

ROTHERHAM LEADER WELLBEING GUIDE



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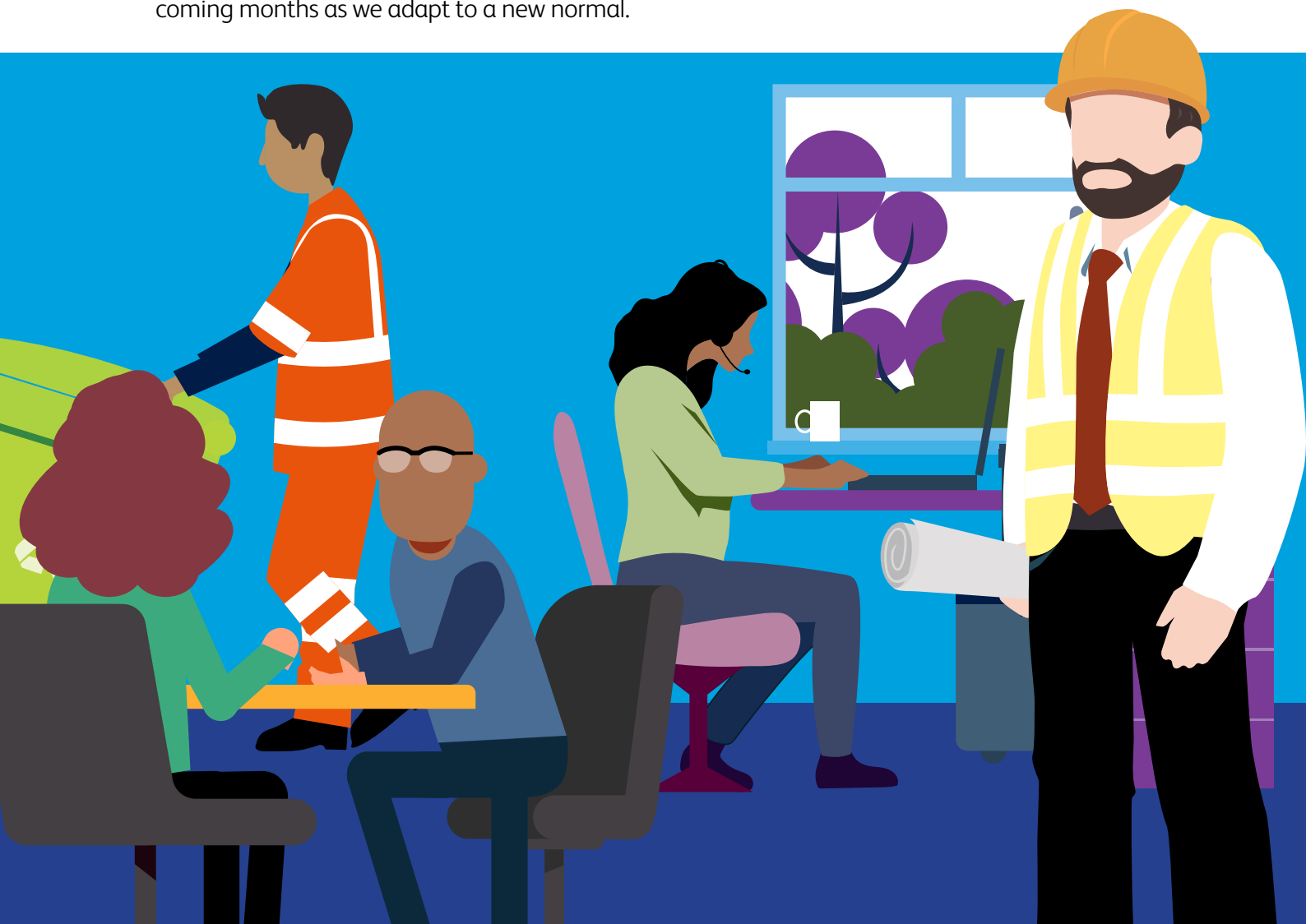
INTRODUCTION

This is a challenging time for everyone. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we live and has impacted everyone within Rotherham, Yorkshire, UK and beyond.

