errors
- Forgetful
- Decrease in alertness
- Decrease in concentration
- Disruptive behaviour at work

Emotional

- Frequent mood swings
- Apathy
- Hostility
- Tearfulness
- Change in social behaviour with colleagues

Behavioural

- Change in the quality/quantity of work
- Missed appointments and deadlines
- Lack of social interest
- Withdrawal
- Difficulty following instructions

The most important thing to watch out for when trying to identify signs and symptoms of stress is change.

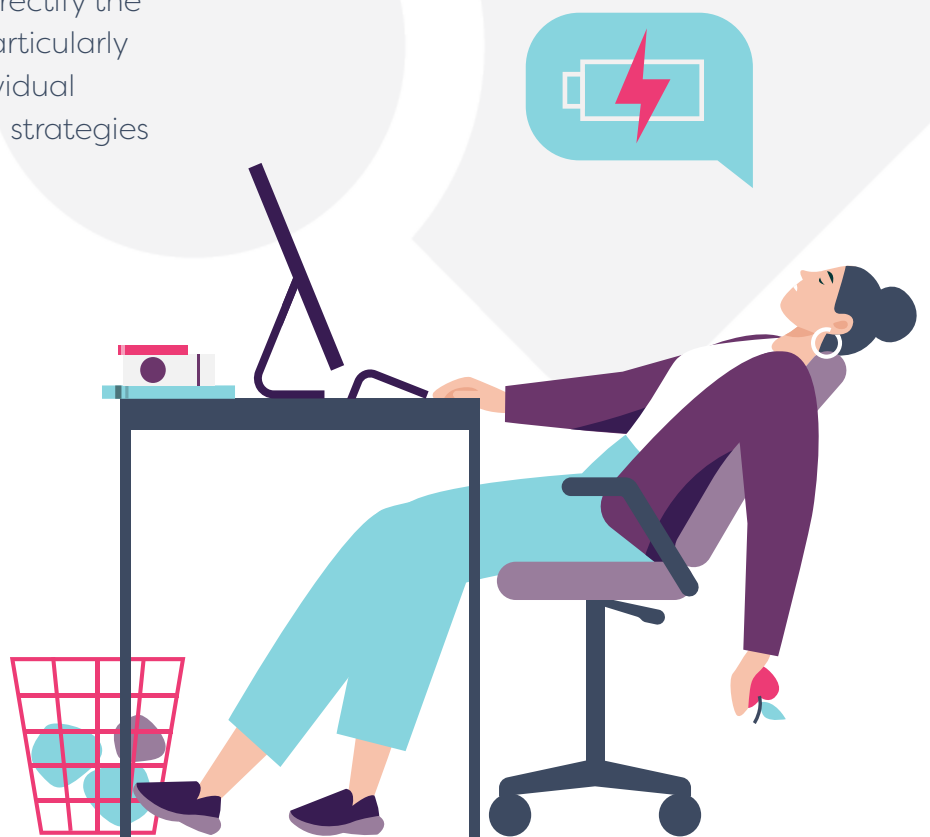
If we consider a time when we have ourselves been under stress, such as just before a deadline, often we behave can become short-tempered, agitated, aggressive, pre-occupied and antisocial.

Sometimes it is difficult to notice these changes over a long period of time so it is important to look closely at any changes in routines, social interactions, general mood and the quality of someone's work. Some common symptoms are listed above.

When stress becomes overwhelming and it is difficult to see how we can rectify the situation, counselling can be particularly helpful in trying to help an individual identify alternative options and strategies for coping.

The longer it takes for someone to ask for help, the more disruption the issue will cause in someone's life and the worse the stress will become. For example, when they may become angry, pre-occupied and stressed, and this may in turn affect their work, which could lead to them losing their job, which will obviously make their financial situation much worse.

If people access help sooner rather than later, it is much better for the individual, much less costly for the organisation, and much easier for us to provide assistance. Therefore it is important for a manager to refer an employee to the EAS as soon as they become aware there could be a problem.



Referring an Employee to the EAS

Self-Referral

Self referral is the most common way that individuals can access the EAS and they are able to make contact 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, over the phone or by reaching out through the web portal, app or live chat.

Informal Referral

Often an individual may approach you, as their manager, for help with a concern they have. Under most circumstances all a manager will need to do is suggest to an employee that they could benefit from using the service and encourage them to call the EAS. This could simply involve providing the contact details and perhaps a room with a phone which offers some privacy and some time for the employee to make the phone call. This is typically all that is needed.

