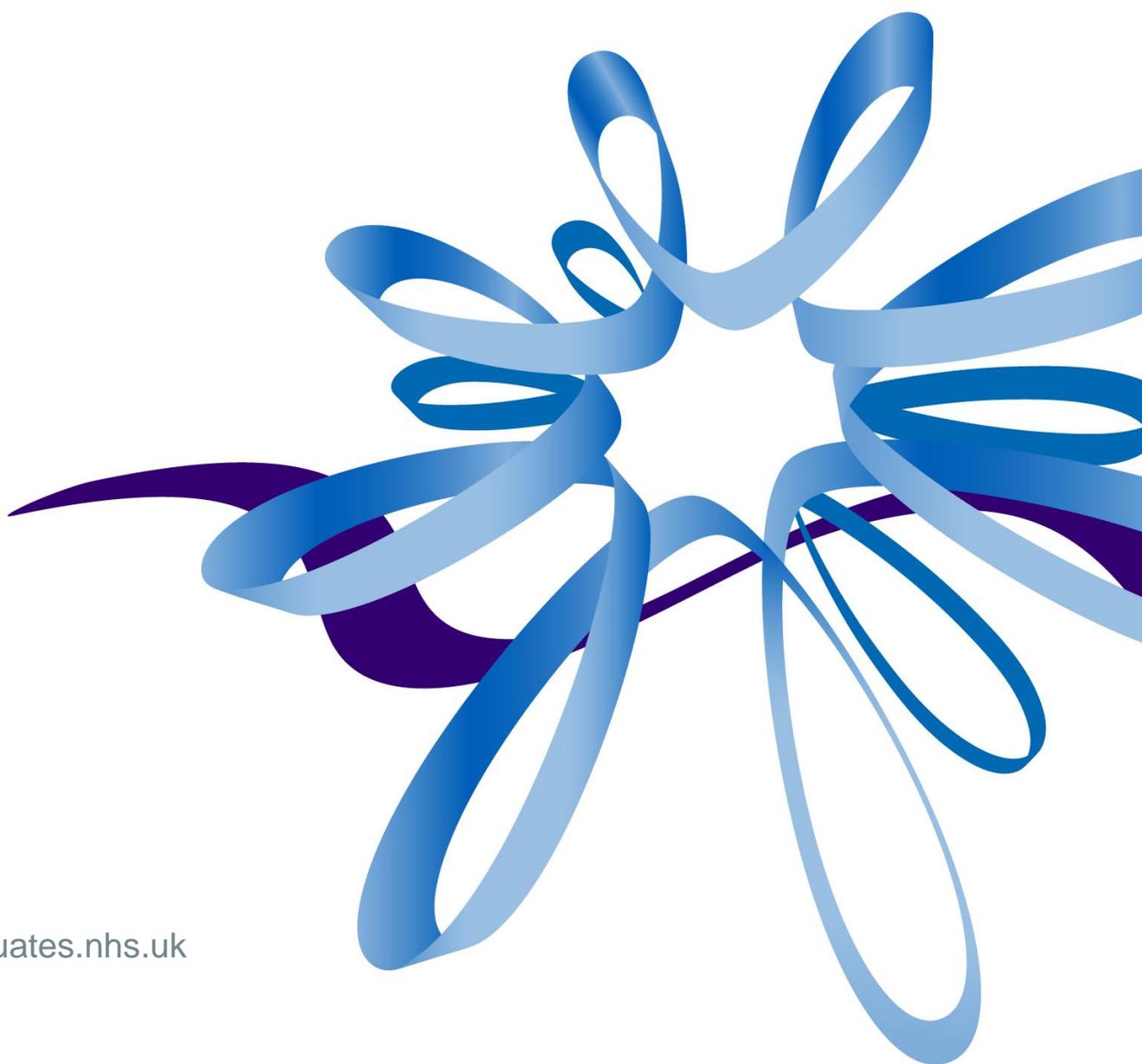


GMTS and wellbeing

Looking after yourself and others





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Introduction

This has been one of the most challenging times ever for the NHS and we all have a part to play in helping our front-line colleagues provide the services patients need. If we are to succeed in this, we need to look out for each other, as the People Plan and People Promise sets out:

“We are the NHS: People Plan 2020/21 – action for us all, along with [Our People Promise](#), sets out what our NHS people can expect from their leaders and from each other. It builds on the creativity and drive shown by our NHS people in their response, to date, to the COVID-19 pandemic and the interim people plan. It focuses on how we must all continue to look after each other and foster a culture of inclusion and belonging, as well as take action to grow our workforce, train our people, and work together differently to deliver patient care.” From <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ournhspeople/>

We have already overcome personal and professional challenges to be at our best at work in recent months and can rightly be proud of our contribution so far. Whilst we need to be realistic about the pressures ahead, we also need to maintain our optimism, resourcefulness, adaptability and support for others, as evidence shows these are the attributes of people who fare well under the most difficult of circumstances.

The purpose of this document is to provide some updated guidance for trainees, their managers and the wider GMTS team on maintaining wellbeing.