The freedoms and daily rituals that we have all previously enjoyed have been restricted, this means family life will have been suddenly adjusted overnight and many people are now not only trying to manage a healthy work life balance and maintain performance in their roles, but also home school children, look after family members, maintain social distancing, manage grief and loss and much more whilst trying to keep mentally well.

And that seems like more than enough to keep everyone occupied – however as a Rotherham Leader you will have supervisory, team leader, management and/or leadership responsibility for a team of people. This brings an extra level of responsibility and we know that at times you may feel overwhelmed or not sure if you are leading in the right way or that maybe things could be done differently to support your team.

This guide has been developed for everyone in the Council who has any level of supervisory responsibility. The aim is to provide you with some guidance, tips and suggestions for engaging, understanding and supporting your team. The information provided is not exhaustive, but it does cover the key points that are essential for our workforce both right now and over the coming months as we adapt to a new normal.



SECTION I: ENGAGING YOUR TEAM

Feeling isolated and not as connected to our team is one of the biggest challenges we are all currently facing; and communicating and engaging with your team is essential during this time although it may feel very different if your team have adopted different ways of working or you have team members working remotely.

This section provides some suggestions and good practice that you can use, adapt and build on with your team.

Communication

Most people, when asked, would say that communication is an area in need of improvement in the council, and this was reflected in the Employee Opinion Survey 2019. Getting the balance right with your team is important as a lack of information and communication can cause stress and tension, whilst too much information and communication can feel overwhelming.

Try out a variety of communication methods to see which work best for both you and your team.

Tip: Ask your team how they would like to be communicated with. Remind your team to keep up to date by viewing the information that is sent out by the CEX and what is available on the homepage of the intranet. If you have team members who do not have access to emails and the intranet remember to share with them the latest updates on a regular basis.

Performance & Development Review (PDR)

The annual PDR is a key activity for every manager and their team members. Due to the current situation a decision has been made to extend the timeframe relating to this year's annual PDR meeting. This meeting should now be completed by **30th September 2020**.

When completing the PDR you should use Teams where possible. If you have a team/ individual who does not utilise IT within their role please ensure that you adhere to social distancing guidance when undertaking this meeting.

Plan the meeting in advance and give you and your team member time to prepare.

Start the conversation by focusing on the well-being of the individual rather than going straight into performance. This is a good opportunity to find out how they are finding the situation, if they are facing any particular challenges and if there is anything further that you can do to support them.

Carefully consider the objectives that you set for each team member and aim to set no more than 3 for this year.

For further guidance on the PDR process please refer to the **PDR Intranet Homepage** and **PDR eLearning Module for Line Managers/Reviewers**

Virtual team meetings

If you have a team who are now working remotely hosting and chairing a virtual meeting can be a little more challenging than chairing a meeting where everyone is in one room. But this is great way of bringing your team together and building a sense of being connected and working together.

- **Use video.** A large part of the way in which we communicate is through body language. It's not as easy to tell if someone is upset, anxious or angry when you can't see them. Encourage your team to use the video capability during meetings. This will help people feel more connected too.
- **Timing.** Don't make the meeting too long and consider the best day and time for a team meeting. Often the business of the meeting is dealt with much more quickly virtually as there aren't as many distractions. Aim to avoid key times e.g. lunch time or late afternoon
- **Have an agenda.** Have an agenda and outline the reason for the meeting. Where possible get all attendees to introduce themselves at the start and invite each attendee in at relevant parts of the agenda
- **Mute.** When people aren't speaking ask them to mute their microphone so that others can't hear background noise e.g. the dog barking,

Keep things social & have some fun

Keeping your teams engaged and motivated will be more challenging if you only focus on work.

Making time for informal chats and having some fun as a team, can help raise the overall mood of your team, reduce the feeling of isolation and increase productivity and improve mental well-being.

Tip: Ask your team to come up with suggestions and to take it in turns to lead a fun activity meeting

To get you started the following section covers some suggested ways of engaging as a team:

Virtual coffee morning:

For a quick virtual catch up with team members, or a chance for a quick offload to people outside of your service area.

How it works: optional 30 minute Team meeting link is sent to team or group (ideally less than 15 people). Anyone who would like to come can respond confirming attendance.

Facilitator should outline ground rules in meeting invite (eg mics off when not talking).

During the meeting, start with an open question such as 'how are you?' 'how has your week been?' 'how are you feeling about today?' and ensure that everyone who joins is given the opportunity to speak.

Session can go on as long as needed, up to 30 minutes.

Show and tell:

A chance for members of your team to talk about something they care about outside of work, and for everyone to learn a little more about each other.

How it works: as part of a team catch-up, this activity gives each team member one minute to show and talk about something. It may be an object that's important to them, or something less tangible.

Participants will know about the activity in advance so they have a little time to think and prepare. After each person has shared for a minute, there will be a little bit of time for the rest of the team to discuss and ask questions.

Perfect holiday:

This activity gives participants a chance to talk and listen to other team members one-to-one.

How it works: Participants are asked to choose a partner each (this can be pre-chosen by facilitator if easier).

Then, each duo goes on a personal call and tells their partner about their perfect holiday – if they had unlimited time and money.

After everyone is done, all the team members get back together on a call and try to explain their partner's dream holiday as accurately as possible.

Co-working:

Nothing can quite replace working together in an office space, but virtual co-working offers puts time aside for you and your team to work alone, together.

How it works: There are different ways to try this with your team. A great way to start is to do a virtual co-working hour. This is an hour set aside where you all continue on your same projects, but join a group Team chat where you can update on what you're up to, ask questions which might have usually have not been raised, share pictures from the day or anything else that crops up.

For teams that find this particularly useful, there are tools that create a virtual co-working space all the time. For example, if you have a particularly busy period coming up, you could use the free trial of Sococo.com, which creates a virtual office for your team.

Skill sharing sessions and learning activities:

These will be weekly sessions ideally led by colleagues who have these skills or feel comfortable facilitating sessions. They could include:

Slow hatha yoga, breathing, yoga nidra Slow yoga practices can help focus on the present, take time for themselves, and relax.

Book club:

Starting with shorter texts, these would give a space for staff to share their thoughts on a book they have read the previous week

Active skills sessions:

One-off sessions to help people develop skills to become more active.

SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING YOUR TEAM

Encourage staff to look after their wellbeing

As a leader you can have a big impact on employee wellbeing. In the current situation people may be having difficulties switching off at the end of the end of the day or feeling anxious trying to balance family responsibilities whilst also trying to be productive.

As a leader you can help your team by:

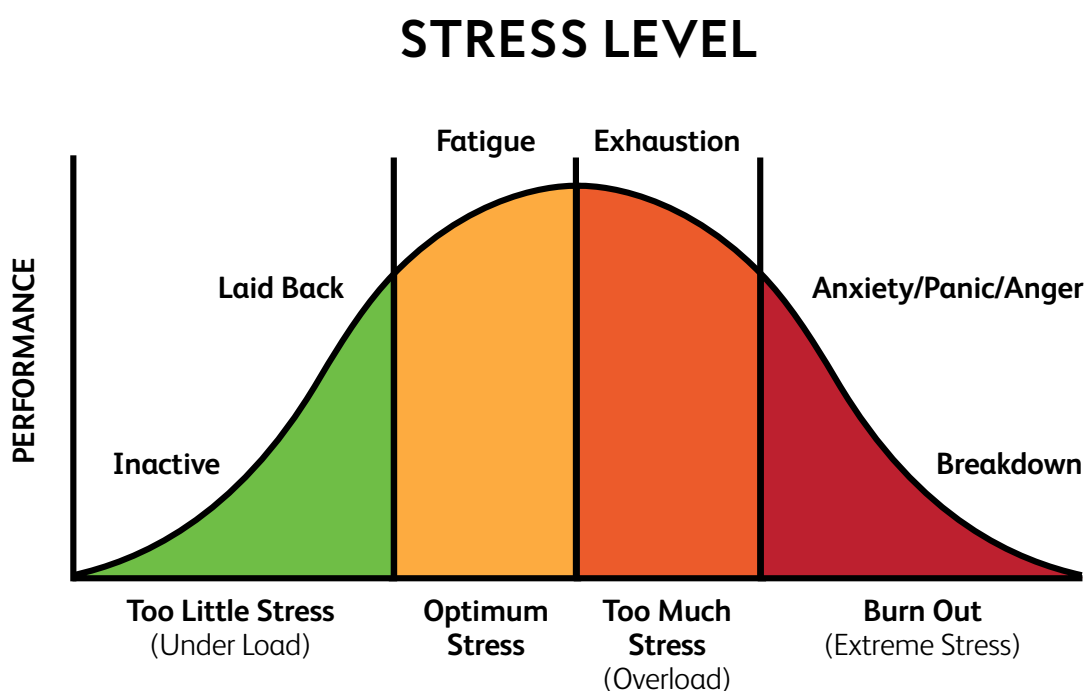
Spotting the signs and symptoms of mental distress early

Burn-out and stress are real risks to our workforce given the increasing levels of demands on our workforce, combined with personal isolation at home.

Burn-out: Long-term fatigue which can lead to physical and mental health problems and a feeling of being psychologically trapped and exhausted by the pressure.

Stress: Everyone experiences stress and it is not always negative. In some situations stress can be motivating and performance enhancing. However if people experience stress in a negative way it can be a multifaceted experience affecting how people feel, how they think, their behaviour and emotions.

It is completely normal for people to be feeling anxious, stressed or scared during this time. It is important to reassure individuals and teams that there is no right or wrong way to be feeling and that it is absolutely **“OK to not feel OK”**. Covid-19 is affecting everyone’s life, and there is ongoing uncertainty over what will be happening coming weeks and months with no clear ending.



As a leader there are some practical steps you can take to reduce the potential for burnout and stress in your team. Recognising some of the generic warning in your team members is key. Signs to look out for include:

- Headaches
- Sweating
- Racing thoughts
- Increased absenteeism
- Unusual changes in behaviour
- Cynicism or negativity, feeling work has little value. People may withdraw from projects they were previously passionate about.
- Chronic fatigue
- Feeling unduly irritated by colleagues
- Anger
- Self-criticism and negativity
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Ongoing anxiety or restlessness even when a challenging time or project comes to an end
- Poor performance and reduction in the quality of work.

Tip: *If you notice any of these signs, ask to speak to the individual concerned at the earliest opportunity to find out what you can do to help. Key questions to consider asking include:*

- **What's happening?**
- **What are you noticing?**
- **How are you feeling?**
- **What patterns are you noticing?**
- **What can you now do?**
- **What do you now need?**
- **How can I help?**

In addition to speaking to team members if you notice any warning signs make sure you:

Maintain team meetings & 1:1s. Regularly check in with your team. Make well-being a standing agenda item for every team meeting and encourage individuals to consider using annual leave to ensure that they are able to take a proper break from work when they need to.

Keep track of people's workloads. Warning signs aren't always easy to spot if you and your team are working remotely so keeping an eye on what work each team member is doing

Thank your team. Remember to thank your team and individuals regularly for their efforts so that they feel valued and appreciated for all the work that they do.

Tip: **Symptoms of stress tend to be individual and so it is important to encourage self-reflection with your team and encourage people to think about their own signs of stress. Keep reminding your team about the help and support that is available to them. Refer to section 3 for more information.**

Actively listen to understand and address concerns

As leaders we all would like to think that our team members would be open and honest about how they are feeling and how they are finding things with work, especially during this pandemic. However it may not always be easy for your team members to feel comfortable in opening up to you about work and personal pressures.

Encouraging open and honest discussions is vital and to do this you need to be consistent in your approach to asking questions and be open to the responses you receive. Be clear about what you know or can and can't do and if you need to seek assistance/support from elsewhere in the council in order to fully support them.

Tip: When a team member does confide in you about work or personal pressures it is important that you actively listen to what they are saying:

- ask open questions to encourage more discussion
- clarify and check that you have understood the issues
- at a suitable point summarise back to the individual so that they know you have understood the issue from their perspective
- if multiple issues are raised encourage the individual to focus on what they feel is the most important issue to them by asking “what is the most important thing you have talked about in the last few minutes?”

Reflect on your leadership style

This is a challenging time for everyone and as a leader you may also be feeling anxious or uncertain. Take time to look after your own well-being as well as looking out for your team.

Reflect on your own behaviour and actions and consider how these may impact upon your team, peers and line manager.

