

Looking after yourself and others during COVID-19: A resource for team leaders in health and care settings



Introduction

“ *We need to create a climate of kindness, trust and compassion...to get through to the other side of this; stronger, better, wiser*

Professor Michael West, The Kings Fund (2020)

As a leader of a team you are already skilled in communicating, supporting and building relationships with the people in your team, and with the people your team provides care for. In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, you will be challenged to use those skills in a fast-changing environment as Scotland's health and care sector faces its biggest challenge to date.

During this crisis, you may be asked to step up to leadership, or to take on more responsibility in your current role. Your skills are needed more than ever now as staff, and people in your care along with their loved ones will be understandably anxious and have many questions. Being a leader is not about having the most senior position, it is about creating the right conditions for the team to be the best it can be; especially in uncertain times.

This learning resource is designed for anyone who leads, in any capacity, in any health and care organisation. It is designed to support your understanding, knowledge and skills, and to give you confidence as a leader that you are doing the right things and supporting others to do that too.

The resource has five easy to navigate sections which allows you dip in and out of the resource in small bite sized pieces of learning:

01 | Working collaboratively

02 | Preparing and sustaining yourself

03 | Supporting and sustaining your team

04 | Going home safely, protecting yourself and those around you

05 | Tools to support your team

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01 | Working Collaboratively

“ *Collective leadership is a leadership in which all staff take responsibility for ensuring high quality patient care and all are accountable* ”

Professor Michael West, The Kings Fund (2015)

The current situation is unprecedented however, supporting the delivery of safe, effective and person-centred care must still be core to everything we do as health and care staff.

As a leader, using your knowledge, skills and networks to collaborate with and influence others will be key to ensuring the teams objectives are achieved.

You will be called upon to demonstrate your leadership and influence and encourage others by how you work in partnership with people who use your service, as well as colleagues in your own team and across many new partners.



Collective leadership offers a framework for you to be the best leader you can be in these challenging times for all health and care staff. Only by working together in this way will we be able to maximise our effectiveness.

Based on the work of Harvard Professor Amy Edmondson, there are three things that the King's Fund say that you as a leader can do to support team members at this time, particularly if the team is new:

- **Let go of the need to have all the answers**, free yourself from feeling you should know everything. This may free others to pitch in to collective problem-solving and may help you all feel more in control
- **Make some time to connect**, even if it's briefly, and get to know your new teammates, what they bring and how they can contribute – they may surprise you
- **Be curious and welcome curiosity** to make it easier for people to share their ideas and concerns and worry less about hierarchy or what people will think of each other'

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01 | Working Collaboratively



Key Points

- ▶ Supporting the delivery of safe, effective and person-centred care must still be core to everything we do as health and care staff
- ▶ As a leader and manager, you need to value the strength, experiences and perspectives of others
- ▶ Try to remain curious
- ▶ Remember to connect with all your team regularly, even if it is only briefly

Useful resources



A very brief introduction to teaming



Covid-19: why compassionate leadership matters in a crisis' (Blog by Suzie Bailey and Michael West)

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02 | Preparing and Sustaining Yourself

“ *You can't pour from an empty cup*

Norm Kelly via [Twitter.com](#)

It is important that you look after yourself so that you can help your team and others around you to do the best, they can with what they have and what they know.

At this time of uncertainty and stress it is important you are aware of your own personal signs of stress and are kind to yourself so it will also be important that you understand how to keep yourself physically and mentally well and able to respond flexibly, particularly at this time of enforced and rapid change.

This is often called being 'resilient' but what does that mean?



Resilience:

- is being able to survive in the face of stressful or traumatic situations
- is well researched by psychologists, we know that human beings are capable of overcoming danger, risk and misfortune and that individuals and communities can adapt and rebuild their lives even following overwhelming misfortune
- does not prevent feelings of anguish, sorrow or grief but the difference lies in the ability to work through these emotions
- is not something that you are genetically programmed with or born with
- is not a character trait - it can be learned by anyone, but this requires time and effort

Developing resilience is personal to each one of us. Everyone will react differently to stressful life events therefore it is important that an individual approach is adopted. This will reflect cultural influences whether at a societal level or relating to specific culture of one's own family background. As a team leader you need to consider this for the members of your team and encourage them to look after their own resilience too. You will find more resources and tools to support you and your team in Sections 4 and 5 of this resource.