Health, safety and wellbeing

Whether you're working from home or working on site, your health, safety and wellbeing is important. NHS Employers works closely with Public Health England, the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and NHS Improvement and other key stakeholders to provide signposting and information to support NHS organisations:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing>

If you are working on site, you must follow both national and local policy and procedure on maintaining safety at work. Your placement and programme managers will be able to advise.



NHS Horizons also continues to provide regular webinars on health and wellbeing:

<http://horizonsnhs.com/caring4nhspeople/>

There are some wellbeing apps free to NHS staff:

<https://people.nhs.uk/help/support-apps/>

Meeting the challenges ahead

This list of issues and suggestions comes from conversations with trainees, as well as from research and guidance. Some of it will be familiar, but often the things we know are helpful are what we neglect when under stress, so be honest with yourself when considering what you do to maintain your wellbeing:

- **The Basics** – sleep, hydration, healthy eating, daylight and exercise are all easy to dismiss when we're under pressure. Try to keep a good routine as this will help maintain stamina and resilience. Consider scheduling a walk outside in daylight hours where possible.
- **Work/life balance** - Restarting studies after the scheme pause is another adjustment for trainees and managers, so be sure to include this in the conversations in 1:1s and probation/performance reviews. Build time into your routine for study, but also for activities that are restorative and relaxing.
- **Pre-existing health issues** – stress can impact on our capacity to manage existing physical and mental health conditions. Be sure to seek help when needed and consider writing a wellness plan that involves friends or colleagues in helping you notice if things are getting difficult.
- **Isolation and/or feeling crowded** – The combination of our living and working circumstances, and our personal preference, can contribute to either isolation and loneliness or to feeling overcrowded. Recognise how this is for you and think of ways you can safely find either the company or solitude you need. Perhaps a long walk alone or asking a colleague to work alongside you on Teams for part of the day.
- **Undercurrent of fear and anxiety** – most of us will feel anxious or afraid at some point, and therefore we need to consider what helps when we feel this way. Perhaps a phone call with a friend, some distracting gentle



TV or music? If the feeling becomes overwhelming and interferes with our ability to get on with daily activities, then that's when we need to ask for support.

- **Uncertainty and creating 'safe uncertainty'** – One of the most challenging things about the times we're in is the uncertain future, and this can feel very unsettling, even unsafe. However, if we can find a way of making this 'safe uncertainty' then we're often at our most innovative. Consider a discussion about this with colleagues or friends.
- **'The Six-Month Wall'** - Dr Aisha Ahmad writes about a sense of fatigue and foreboding at the six-month point in major events. She also gives a lot of practical suggests about how we can help ourselves if we hit this wall. See her twitter account for more: @ProfAishaAhmad
- **Avoid comparing yourself to others** - Everyone is having a varied experience in and out of work and comparison can often end up in negative thinking and self-belief. Appreciate your own uniqueness and use comparisons only to motivate you to improve what really matters.
- **Optimising what we can** – All of us are missing aspects of our 'old life' but we might also be enjoying some of the changes too. Try to notice what you miss and then find new ways to give yourself whatever it is, and maximise the benefits of change.

Five ways to wellbeing

Over a decade ago, a large-scale study concluded that the people who maintained their mental wellbeing consistently did five things:

- **Notice** – attend to the world around you, using all your senses
- **Connect** – invest in networks and relationships
- **Be active** – take regular exercise in a form you enjoy
- **Give** – do something to help others
- **Learn** – pursue new interests

Check in with yourself every week and ask if you've done all five!



Common mental health problems - signs/symptoms and stepped care model

Sometimes, particularly if we experience stress at work and difficult events at home at the same time, our mental health can be compromised. Here are some of the things we can do and be alert to, in ourselves and others:

Indicators of mental distress

(Not an exhaustive list)

- Emotional lability, weepiness, irritability and other exaggerated changes in mood
- Emotional flatness; much quieter than usual
- Reduced concentration and motivation
- Change of appetite, sleep, activity levels

Stepped model of support

- Universal – all trainees should have opportunities to talk and decompress; self-care
- Low severity - those who experience some negative impact may need support and self-help
- High severity - those who have experienced trauma or complex loss may require specialist support and intervention

Tasks for managers and GMTS Staff

- Be compassionate and genuine in all interactions
- Encourage adaptability and future focus
- Have realistic expectations of trainees
- Be alert to those with pre-existing mental health issues and/or who have experienced personal loss, stress or other difficulties during the pandemic
- Be alert to signs that a trainee is struggling and contact the Trainee Support Manager



Support package from GMTS

- Trainee Support Managers - provide information, practical support, coaching conversations, signposting and referral
- Faculty - provide support and development via ALS and experiential learning
- Mental Wellbeing Apps - free to all NHS staff until the end of December 2020: <https://people.nhs.uk/help/support-apps/>
- Employee Assistance Programme – information, guidance and counselling on issues including emotional/mental health, finance, debt, housing
- Pro Tenant – advice for tenants on housing issues
- Occupational Health referral
- GP consultation and referral for the most severe issues

For further support, guidance and information on wellbeing contact your Trainee Support Manager