Introduction:
Work-related stress is associated with anxiety, depression, days off-work, errors and ‘near misses’ [1]. Our objective was to assess stress levels and causes of stress among doctors and nurses at University Hospital Lewisham and Queen Elizabeth Hospital Woolwich. We surveyed staff using UK Health and Safety Executive’s Management Standards (HSEMS), a 35-question validated tool which identifies stressful work conditions requiring intervention.

Methods:
We conducted an anonymous survey of doctors and nurses working in Intensive Care, Accident and Emergency (A&E), Acute Medicine, Anaesthetics and Surgery over six weeks. Results were analysed using the HSEMS Analysis Tool and broken down into seven areas: job demands, managers’ support, peer support, relationships, role, level of control and possibility of change. Each area was scored from 1-5 (5 represents lowest stress). We compared the Trust’s results against national standards.

Results:
283 healthcare professionals completed the survey. Intensive Care had the lowest stress levels and scored above average in all areas (n=55, mean 3.80, S.D. 0.39). This was followed by A&E (n=90, mean 3.63, S.D. 0.45), Anaesthetics (n=57, mean 3.58, S.D. 0.54), Surgery (n=42, mean 3.33, S.D. 0.47) and Acute Medicine (n=39, mean 3.25, S.D. 0.53) which had the highest stress levels. When compared to HSEMS targets peer support exceeded national standards. However, there is a clear need for improvement in staff’s ability to control and change their working environment.

Conclusion:
Stress Levels on Intensive Care were reassuringly low when compared to other departments as well as national standards. We identified areas that need improvement and with the support of hospital management we will initiate HSEMS-validated measures to reduce stress.

References: