SUPPORTING STAFF WELLBEING

This pandemic is a unique circumstance which has caused stress and uncertainty, creating some significant challenges to our wellbeing. For some, it has led to huge demands on our time and energy. For others, our usual roles may seem diminished at the moment. Many people are juggling home working, home schooling and home caring without the usual things that we know support our wellbeing such as pleasurable activities, routines and good social support. Many people feel the pressure to achieve the same level of focus and productivity whilst also juggling these many priorities, and this can lead to feelings of exhaustion and guilt when they fail. For some people, the risk of being at home with people we are not safe with is real and needs to be urgently responded to. For others, the mental health difficulties that we have struggled with or even resolved are becoming more burdensome.

It is, therefore, completely understandable, normal and predictable that our wellbeing and mental health is varying at the moment. As a manager, it is important to know when we can help staff.

Responding to the universal needs of all staff as an organisation:
- Ensure that basic needs for rest, breaks, hydration and connection are available.
- Establish an environment and organisational culture where seeking help for distress and mental wellbeing is actively welcomed, and team members are able to seek and gain support from one another through informal (like peer support) and more formal (like reflective practice or equivalent) means. For further information on how to support your staff as a manager, please see:
  https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/29715/psychosocial-mental-health-and-wellbeing-support/taking-care-of-your-staff
- Lead by taking active steps to preserve your own wellbeing, as a model for others.
- Encourage staff to be proactive about protecting their wellbeing, to take time to create and implement their own wellbeing plan; they know what works for them but they might need your support to be explicit about it and put it into practice.
- A well-being planner that might be useful to support this conversation is available:
  https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/29700/psychosocial-mental-health-and-wellbeing-support/taking-care-of-myself

Recognising and responding to individual staff needs in a stepped way:
- Create safe opportunities, both formal and informal, for staff to tell you about how they are feeling and coping. This can be done by maintaining contact regularly, and routinely enquiring empathically about wellbeing.
- Respond to distress in the first instance with the principles of Psychological First Aid, if needed:
  https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/29711/psychosocial-mental-health-and-wellbeing-support/taking-care-of-other-people
- Provide information to staff on other sources of support if that is a better option for them - www.promis.scot provides a range of options.
- Recognise the indications that a staff member or colleague may be at risk of experiencing significant difficulties, for example where identified problems with mood, sleep, and other indicators of wellbeing are increasing in severity, persistence, duration or frequency, and usual coping mechanisms are not helping.

How to respond as a manager when you identify a staff member's mental wellbeing may be at risk:

- Respond with active monitoring in the first instance: defined as 'regularly monitoring a person who has some symptoms but who is not currently having clinical intervention (for the condition)'[1]. It involves monitoring a person's wellbeing with them to see whether it improves, stays the same or gets worse. It does not involve, at this stage, referral for a formal assessment. Active monitoring is designed to support a person to engage with the wellbeing activities such as rest, breaks or activities that allow for natural recovery, usually the norm.
- Support the person to consider who they feel is best placed to monitor their symptoms – this could be their GP, Occupational Health or you, as their manager. This link provides information about resources and support which are available: https://learn.nes.nhs.scot/29715/psychosocial-mental-health-and-wellbeing-support/taking-care-of-your-staff. You may wish to signpost your colleague to this information, or work with them to identify which would be most relevant/beneficial to them.
- As a manager, consider routinely incorporating opportunities to discuss any new or existing difficulties into your ongoing management of the member of staff.
- Collaborate with the member of staff to agree whether it would be helpful to arrange regular 'check ins', but do not push them to do so.
- Support staff to understand their own 'warning signs' that might indicate that they need to seek further specialist support.
- Be informed about the range of options that might be available if difficulties persist and have a relatively low threshold for having a conversation with staff about these options.

Additional Resource:
https://learn.sssc.uk.com/wellbeing/index.html.

Domestic Abuse

Public health measures to control the spread of COVID-19, like staying at home, social isolation and reduced access to support, have created more opportunities for perpetrators of domestic abuse to offend and increased the risk for women and children who are experiencing domestic abuse. Although men do experience domestic abuse, evidence suggests that in a significant majority of cases the perpetrator is male and the victim is female.

If you or someone you know are experiencing domestic abuse or other forms of violence and control at home, support and services are still available and operating.

It is important you know that you are not alone. You can contact support services in confidence. **NB** The rules include 'reasonable excuse' for leaving the home if there is a risk of harm.

Also, if it's safe to do so, speak to a manager if it is difficult to work or you need support; for example, if the abuser is preventing you from working or not sharing childcare to make working more difficult for you.

Managing staff

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[1] National Institute for Clinical Excellence

If you are managing staff, you may or may not be aware of domestic abuse issues at home for your staff.

Not everyone would want, or be able, to disclosure domestic abuse but you may be the first or only opportunity they have had to tell someone. If you suspect that someone is experiencing abuse, check with them about how they are coping and whether they feel safe at home.

As a manager you can:
- ensure that staff are aware of support services available
- check the impact on their health and wellbeing and how you can best support them
- Have a flexible approach, for example, if it's not safe at home, is it possible that they could access the working environment?

Helplines and resources
SafeLives have produced a practical guidance on how to support colleagues experiencing domestic abuse: Responding to colleagues experiencing domestic abuse
Resources for managers on violence against women, work and Covid-19 can be found here: https://www.equallysafeatwork.scot/resources-1/

There are national helplines and online support to contact someone in confidence by contacting:

- National Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline 0800 027 1234 https://sdafmh.org.uk/
- Men's Advice Line 0808 801 0327
- Rape Crisis Scotland 08088 01 03 02, https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/
- LGBT Scotland 0300 123 2523, https://www.lgbthealth.org.uk/services-support/helpline/
- https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-domestic-abuse/
- Further links can be found through SaferScot.