

# Guidance for Managers and Leaders during the Covid-19 pandemic – The psychological wellbeing of care staff



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The Covid-19 pandemic presents significant challenges for health and care staff. Good leadership and management of staff is important in helping staff deal with the psychological demands that are being placed on them. There are some things that can help when managing and leading teams:

- Role-model caring and compassionate leadership
- Being accessible and visible to staff and putting in place mechanisms to communicate regularly
- Assisting staff to identify their concerns and working with them to address them
- Coming together to share experiences, learning and to be together as a team, such as at the beginning and the end of the day
- Developing peer support formally and informally
- Regular supportive supervision for individuals and teams
- Access to a protected space for teams to be together
- Partnering inexperienced workers with experienced workers, such as a buddy system
- Encouraging staff to take breaks, eat, drink and rest and maintain contact with families, friends and colleagues
- Rotating staff from higher stress to lower stress functions where possible. If staff are using PPE, consider whether flexible shift patterns can be created
- Providing additional support for staff who may be more vulnerable
- Checking in with teams about whether the physical environment is adequate and ensuring there is access to food and hydration
- Giving the message that it is OK to not be OK – everyone reacts differently but it is normal to struggle. Don't be afraid to ask 'are you OK?'

## **Staff Support**

- Encourage staff to reach out to colleagues, family and friends
- Don't set up single session interventions such as critical incident debriefing or rush to provide psychological therapy too soon – this could interfere with people's natural ways of coping
- Signpost to local resources such as chaplaincy services, professional membership organisations, unions, employee assistance programmes and others
- Ensure staff are aware of the following free resources:
  - Text messaging support service – text 85258 or click [here](#) to find out more.
  - Advice and tips from Every Mind Matters - [click here](#)
  - Help for Heroes have developed a psychological resource for health and care staff – [A Field Guide to Self-Care](#)

- Although it is normal for staff to find what is happening emotionally difficult, look out for signs of burnout such as feeling emotionally exhausted, tearful, overwhelmed or flat – these feelings should be a cue for staff to get help and workplace support
- Most staff members won't require formal psychological interventions. However, symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may develop in some staff who have been exposed to very stressful, traumatic or frightening experiences when delivering care to patients. Symptoms include reliving what has happened through vivid dreams and flashbacks, feeling very anxious, angry, irritable and guilty. Some people will feel low in mood, have trouble sleeping and have physical symptoms. For many people these symptoms will improve over time, but if they don't improve after one month, staff can be referred or self-refer for psychological therapy. Services will also work with people experiencing depression and anxiety – [Find an IAPT Service](#)

The Kings Fund have produced a useful ideographic on responding to stress experienced by staff - <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-04/rapid-guidance-stress-diagram.pdf>