Health and Social Care Workforce and Unpaid Carers

Health and Wellbeing Communications Toolkit

Version 1.0
20th April 2020

Introduction

From Clare Haughey MSP, Minister for Mental Health

I recently wrote to you to express my sincere appreciation for the extraordinary work that the health and social care workforce and unpaid carers in our hospitals and community care settings are doing to protect and care for people in these difficult times.

Individuals across health and social care continue to work incredibly hard at this time of unprecedented challenge. We are asking people to work in unfamiliar settings and in situations with little or no certainty. Whether they are based in a hospital setting, care home or in the community, many will be asked to learn new skills and will be working in new roles. We recognise that many will be personally impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19) and these factors are likely to place emotional burdens on the workforce.

I know you will agree that it is absolutely essential that we maintain support for the mental health and wellbeing of our workforce and unpaid carers. Engaging directly with them will be critical, and we have developed this communications toolkit to provide some practical support and messaging which I hope will complement your response and help you as an employer, support organisation and commissioner of services.

We know that NHS Boards, local authorities and care providers in the independent and third sectors have identified local staff wellbeing champions who have already been involved in establishing local arrangements for supporting staff health and wellbeing. There are some interesting local approaches emerging such as wellbeing hubs. The first meeting of Scotland's Health and Social Care Champions Network for Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing has now taken place. This will enable good practice to be shared across the country, ensuring the wellbeing needs of the health and social care workforce and unpaid carers are at the forefront in the development of national policy, resources and support going forward.

We have encouraged organisations to clearly signpost their workforce to support that can be accessed, including through trade unions and professional bodies. National and local carer services are also providing emotional support to unpaid carers and it is my hope that these resources will be valuable for them too.

Consistency of messaging is of fundamental importance at this challenging time, so we would appreciate your support in sharing these approved messages across your existing networks to ensure that they reach as many members of the workforce as possible.

Thank you again for your extraordinary work.

Clare Haughey MSP
Minister for Mental Health

Supporting Our Workforce and Unpaid Carers

Below we've provided some messages, links and resources on a range of key areas of health and wellbeing which you may find it useful to share. We'll continue adding to these over the coming weeks.

At this time it is vital that we remain consistent in our messaging and support offering to individuals across the health and social care workforce. Therefore we would ask you to use these messages with minimal revisions.

The themes covered in this toolkit are:

- **Staying Safe and Well**
- **Emotional Wellbeing**
- **Sleep**
- **Social Connections**
- **Eating Well**
- **Physical Activity**
- **Resilience**
- **Culture and Behaviours**
- **Compassionate Leadership**
- **The Role of Teams**

You may also find the materials at the following links useful:

- NHS 24 Breathing Space – social media toolkit.
- MIND.org - Going Home Checklist

Staying Safe and Well
(Message below was circulated in Ms Haughey's letter of 26 March 2020)

You are likely to be under increased pressure over this period and you will need appropriate support. It is going to be crucial that we are all able to talk openly and honestly about our mental health and wellbeing, and that we have access to the right help and support when we need it. Looking after our mental health is just as important as our physical health.

You need care too

Here are some tips for staying safe and well:

Information and social media

- Get timely, accurate and factual information about COVID-19 from a reliable source no more than a couple of times a day.
- If you are feeling stressed or anxious, consider how you feel when you have constant exposure to media coverage and graphic news stories. Although it is important to stay informed, consider taking a break if you feel things are getting on top of you.

Looking after your basic needs

- Take care of your basic needs at work. Eat and drink regularly and healthily. Always take regular breaks during shifts.
- Allow time for sleep, rest and respite between shifts.
- Try and stay as connected to your friends and family as much as possible via technology.
- Where possible, maintain your normal daily routine and a healthy diet, and get fresh air when you can. Avoid using unhelpful coping strategies that involve alcohol, tobacco or an unhealthy diet.
- Think about creating a consistent routine to ensure you get the amount of sleep you need, but also about ensuring your bedroom is quiet, dark and a relaxing environment to sleep in.

Looking after each other

- Speak to colleagues, line managers and professional leaders, building this into your team's daily huddles and handovers. They may be feeling the same way. It's good to talk. Peer and social support are often the best buffers against stress and adversity.
- Look out for each other and share small successes about what's gone well.
- Be kind to each other. This can have a profound impact on staff wellbeing.
- Use the [Going Home Checklist](), where relevant, to leave work in work.
- It's good to talk, but not all of you will be 'talkers'. That's OK too but make sure you give yourself space to process the events of the day and deal with your feelings.

Additional information

It is perfectly normal to feel worried during exceptional times such as these. However, if you are starting to feel overwhelmed, it's important to acknowledge your feelings and speak to someone you trust, whether that's a friend, a family member, or a colleague. A helpline such as NHS 24 (111) or Breathing Space (0800 83 85 87) may also help.

You may find the following websites of assistance:

- NHS Scotland Staff Governance Website - Governance and partnership working
- NHS Education for Scotland - Psychosocial mental health and wellbeing support
- NHS Inform – Coronavirus (Covid-19) advice
- Support in Mind Scotland – Mental health support
- Breathing Space - Listening, information and advice
- Mental Health Foundation - Mental health and psychosocial support

Emotional Wellbeing

It's OK not to feel OK

This is an unprecedented scenario, and it is okay to feel stressed or anxious at this time. This is entirely normal, and it is highly likely that many of your co-workers, family and friends will be feeling the same way. But if it is not passing or your usual coping strategies aren't helping, think about where you are able to get more support (see additional guidance).

This is something we're all going through together. That means over the coming months, it's going to be crucial that we're all able to talk openly and honestly about our mental health. That also means being able to access the right help and support if you need it.

It is perfectly normal to feel strong feelings during exceptional times such as these. This can include feelings of anger. However, if you are starting to feel overwhelmed, it's important to acknowledge your feelings and speak to someone you trust, whether that's a colleague, a friend or a family member, or a helpline such as NHS 24 (111) or Breathing Space (0800 83 85 87).

Helplines:

NHS 24 (111)
Breathing Space (0800 83 85 87)
Samaritans (116 123)

Online support:

- NHS Scotland Staff Governance Website - Governance and partnership working
- NHS Education for Scotland - Psychosocial mental health and wellbeing support
- Breathing Space - Listening, information and advice
- Mental Health Foundation – Mental health and psychosocial support
- NHS Inform - Coronavirus (Covid-19) advice
- Support in Mind Scotland - Mental health support
- See Me – Resources to help challenge mental health stigma
- SAMH – Coronavirus mental health information hub
- NHS – Mental Health Apps
- Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland
- Marie Curie - Information and support

Sleep

Sleep well

Allow time for sleep, rest and respite between shifts.

Getting a good sleep is crucial for feeling mentally and physically healthy. We all feel better after a good sleep. Think about creating a consistent routine to ensure you get the amount of sleep you need, but also about ensuring your bedroom is quiet, dark, and a relaxing environment to sleep in.

It is important that you allow yourself to wind down before bedtime. This could include not using social media or your phone an hour before bed, taking a bath or reading.

If possible, try to maintain your normal routine. This means going to bed at the same time and waking at the same time.

Online support:

- NHS Inform – How to get to sleep
- Mind - How to cope with sleep problems

Social Connections

It's good to talk

Speak to colleagues, line managers and professional leaders, building discussions on wellbeing into your team's daily huddles and handovers. They may be feeling the same way. It's good to talk. Peer and social support are often the best buffers against stress and adversity.

It's good to talk, but not all of you will be 'talkers'. That's OK too but make sure you give yourself space to process the events of the day and deal with your feelings.

It is important to try and stay as connected to your friends and family as much as possible via email, video-calling and telephone.

This is something we're all going through together.

Helplines:

NHS 24 (111)
Breathing Space (0800 83 85 87)

Online support:

- NHS Education for Scotland - Psychosocial mental health and wellbeing support
- Breathing Space - Listening, information and advice
- Mental Health Foundation - Mental health and psychosocial support
- NHS Inform - Coronavirus (Covid-19) advice
- Support in Mind Scotland - Mental health support
- SAMH – Looking after your mental health in challenging times
- Penumbra – Coronavirus info hub
- Samaritans – Coronavirus resources

Eating Well

Rest, refuel and rehydrate

Try to take regular breaks, were possible away from your workplace or caring responsibilities. Frequent shorter breaks are better for reducing fatigue and stress.

Drinking water often throughout the day will help to keep you hydrated. This is especially important for people wearing PPE for long periods of time.

Life isn't easy at the moment but eating well and as healthily as you can will help your body cope better with the demands placed on you during busy shifts. Focussing your meals and snacks around starchy food such as pasta and rice and filling up on fruit and vegetables will help keep your energy levels maintained.

Where possible, set aside some time to plan your meals and shopping to help you eat healthily when you are busy.

Online support:

- WHO – Food and nutrition tips during self-quarantine
- NHS Inform – Food and nutrition
- Food Standards Scotland – Eat well everyday
- Parent Club – Eating well at home
- Priority shopping hours – During Covid-19 outbreak

Physical Activity

Stay safe, stay active

Being active can help to enhance your mood and wellbeing by reducing stress, anxiety and increasing energy levels. Now more than ever, it's important to move more.