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02 | Preparing and Sustaining Yourself



Key Points

- ▶ To look after others, you must first look after yourself
- ▶ We're all in these strange and challenging circumstances together, trying to do the best we can with what we have
- ▶ This situation is going to last for some time, "a marathon rather than a sprint", so making sure you pace yourself is going to be important
- ▶ Being aware of your own emotions and stress levels will help you manage and lead others through theirs
- ▶ Being a leader and a role model means others will look to you for guidance and as an example - remember 'the standard you walk past is the standard you accept'
- ▶ Keep yourself safe, keep your practice safe - If you see something that doesn't look right, or if you're worried about something then say so
- ▶ People react differently to fear, worry, anxiety. It's OK to feel that way and how you feel will change from day to day; accept that - try and be in the moment
- ▶ Take one step/hour/day at a time
- ▶ Some things will be out of your control; accept this and be ready for it
- ▶ Ask for help and support

Useful resources



Psychosocial and mental health and wellbeing support for staff



Developing self-awareness



Managing my resilience (45 minutes in duration)

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03 | Supporting and sustaining your team

“A leader is someone who can get things done **through** other people

Warren Buffet

You are a team manager and leader for a reason. Use what you know to help your team to do the best they can with what they have and what they know.

To support and sustain your team in the context of COVID-19, watch these two very helpful videos, each only five minutes long where Professor Michael West, The Kings Fund (2020), explains the important behaviours leaders and team members need to adopt to maximise individual and collective effectiveness while keeping people safe and achieving good outcomes for people:

- [Effective Teamworking during the COVID-19 crisis](#)
- [Looking after colleagues during the COVID-19 crisis](#)

As a leader you have a key role in being clear about roles, responsibilities and the team's shared purpose. Trust is key, trust in ourselves as leaders and trust in our colleagues and partner organisations. This is not a time for criticism or blame, as our Project Lift colleagues remind us, we are “*all in this together.*”



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03 | Supporting and sustaining your team



Key Points

- ▶ You are a team leader for a reason – you will take the knowledge, skills and expertise you have with you, no matter where you work or move to during this crisis
- ▶ You don't need to have all the answers: use the knowledge, skills, strengths and expertise in your team
- ▶ You don't need to do everything: your team are there to contribute, so let them do so
- ▶ Your team don't all have to agree, but they do need to find a way to work together. Help them to do that
- ▶ Encourage team members to build their self-awareness and ability to interpret what is happening for them
- ▶ Trust when you are the right person and step in, trust when someone else is the right person and let them step in
- ▶ If you are in a situation that you are unsure about, look to your left and look to your right, gauge the expertise in the room
- ▶ Let your team know they are important and what they are doing is appreciated
- ▶ Share your hopes for the team; encourage them to be the best they can be
- ▶ Encourage them to be flexible, creative and adaptable
- ▶ Encourage them to support each other
- ▶ Share information freely, no one likes a vacuum

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Useful resources

 [Effective Teamworking during the COVID-19 crisis](#)

 [A personal message from Project Lift](#)

 [Looking after colleagues during the COVID-19 crisis](#)

 [Questions to support each other to get through the day](#)

 [Responding to the COVID-19 crisis; Don Berwick](#)

 [Leadership Links](#)

04 | Going home safely, protecting yourself and those around you

“It’s really okay for there to be times when you stop putting everyone else first and just do what’s best for you

Tracey Leech, LessonsLearnedinLife.com

The current COVID-19 pandemic will affect us all in different ways: physically, emotionally, socially and psychologically. Staff across health and care settings will experience varying levels of stress and distress at points.

We all need to look after ourselves first before we are able to take care of other people. We are all affected by the current crisis, we have stresses and worries of our own which we need to be aware of.

You might feel there is increased pressure to work longer hours, or to constantly respond to e-mails and messages, but we all need to have time away from work so that we can clear our head and recharge ourselves by having time with people we love and who love us. Having hobbies you enjoy, fresh air, exercise, pets, relationships; all these things brings balance to our lives outside work. This matters more now than ever, therefore make time to look after yourself a priority – your wellbeing matters.



Reframing how we see the world can help too, so please remember:

- People react differently to fear, worry, anxiety. It’s OK to feel that way and how you feel will change from day to day; accept that - try and be in the moment
- This situation is going to last for some time “a marathon rather than a sprint” so making sure you pace yourself is going to be important
- Keep yourself safe, keep your practice safe. If you see something that doesn’t look right, or if you’re worried about something then say so

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04 | Going home safely, protecting yourself and those around you



Key Points

- ▶ Try to take five minutes each day before you go to work and when you come home to be kind to yourself and just be in a quiet space and breath slowly
- ▶ Know when it is time to go home and do things that energise you and give you joy
- ▶ Find ways to relax when you are home, whether it is mindfulness, exercise, yoga or DIY, playing music and singing along (even though you will never sing like Madonna)
- ▶ Make time for some daily exercise whether just a walk or something more energetic
- ▶ Think about five things you are grateful for and write them down
- ▶ Have some time in your day for a personal journal, often when you do this it becomes a useful reflective account and provides an outlet for your thoughts



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04 | Going home safely, protecting yourself and those around you

Resources for protecting yourself and others

We all need to have confidence we are keeping ourselves and those we live with safe. As the guidance is changing as the pandemic progresses, it is important to ensure you and the team are following the most up to date guidance regarding Infection prevention and control (IPC) both at work and on returning home.



NES: Protecting yourself and your workplace environment



HPS: COVID-19 guidance for infection prevention and control in healthcare settings

There are four downloadable posters on Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) guidance developed by Health Protection Scotland – these can be an effective way to reinforce the policy message for your team in a visual way. Available as large (A3) and small (A4) versions



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Guidance posters

It is equally important during this crisis that you make time to unwind, focus on what you need to be resilient and allow yourself to have some fun. We have a useful page on TURAS Learn to host resources for staff wellbeing and mental health



Turas Learn: Resources for staff wellbeing and mental health

Going home checklists – your employer may already have a going home checklist, if not you can download this NHS Education for Scotland version



Going Home Checklists

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04 | Going home safely, protecting yourself and those around you

Resources for self-care

Self-care matters more than ever during this crisis, here are some more resources to help you and your team find practical and fun ways to relax and recharge your batteries:



 Watch the TedTalk – We are all different and that is awesome

 MIND - Eight tips for relaxation

 MIND – Five way to get moving and feel better

 Listen to this or any other music you love and dance

 See Me Scotland – The Power of Okay

 Free access to wellbeing apps for NHS staff

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05 | Tools to support your team

01 | Psychological First Aid (adapted)

DURING WORK



Behaviours

- ▶ Permission from self and others to take breaks in a safe environment
- ▶ Eat and drink well
- ▶ Pace yourself

Thoughts

- ▶ Focus attention on what you can control
- ▶ Notice a limit rumination
- ▶ Understand normal responses to stress
- ▶ Notice your own stress response, acknowledge it is OK and normal to feel stress
- ▶ Take mental 'breathing space' breaks when physical ones may be impossible

Social connections

- ▶ Opportunities for regular check in with colleagues
- ▶ Work with a buddy where possible
- ▶ Maintain a connection with outside support in breaks

LEAVING WORK



Behaviours

- ▶ Do a physical 'check in' - "Am I OK?"
- ▶ What steps do I need to take to be OK?
- ▶ Who can I speak to / what do I need?

Thoughts

- ▶ Take a moment to say to yourself "Today's shift is over. I have done what I can"
- ▶ Reflect on your day and acknowledge your feelings. What went well?
- ▶ Intentionally switch your attention to home, restore, recharge, replenish and rest

Social connections

- ▶ Connect and share with colleagues
- ▶ Check on your colleagues before you leave. Are they OK?