Think about:

- How you are now operating?
- Is this different to how you operated a few weeks ago?
- Are you prioritising work in the same way?
- Are you delegating appropriately?
- Is your team able to contact you as frequently as they need to?
- Are you managing your emotions effectively?

SECTION 3: SUPPORTING YOUR TEAM

As a leader one of the key responsibilities and expectations is that you provide the first level of support to your team.

Providing support has never been so important than right now during this pandemic; especially if you have a team or individuals who are experiencing particularly emotional or stressful situations.

Most individuals will have well-developed coping mechanisms and so will only need a reminder to use their own positive coping strategies. This will enable staff to take responsibility for their own self-regulation and mental health management and increase their sense of self-control.

This section outlines some practical steps you can take to support your team.

There are some points you can encourage individuals to follow which will help maintain good mental health and manage stress:

- Get enough rest and sleep (aim for between 7 and 8 hours a night)
- Eat a balanced diet and stay hydrated
- Talk to people they care about outside of work (suggest use of technology)
- Talk about general problems with someone they trust
- Do activities that help them relax (suggest reading, drawing, cooking)
- Get some physical exercise where possible

Sometimes it may become clear that an individual is engaging in more negative or unhelpful coping mechanisms such as excessive nicotine use, alcohol consumption or substance misuse, withdrawal from work colleagues or avoidance of work.

As a general guide consider the following points when supporting individuals using unhelpful coping mechanisms:

- Ensure that you acknowledge with empathy the challenges and difficulties presented by Covid-19 and its impact
- Continue to have regular and ongoing conversations with the individual to assess the impact on their ability to carry on completing regular duties safely and effectively (“How are you feeling? How are you coping?”)
- Where appropriate, express regret (“I’m sorry you had to experience that”, “you did what you could, with the resources available to you at the time”).
- Allow space and time for the individual to form a narrative of their experiences, whether this is in a 121 or group discussion. The individual should not be pushed or pressured to talk but rather be made aware that you are ready to listen

- Encourage sharing of experiences as appropriate between peers and between you as a leader and your team to promote positive examples of making mistakes, accountability and positive coping
- Be aware of the various levels of support that your team can access and signpost to these different resources e.g. the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), or self-care via external organisations
- Encourage questions and ask if there is anything that you can help them with
- Embed a culture of checking in, of looking out for each other, talking about how you are feeling and of “watchful waiting”, to help recognise the signs of potentially more serious and persistent psychological distress
- As we move forward over the coming months into the recovery phase, allow your team the opportunity to process their experiences and insights from the pandemic to reflect on learning at individual and organisational level that may benefit service delivery going forward

Tip: Refer to the Five Ways to Well-Being as a guide for encouraging your team to look at ways that they can look after their own health and mental well-being.



Five Ways to Well-Being

In your general conversations with individuals or team you can encourage and promote self-care in relation to mental health and well-being.

A good place to start is by referring to the Five Ways to Well-Being as the steps can be incorporated into everyone's everyday life to help maintain good mental health.

Encourage your team to talk about good habits which help maintain mental health using the information below as a starting point for your conversations:



Be Active

**It is important to keep active whilst you are self-isolating.
Try and move around and stay active, for approx. 30 minutes a day.**

There are some great tips in the following links:

www.sportengland.org/news/how-stay-active-while-youre-home

The Chief Medical Officer's own physical activity guidance highlights the benefits of maintaining muscle strength, balance and flexibility. Try looking at the following sites:

www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises/

www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-exercises/

www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/balance-exercises/

www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/flexibility-exercises/



Connect

Reach out to others, spend time speaking to friends and family. Share a selfie with friends to show what you are up to and start a conversation. It can help you feel connected even if you're working remotely.

Find out how at **mhfaengland.org/my-whole-self/selfie-how-to**.

Virtual social-sessions- If you usually schedule time in the day for an activity or exercising with friends, continue to make time for this over webcam or phone. Here are some ideas:

Video calling for craft session or cooking sessions

Daily online quiz sessions with your friends/family.

While it's important to keep up to date with current affairs, constantly watching the news can increase feelings of anxiety. Try to only check it once a day and stick to reliable news sources such as the BBC or use the NHS website for health advice.

We have some guidance here on how people can use social media to connect with others at **www.youtube.com/channel/UC0iHIeKXaIt2_AZQXz4LFnw**



Give

Give time to yourself, have a bath, read that book you've promised yourself you will read one day.