Any amount of physical activity, however small, is good for you. Continuing to enjoy short, local walks, jogs or cycles is a great way to clear your head and stay active. Remember to observe social distancing guidance and stay local or try to build into your daily commute.

You can also stay active at home, by walking up and down stairs, dancing, gardening or taking part in a virtual fitness class. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you do something that you enjoy and keep moving.

Online support and resources:

- NHS – Fitness Videos
- Mind - Physical activity and your mental health
- Sport England - Stay In, Work Out #StayInWorkOut
- WHO - Be Active During Covid-19
- Paths for All - Home based exercises

Resilience

Keep things in balance as best you can

Being resilient doesn't mean that we're unaffected by the adversity we encounter in life. Instead, resilience refers to the ability to recover, and this ability to "bounce back" depends on the balance between the demands that are made on us and the resources we have available at any given time.

The current pandemic is disrupting this balance as it places extra demands on us while limiting our ability to do the things that help us cope. It can be hard to bounce back when things are so out of kilter

Have a think and/or talk to someone you trust to see if there are any demands that can be reduced, either at work or at home. And what alternative or additional resources might sustain you during this difficult time?

Try to keep things in balance as best you can. Please take care of yourself and make use of the support on offer.

Helplines:

- NHS 24 (111)
- Breathing Space (0800 83 85 87)
- Samaritans (116 123)

Online support:

- NHS Education for Scotland - Psychosocial mental health and wellbeing support
- Breathing Space - Listening, information and advice
- Mental Health Foundation - Mental health and psychosocial support
- NHS Inform - Coronavirus (Covid-19) advice
- Support in Mind Scotland – Mental health support
- See Me – Talking about mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak
- SAMH – Coronavirus mental health information hub
- NHS – Mental Health Apps
- Lifelines - How to stay well

Culture and Behaviours

As our Health and Social Care organisations rise to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important that we now focus on enhancing the behaviours and values that positively impact our workplace cultures. [1] Compassion is essential to building team connections and resilience; nurture this by regularly reflecting and debriefing together. Self-care and self-compassion is essential to allow us to be as well and as full a participant in a team as possible. To avoid burnout, we must take the time we need to consider how we are and what, if any, help we need.

Four behaviours can really make a difference to our wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around us: [2]

- **Paying Attention** to how staff and colleagues around us are acting and asking them how they are feeling – this can be really impactful.
- **Understanding** the situations they face
- **Empathising** with the way they feel
- **Helping** by taking thoughtful and appropriate action to help relieve their suffering if possible

We all know the benefit of being treated kindly. Evidence shows that being on the receiving end of uncivil behaviours can negatively impact our wellbeing and ability to provide high quality care.[3] It may be easy to recognise and feel aggrieved by unkind behaviours, not rising to these is another matter.

When someone has been rude to us, take time to consider:
- the thought processes and situational factors that may have contributed to their actions
- how to best deal with this, with kindness - should we speak to them about their behaviour? If so when and where? And, most importantly, how we do so; we should aim to underpin these conversations with curiosity and respect. [4]

No matter our position in an organisation, our behaviours have ripple effects. If someone speaks to us about our own behaviours, we need to pause to consider how we may have come across and how we can change things going forward. Taking some time to reflect before we react can allow us to get to a faster and kinder resolution. [4]

A respectful and kind workplace brings enormous benefits to those who work in it and we all have a crucial role to play in ensuring that this is the case.

Useful Resources:

- The Kings Fund - Michael West: collective leadership for culture change
- The Kings Fund - Improving NHS culture
- Civility Saves Lives

References
[1] Work and wellbeing in the NHS: why staff health matters to patient care. Royal College of Physicians 2015.
[2] Atkins PWB, Parker SK (2012). 'Understanding individual compassion in organisations: the role of appraisals and psychological flexibility'. Academy of Management Review, vol 37, no 4, pp 524–46. [3] Katz, Daniel, et al. "Exposure to incivility hinders clinical performance in a simulated operative crisis." *BMJ quality & safety* 28.9 (2019): 750-757. [4] Turner, Chris. Advice on calling out uncivil behaviour. Adapted from 'Calling it out with compassion workshop' by the Civility Saves Lives Movement.

Supporting Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing through Compassionate Leadership

During the pandemic many within the Health and Social Care workforce will be asked to learn new skills, work in different settings, on their own or with new team members or utilise alternative approaches to how they would usually deliver care. This includes digital technologies such as Near Me, Skype and Microsoft Teams 365. The impact of change both professionally and, importantly, personally can understandably cause people to feel anxious or stressed and calls for compassionate professional leadership.

Compassionate leadership means creating the conditions – through consistently listening, understanding, empathising and helping.

