

Support for staff and teams during COVID-19 a brief manager's guide

This document explains the different forms of support which are available to staff and teams. It is aimed at managers and clinical leaders at all levels and should be cascaded as appropriate. Of course, managers and clinical leaders are also staff members and will have their own anxieties and needs – hopefully the information in this document will be helpful for that too.

The key message behind this document is that there are a range of options and resources available to support you and your teams both now and into the longer term. If you are not sure what would be right for you or for your team or would like to talk through the options please email wellbeing@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk - this email will be used as a 'single point of access' for all queries about staff wellbeing and support needs - and we will ensure that someone comes back to you.

With our best wishes

The Oxford Health Psychosocial Response Group¹

¹ The PRG is a multidisciplinary group which has existed for some time in OHFT. The aim of the group is to ensure that in a serious incident or emergency the psychological and social needs of service users and staff, as well as medical and physical needs, are met.

The group is multidisciplinary and composed of trust leads for psychological and other therapies, social care, and spiritual and pastoral care as well as key corporate functions including HR and communications and the wellbeing team.

How can we understand the needs of staff in responding to an extreme situation like COVID-19?

People's circumstances will vary greatly and there will be different challenges for people in different situations. National frameworks for describing staff support are focussing on understanding the different phases of the crisis - 'Prepare', 'Active', and 'Recover'. Different teams and services may pass through these phases at different times.

Prepare	Active	Recover
In the 'Prepare' phase the key challenges are changing roles and anxiety about what is to come. The key interventions needed are good information and clear communication.	In the 'Active' phase, the key challenge is maintaining high and demanding workload under pressure. Key interventions for supporting teams during this phase are described below.	In the 'Recover' phase, demands return to a more normal level – but this is when attention to staff wellbeing and the aftermath of the pandemic is critical. This is when it is particularly important to be aware of trauma and loss and the impact they may have on individuals and teams.

Supporting staff during the 'Active' phase

During a period of increased pressure and activity:

- Team is everything – support from colleagues and supervisors is vital in promoting resilience and reducing burnout. One great way of keeping up team morale and communication during high pressure periods is to use 'huddles' as a brief way of catching up and checking in – find out more here <https://bit.ly/3bdXnUS>
- One of the most important things a supervisor or manager can do is find a moment to spend with individuals to check in and see how they are doing and making clear you are ready to listen in and when they need support.
- The PIES acronym may be helpful:

P roximity	Keeping staff in the team is important. If individuals are struggling, consider rotating duties or allowing flexibility to keep them at work and part of the team.
I mediacy	If you are concerned about how someone is doing, ask them – getting in early and offering simple practical support is important.
E xpectations	It is OK not to be OK. We will all struggle at some point and it is possible to pick up and carry on. The more that teams can talk about this the less individuals will feel alone with their experience.
S implicity	At this stage, simple things mean a lot – taking a break, keeping hydrated, having time to catch up as a team before the end of the shift, getting and giving a thank you, planning time off.



Resources for all and support within your team:

- Does your team have huddles? They can help begin and end each shift and keep the team together.
- The OHFT Health and Wellbeing page has lots of information and free wellbeing apps.
- The OHFT Employee Assistance Programme offers 24/7 advice and support - call 08000305182
- Our NHS People national support line 7am-11pm on 03001317000 or text FRONTLINE to 85258

Support for your team:

- Use team psychological therapists or attached chaplains.
- Facilitators are ready to provide additional flexible support to teams - this could be relating to specific incidents including loss and bereavement or ongoing support through the current crisis. More information about team support is available on the intranet and or just contact us on wellbeing@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk
- Managers and clinical leaders need support too - this could be regular or just a one-off chance to talk through a challenge you are facing - contact wellbeing@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

Additional support for individuals who need it:

- It is best to allow time after a traumatic event or period to allow natural recovery processes to take place - getting help too early can be counterproductive. For more information about trauma and COVID see www.traumagroup.org
- Use the Occupational health team for advice and support - call 01865 902504
- Good self-care and ensuring that teams are trauma aware is important in promoting recovery.
- The EAP can offer brief counselling and support - 08000305182
- Where individuals do need help and support and particularly when people have experienced significant trauma, other evidence based options are available. Details of this offer are being developed - if you need to know more please contact wellbeing@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

What if you / your team / a team member needs additional support?

We hope this information is helpful. Do check the intranet wellbeing page for more updates and do get in touch on wellbeing@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk if you have any other questions or concerns.