Give yourself tasks to complete each day it will give you a sense of achievement.

Give yourself a good night's sleep. For full details on tips on getting a good nights sleep visit. www.mentalhealth.org.uk/blog/ten-top-tip-good-sleep.



Keep Learning

Virtual cooking sessions with friends.

Find that musical instrument that you have stored away and start learning again.

What about learning a new language?

Learn about places in this country and around the world. Some museums are offering virtual tours. [Artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en](https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en)



Take Notice

Try and have a daily routine. Get up at the same time and try to have some structure.

Although you may have extra time in bed aim to wake up around the same time every day. This helps stabilise your internal clock and improve your sleep overall. You'll feel less tired, more refreshed and find it easier to concentrate throughout the day.

Keep to your established morning routine if you can – get ready, washed and dressed as if you are going out.

Many people are commenting on how good it is to hear birds singing. Open your window listen and take notice of what you can see. Many places are offering people opportunities to observe nature from the comfort of their own armchair.

There are more tips on looking after mental health and wellbeing. Every Mind Matters offers expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing.

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing

Support working from home effectively

Working from home will take some getting used to and many people don't have a dedicated space in their home for work. In addition many people are currently juggling caring responsibilities or home schooling and so you need to take individual circumstances into account.

Flexibility. For many of our staff working 09:00 till 17:00 is simply impossible, they may have caring commitments for dependents, or have distractions which makes working productively difficult. Explore different flexible working options which might not be considered in more normal times? Would it be more convenient for staff to work some hours at night, or even a weekend?

Structure. Having a routine is so important for our mental health and general well-being, but it also helps us to feel organised and make the most out of our working day. Encourage your team members to develop a structure which works for them

Breaks. Having regular breaks is vital. Encourage your team members to have breaks away from their screen to refocus and give their mind a break.

Tip: *Have a look at the working from home advice that is on the home page of the intranet for more guidance and encourage your team to do the same.*

Psychological First Aid

Psychological First Aid (PFA) provides non-intrusive practical care and support and aims to reduce initial distress experienced by an individual. This is a practical model that as a leader you can use to help to support individuals within your teams. The 7 key components of the model are shown in the diagram below:



Psychological First Aid is:

- ✓ A model to identify key areas under which to offer support
- ✓ Being available to listen to someone's story without pressurising them to talk about their feelings, thoughts or reactions to an event or incident
- ✓ Offered in a private one to one situation
- ✓ Delivered in a calm, understanding and non-judgmental manner and allows for silence

Psychological First Aid isn't:

- ✗ A professional counselling or psychological debriefing
- ✗ A detailed discussion of the event or incident as this may cause additional distress
- ✗ A detailed analysis of what happened and in what order

When talking to a team member about a specific incident or event remember to acknowledge and validate their feelings ("that sounds really hard, I'm so sorry you had to experience that"). This will help to normalise their reactions as understandable responses to difficult and challenging times. Where possible, acknowledge and reflect on the individual's strengths and how they have helped themselves previously, discussing healthy coping and self-care.

If the individual is aware of the people or situations that are likely to trigger further distress, consider what mechanisms might be put in place or support that can be made available that may act as a buffer. It may be useful to have a discussion with the individual about phased reintroduction to the activities or situations that trigger distress over time with support.

If you or your staff would like to learn more about psychological first aid, a **free Psychological First Aid online** course has been developed by Public Health England, specifically for frontline, essential workers and volunteers.

The course teaches the key principles of giving psychological first aid in emergencies and aims to increase awareness and confidence to provide this support to people affected by COVID-19 (this could be both employees or service users). It takes 90 minutes to complete.

Tip: Keep it simple and don't overthink having this type of discussion. Use the headings in the model to guide you. Talk in a way that the individual can understand and be honest about what you do and don't know or what you can or can't do. Encourage the individual to make contact and connect with team members that they have positive and supportive relationships with or ask peers to check in with them to offer support.

Peer Support

Peer support is an effective way to help staff to manage their well-being in the workplace. Peer support refers to processes by which an employee can offer support to another in a mutual space in the workplace with others who have a shared experience.