Research suggests that the most effective leaders consistently demonstrate compassion by:

- Being present; they pay attention to people and "listen with fascination"
- Empathising with people and their situation
- Having the motivation to help; taking action to make a difference where necessary
- Developing a shared understanding of the situation they face.

Leaders can lead by example, creating a culture where asking for help is seen as courageous and insightful, rather than a sign of weakness; it is ok not to feel ok all of the time. They can also sign-post and engage staff with appropriate support and help.

Regular individual or peer supervision for all team members is essential. Through enacting the principles of compassionate leadership, individuals can be supported to:

- Articulate how they feel
- Consolidate new learning into practice, and remain competent and confident practitioners
- Share experiences and comfortably seek support both professionally and personally
- Have a sense of belonging as part of a team with autonomy and control
- Support each other with empathy and kindness
- Influence decision making within their own area and more widely within their organisation.

Useful Resources:

- SAMH - Coronavirus mental health information hub
- NHS NES - Coronavirus (COVID-19) Learning materials for professionals
- Healthy Working Lives

The Role of the Team in Staying Well

Everyone is playing an essential role contributing to the national response to COVID-19. A common feature of a crisis response is the need to form new teams. These often bring together people who are unfamiliar to one another. Currently facing COVID-19, many people within these teams are also faced with new roles that are unfamiliar to them.

The team has a critical role not just in delivering essential health and care services, but also in sustaining resilience and protecting workforce wellbeing. Mental wellbeing in threatening situations is supported by the resilience that exists between people. The connections between team members are, therefore, an essential component in our response to COVID-19 in protecting individuals' physical and mental health both in the immediate and long term. It is vital that within teams in Health and Social Care - whether newly formed or familiar - that meaningful team engagement and participation is enabled.

No matter how short a time, building rapid team reviews into daily team routines – virtual or in person - provides dedicated, predictable space allowing team members to learn together, support each other, understand the team's shared values, celebrate success and reflect on their experiences shared. According to the Kings Fund, time spent on the above reaps a 35% improvement in wellbeing.

When working with teams beyond your own, key principles to hold in mind include:

- Be respectful of other teams when you discuss them
- Be clear with your communication with others to uphold safety and highlight relevant critical information
- Do what is within your team's capability and reflects your responsibilities
- If uncertainty exists between teams, take steps to clarify as a priority
- Don't make commitments on behalf of other teams
- Be mindful that all teams have considerable pressures on them at this time.

Be thoughtful about the needs of others; the success of your team depends on the effective functioning of others.

Useful Resources:

- CIPD podcast 'Building the best team'
- Civility Saves Lives
- Learning from Excellence

References
[1]FMLM Leadership and management standards for medical professionals
[2]RCGP/SA paper on working in teams sent in email to accompany.
[3]Professor Neil Greenberg, Professor of Defence Mental Health - Wellbeing webinar on behalf of NHS England and NHS Improvement via YouTube, 8th April 2020.

Appendix of Support and Resources

Staying Safe and Well

Online support:
- NHS Scotland Staff Governance Website - Governance and partnership working
- NHS Education for Scotland - Psychosocial mental health and wellbeing support
- NHS Inform – Coronavirus (Covid-19) advice
- Support in Mind Scotland – Mental health support
- Breathing Space - Listening, information and advice
- Mental Health Foundation - Mental health and psychosocial support

Emotional Wellbeing

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- Support in Mind Scotland - Mental health support
- See Me – Resources to help challenge mental health stigma
- SAMH – Coronavirus mental health information hub
- NHS – Mental Health Apps

Sleep

Online support:
- NHS Inform – How to get to sleep
- Mind - How to cope with sleep problems

Social Connections

Helplines:
- NHS 24 (111)
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- Penumbra – Coronavirus info hub
- Samaritans – Coronavirus resources

Eating Well

Online support:
- WHO – Food and nutrition tips during self-quarantine
- NHS Inform – Food and nutrition
- Food Standards Scotland – Eat well everyday
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- Priority shopping hours – During Covid-19 outbreak

Physical Activity

Online support and resources:
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Culture and Behaviours

Useful Resources:
- The Kings Fund - Michael West: collective leadership for culture change
- The Kings Fund - Improving NHS culture
- Civility Saves Lives

Compassionate Leadership

Useful Resources:
- Mind - Taking care of you - our work with emergency departments
- SAMH - Coronavirus mental health information hub
- NHS NES - Coronavirus (COVID-19) Learning materials for professionals
- Healthy Working Lives

The Role of the Team

Useful Resources:
- CIPD podcast 'Building the best team'
- Civility Saves Lives
- Learning from Excellence