AT HOME



Behaviours

- ▶ **Balance** - try to plan activities that you know help you relax and that provide light to the shade of the day's work
- ▶ Prioritise rest, exercise and eating
- ▶ Plan a wind-down routine to sleep

Thoughts

- ▶ **Awareness** - notice the day's impact on your Body, Emotions, Relationships and Activity
- ▶ Plan a wind-down routine to mentally and physically disconnect from work
- ▶ Take time to consciously switch off mentally from work

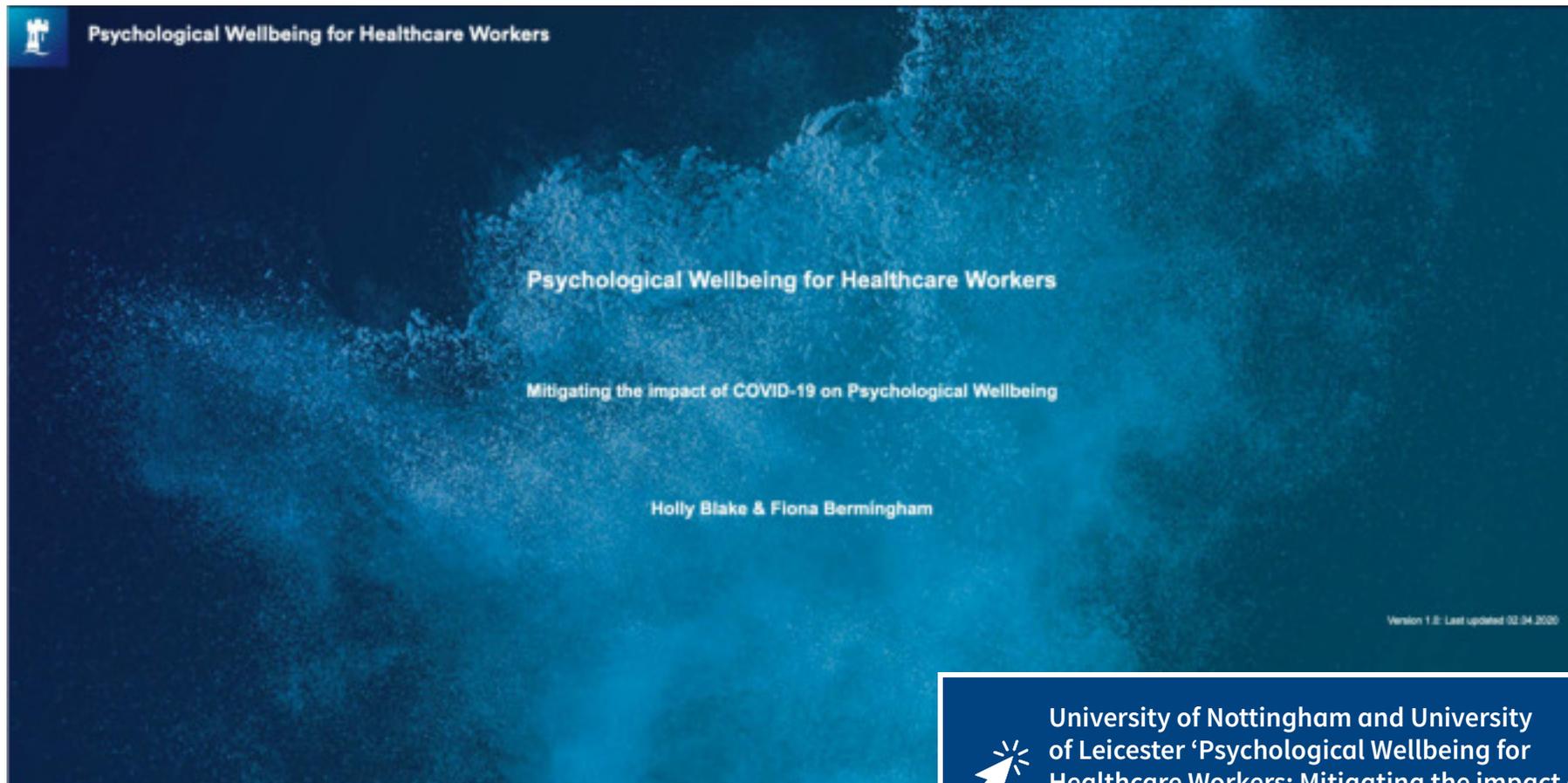
Social connections

- ▶ **Connection** - create and sustain mental and physical connections to people and activities that are important
- ▶ Connect also to your values - why is this work important to you and your community?

