

Health & Well Being Board

NHSEI briefing

1) What issues have you identified in relation to mental health and emotional resilience due to COVID-19?

NHSEI have recognised the immense pressure that has been put on staff and the public in relation to Covid-19, particularly on mental health and resilience. Focus has been on those who have had to self-isolate for long periods of time without social contact and with no other family members. There have been staff who have been juggling carer responsibilities in addition to going to work on the frontline and who have experienced anxiety about the risk this is putting on their own and their families health. Staff who have been asked to work from home in environments not suitable or which are not safe has been something we have been particularly trying to address.

In addition, we have been working closely with our local systems to identify locally any particular challenges in relation to inequalities and specific demographic challenges for example, that may also impact further on the above areas of concern.

Many staff have wanted to come back into the office, but have been unable to do so, or alternatively, those anxious about returning to the office after an extended period of working from home, where adjustments have been made and recognition of the challenge on work/life balance which will be disrupted again.

2) What are you currently doing to address these issues and support the local community?

We are working alongside the Health system in LLR to address the needs of the community along with staff in relation to addressing the mental health issues due to Covid.

We are regularly reviewing for example the referrals into mental health services and also those attending A&E with acute needs to identify the increased demand.

In our regional role we are sharing learning and planning from other systems around increasing MH demand and a changing need for MH services to support development of services in Leicester.

Mental health is a core part of all discussions with the system and ensuring there is capacity and plans in place.

We are already working closely with teams across the organisation - with our national MH lead, Clare Murdoch and her team to ensure we are exploiting the potential of digital opportunities to help young people get support while they are on waiting lists.

More locally to NHSEI, there is a robust health and wellbeing programme in place to support staff in managing their mental well-being during Covid:

Supporting our health and wellbeing

There are regular 'Your Health and Wellbeing' webinars, where the latest webinar focused on 'paying attention to our health' where we heard about type 2 diabetes prevention, the new My Healthy Advantage app, and had an introductory session on mindfulness. The recordings are available at any time on our internal intranet.



Our next webinar is on 9 September and will focus on supporting working parents and resilience. We will hear updates on the supportive actions taken from the first webinar we had back in June and the work we have progressed since then. We will also hear from the children's mental health charity, Place2Be, with expert opinion on supporting parents and children in difficult times. And we will hear from colleagues about their experiences – including a panel discussion, sharing reflections and answering questions.

As schools, colleges and universities return over the next few weeks the first webinar on 'support for working parents' is being advertised again.

There has been a huge amount of work where 2,087 of NHSEI staff have engaged with a programme called 'Exchange Crowdsourcing' since the platform opened in July. This is a programme looking to exchange ideas and good practice. Altogether we've shared 347 solutions to five separate challenges that came out of our June reflections and coffee roulette conversations, made 1,611 comments and cast 7,733 votes.

There is a GymFlex scheme - for those interested in getting discounted gym membership, the latest window for the scheme will be open from Monday 7 September until 21 September to submit applications.

To support staff working from home we have also introduced the option of ordering extra equipment which is delivered directly to their home address to make working from home more comfortable – this includes equipment such as monitors, keyboards and office style chairs.

Staff "check in" surveys are carried out on a regular basis and the ideas raised have been adopted by the leadership teams to improve internal communications. The Employee Assistance Programme is open 24/7 to provide a confidential service to support members of staff. In addition, Resilience Workshops are held on a weekly basis for any member of staff wishing to participate.

3) What issues do you foresee arising in the future in relation to mental health and emotional resilience?

There is a recognition that during these times, the time spent at work has been great and there is a real need for supportive leadership and line management for those struggling but also who are not able to talk to anyone at home. It is also likely that the support needs will be different and more acute for those directly impacted by the pandemic (bereaved families, those who have been ill with Covid and key workers) and those with existing MH conditions.

4) What plans do you have to tackle these issues?

We are launching our "Virtual Leadership" programme this week. All managers will be able to access a digital course, lasting under an hour, which has been designed to offer help and support to lead effectively in a virtual environment. As Virtual Leadership Ambassadors we will champion best practice in virtual leadership within our teams and functions. The training provides practical support covering ten key areas, ranging from creating a 'virtual water cooler' (informal chats to get to know one another better and understand how we're really feeling), to encouraging employee voice, which can sometimes get lost in a virtual setting.