The common principals that underpin peer support include normalisation, validation of feelings, encouraging use of existing coping skills, education and signposting. If a member of staff has been exposed to a potentially traumatic situation, it is important that peer supporters provide cautious curiosity and do not ask for detail on the incident and the associated thoughts and feelings around this, as this may risk destabilising the normal processing of this experience.

Guidance around peer support within Rotherham is underdevelopment and if you feel that peer support may benefit your team please contact Organisational Development (OD@rotherham.gov.uk) in the first instance to discuss your situation.

Please note – peer support does not replace your regular team and 121 meetings. It is an additional support mechanism to address specific situations or incidents experienced by a team.

Bereavement Support

During this time you or members of your team may have a bereavement. Due to the pandemic funeral arrangements have been affected and this along with the loss of a loved one can have long lasting as well as life changing impact.

It's important to realise that grief responses vary, are very personal to an individual and can last for a lifetime. As much as grief is painful, it is a natural reaction to loss and grieving is a healthy process to go through in order to adapt to life without the deceased person.

If grieving isn't allowed to follow its natural course it can have a negative impact on both physical and mental health.

Support can be given in many different ways and there are some basic 'dos and don'ts':

- Don't be afraid of approaching the bereaved person and acknowledging their loss.
- Don't avoid making reference to the deceased person – it won't cause any more distress than is already being experienced and many people like to talk about the person that has died.
- Don't be afraid of someone expressing distressing emotions. You can listen but remember you can't fix the situation.
- Don't try to cheer someone up in response to your own discomfort with the situation.
- Don't try to compare how they are feeling with your own experiences of loss and don't use clichés.
- Don't forget about the bereavement. Often people receive a lot of support in the initial days and weeks but their grieving process will continue for much longer.
- Do say something, even if it is that you don't know what to say or that you wish that you could say something helpful.
- Do take a gentle and non-judgemental approach to the bereaved person.
- Do offer specific concrete help such as information regarding bereavement and signposting to supportive organisations.
- Do be open to the need for the bereaved person to talk about their loss, even if it feels overwhelming.
- Do offer clear boundaries around how much time and support you are able to offer and sustain.
- Do consider your own self-care and wellbeing when supporting a bereaved person.

Suicide Support

The COVID-19 outbreak means that life is changing for everyone for a while. People may feel anxious, stressed, worried, sad, bored, lonely or frustrated. Please reassure your team that it is normal to have these feelings and everyone will react differently. For most people, this situation is temporary and, for most, these difficult feelings will pass.

It is so important that people talk to others about how they are feeling. If staff are finding that these feelings are persisting then please encourage them to seek help.

If you are worried that a member of staff may be thinking about suicide it is important that we take this seriously. It can feel hard to talk about suicide, it is so important that we ask directly. You might want to reflect some of the things you are hearing and observing which has brought you to this concern. Have an open conversation; don't be afraid to say what you're thinking. "I'm worried you're going to kill yourself" or "Are you thinking about suicide?" "Please will you talk to me about how you're feeling?"

- **Talking** – it is okay to use the word suicide, it can help people know you are taking them seriously and allow a more open conversation.
- **Listening** – is the most important thing you can do. Give them time to say how they are feeling. You do not need to have the answers.
- **Care** – let them know that what they are saying is important and seek help for them.

For more information on what to look out for and how to help please visit: www.be-the-one.co.uk. You might want to complete the FREE suicide prevention training (Zero Suicide Alliance), it only takes about 20-30 minutes to complete: www.zerosuicidealliance.com

Summary

The information contained in this guide provides a range of options that may help to support you and your team.

- Take time to have a look at the information in this guide and refer to the links in the Your Wellbeing Guide
- Speak to your HR consultant if you need extra support or would like another view
- Consult with your network, peers and line manager – sharing thoughts and ideas is helpful for everyone
- Use the support offered via the Workplace Wellness Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and Occupational Health

Workplace Wellness Support

If you're concerned about a team member, you can refer them to internal sources of support provided by the Employee Assistance Programme. For more information please follow the link below or visit the website.

Workplace Wellness Information Booklet

Employee Helpline: 0800 111 6387

Line Manager Helpline: 0800 111 6385

Self-help Website www.my-eap.com (Password is ROTHwell)