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05 | Tools to support your team

02 | Psychological Wellbeing for Healthcare Workers



 University of Nottingham and University of Leicester 'Psychological Wellbeing for Healthcare Workers: Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on Psychological Wellbeing'

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05 | Tools to support your team

03| Daily check-in and check-out tool

Think about this	Do this	Think about your role
<p>Start of the day</p> <p>Aim to start the day with a team ‘check-in’.</p> <p>This acts like an emotional temperature check and helps team members to say how they really think and feel.</p> <p>It also helps to encourage honesty and build trust, which are essential. If team members feel safe enough to speak up when they don’t know the answer, or when they see something that is not right, it will save lives.</p>	<p>Ask your team:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How are you feeling today? <i>(Suggest using a scale of 1-10, where 1 = ‘awful, 10 = ‘really good’)</i> What’s on your mind about what’s coming up today? What help can I / the team give you? 	<p>You’re all in this together, so always include yourself in the check-in.</p> <p>Set the tone by answering the questions yourself first. The more honest and open you are, the more honest and open your team will be.</p> <p>People will be feeling fearful and anxious: acknowledge and respect those feelings, but don’t try to fix them.</p>
<p>End of the day</p> <p>Aim to end the day with a team ‘check-out’.</p> <p>This acknowledges the emotional impact of the day and helps team members to let go of things that were difficult for them.</p> <p>It’s also a chance to talk about what went well, which is something we often forget to do.</p>	<p>Ask your team:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How was your day today? <i>(Use a scale of 1-10, where 1 = ‘awful, 10 = ‘really good’)</i> Were there any low points today? Were there any high point today? 	<p>As in the check-in, always include yourself.</p> <p>Be as open and honest as you can with your team.</p> <p>If the ‘low point’ is really bothering a team member, see if there’s a way you can help them let it go by talking it through with them. It often helps to just acknowledge that today wasn’t great, but hopefully tomorrow will be better.</p> <p>‘High points’ are important to acknowledge. Encourage team members to take time to share with each other when things have gone well.</p>

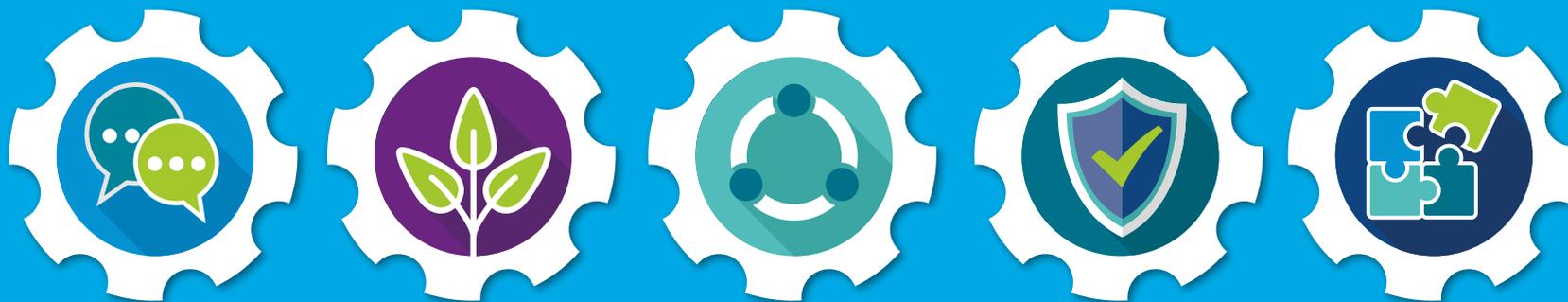
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Looking after yourself and others during COVID-19: A resource for team leaders

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages.
Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or email altformats@nes.scot.nhs.uk.



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