

## Guidance for Staff - Psychological wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic

There are some simple things you can do to look after your mental health and wellbeing at the current time. Looking after your mind and body will help you both at work and home.

- Remember that it is okay to struggle at the present time. Everyone reacts differently and you may feel different emotions at different stages of the pandemic. However, it may cause you to feel worried, stressed, sad, scared or helpless – these are understandable feelings
- Take time to look after your physical wellbeing – this will have a big impact on how you feel emotionally. Taking breaks at work, maintaining a routine, eating well and exercising can help
- Think about what has helped you cope in the past to cope with stressful situations. Focus on what is in your control, try to pace yourself and remember that this will not last forever
- Extend the self-compassion and care you have for others to yourself
- Look after your emotional health. After difficult or stressful experiences at work it is normal for memories or images of what has happened to come into your mind. Try to let these memories come and go rather than blocking them or trying not to think about them. Try not to stay focused on difficult thoughts and feelings – using some of the resources below can help.

### Getting help and support:

- Reach out to colleagues, friends or family members for support
- The following free resources are available:
  - 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 useful resource for health and care staff - [A Field Guide to Self-Care](#)
- Make use of local resources such as chaplaincy services, professional membership organisations, unions, employee assistance programmes and others
- Although it is normal to find what is happening emotionally difficult (for example, you may experience bad dreams or feel anxious), look out for signs of feeling emotionally exhausted, tearful, overwhelmed or low – these feelings are a cue to get support including telling your manager how you are feeling
- Most people won't need to access psychological therapies, but it is important to get help if you need it. If you have been exposed to highly stressful, traumatic or frightening experiences at work you are more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Symptoms include reliving what has happened through vivid dreams or 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, you can be referred, or self-refer for psychological therapy. Services will also work with you if you are suffering from depression or anxiety – [Find an IAPT Service](#).

Guidance developed by Dr Katrina Lake, Adult Mental Health Clinical Lead – South East Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Autism Cell in collaboration with system partners across the South East and members of the NHS England and NHS Improvement South East Staff Support Group.

30<sup>th</sup> April 2020

NHS England and NHS Improvement