If you feel the individual would be reluctant to call the EAS themselves, you can call the helpline directly for advice from a counsellor about the best way to approach the subject with the employee. Often this may be about focusing on the outcome and benefits that could be gained as opposed to the difficulties currently faced.

Formal Referral

Sometimes there may be a need for a more formal approach to making a referral. If the employee cannot find the courage to call us then, with their written consent, it is possible for us to call instead.

In addition, when an individual reports that they are suffering from stress, or perhaps a GP has recommended they have some time off because of stress at work, it is vital that an organisation takes all reasonable steps to assist the employee. One part of this can be offering assistance from the EAS.

In these circumstances, a formal EAS referral form is available to download from the web portal that can be used to refer an employee. It is recommended that before using this option that managers always consult their HR representative and, in addition, it may be useful to contact the service directly to discuss with a counsellor other ways of facilitating the referral.

To make a formal referral:

- Complete the Manager Referral Form - please contact HR for this.
- Have the employee sign the form to confirm consent.
- Email a copy of the Manager Referral Form to EAS@spectrum.life
- Employee will be called within 24 hours
- This contact with the employee will be confirmed with HR

When you are completing the form, do so with the help of the employee concerned, explaining to them why you think it could be of benefit, and that they are not under any obligation to give consent. Also explain that they are not committing to counselling or any other form of assistance by signing the form, they are only agreeing to the EAS calling to offer support.

Dos and Don'ts for Reducing Workplace Stress

The HSE has identified six causes of stress in organisations: demands, control, relationships, support, change and role. The following recommended dos and don'ts are supported by the Health & Safety Authority

Demands

DO:

- Allow regular breaks, especially when the work is complex or emotionally demanding
- Provide realistic deadlines
- Provide adequate training and resources for doing the job
- Design jobs that provide meaning and stimulation and opportunities for workers to use their skills
- Provide sufficient challenge/pressure to keep staff motivated and interested in their work
- Attend to the physical environment
 - - take steps to reduce unwanted distraction, disturbance, noise levels, vibration, dust etc. where possible
- Assess the risk of physical violence/verbal abuse, and take steps to deal with it

DON'T:

- Ask people to do tasks that they are not trained to do
- Encourage staff to take work home with them
- Allocate more work to a person or team unless they have the resources to cope with it
- Allow workers to 'cope' by working longer hours
- Ask young people (under 18 years) to take on work that may be beyond their emotional maturity

Control

DO:

- Allow staff some control over the pace of their work
- Allow and encourage staff to participate in decision making
- Empower people to make decisions about the way they work
- Negotiate shift work schedules

DON'T:

- Monitor employees movements in detail (including toilet breaks)
- Monitor working style, unless necessary
- Ask staff to stay late without notice

Relationships:

DO:

- Encourage good, honest, open communication at all levels in work teams
- Provide opportunities for social interactions among workers
- Provide support for staff who work in isolation
- Create a culture where colleagues trust and encourage each other

DON'T:

- Allow ANY bullying behaviour

Support:

DO:

- Ensure that staff receive sufficient training to undertake the core functions of their job
- Provide constructive, supportive advice at annual appraisal
- Provide flexibility in work schedules, where possible
- Allow phased return to work after long-term sickness absence
- Hold regular liaison / team meetings
Provide opportunities for career development
- Deal sensitively with staff experiencing problems outside work.

DON'T:

- Trivialise the problems of others
- Discriminate against people on grounds of sex, race or disability or for any other reason

Change

DO:

- Explain what the organisation wants to achieve and why it is essential that the change(s) take place.
- Consult with staff at an early stage and throughout the change process.
- Involve your staff in the planning process so that they understand how their work fits in.

DON'T:

- Delay communicating any new developments. This will help reduce rumours spreading.

Role

Do:

- Provide a clear job description
- Define work structures clearly, so that all team members know who is doing what and why
- Give all new members of staff a thorough induction to your organisation
- Define work objectives (eg through a personal work plan)
- Avoid competing demands, such as situations where it is difficult to meet the needs of the business and the customer.

DON'T:

- Make changes to the scope of someone's job, or their responsibilities (eg at promotion) without making sure that the individual knows what will be required of them and accepts it



Where
wellbeing
works.



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