



## RCM Clinical Guidance Briefing: Maternity Staff Mental Health Care During COVID -19

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| <b>Topic</b>   |
| <b>Maternity Staff Mental Health Care During Covid -19</b>   |
| <b>Potential impact of Covid-19 in this topic area</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff may be working with a depleted team due to increased sickness absences</li><li>• Staff are facing new challenges in relation to infection control</li><li>• Staff are concerned about personal risks to health</li><li>• Staff are anxious about constantly changing or lack of guidelines relating to Covid-19</li><li>• Staff may have high risk or isolating family members</li><li>• Staff may be working increased hours</li><li>• Staff may be working in unfamiliar areas or ways of practice</li><li>• Staff may be unable to access their usual support mechanisms</li><li>• Staff may be juggling additional caring commitments with work</li><li>• Staff may be unable to attend work and be in self-isolation</li></ul> <p>All or any of the above are likely to add to stress and anxiety at what is already a difficult time for all.</p>                    |
| <b>Current key guidance for this topic</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing</a></li><li>• <a href="http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/statements/statement-physical-and-mental-health-key-to-resilience-during-covid-19-pandemic">http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/statements/statement-physical-and-mental-health-key-to-resilience-during-covid-19-pandemic</a></li><li>• <a href="https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_8">https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_8</a></li><li>• </li></ul> |
| <b>References and links to online and virtual support and guidance</b>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Download a mindfulness app on your personal phone- with exercises designed to support mental health balance and aid with sleep</b> <a href="#">Balanceapp is free</a> or <a href="#">Headspace offers a free trial</a></li><li>• <b>Food and Nutrition Tips During Self-Quarantine</b> - <a href="http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-technical-guidance/food-and-nutrition-tips-during-self-quarantine">http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-technical-guidance/food-and-nutrition-tips-during-self-quarantine</a></li></ul>  |

- **Stay Physically Active During Self-Quarantine** - <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-technical-guidance/stay-physically-active-during-self-quarantine>
- **Coronavirus (Technique for Reducing and Overcoming Fear)** - <https://www.heartmath.com/blog/health-and-wellness/special-care-focus-coronavirus-technique-for-reducing-and-overcoming-fear/>
- **Capacitar Practices to Transform Anxiety and Fear & Boost the Immune System** - [https://www.firstchurchberkeley.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Covid-19\\_Capacitar-Practices-English.pdf](https://www.firstchurchberkeley.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Covid-19_Capacitar-Practices-English.pdf)
- **Anxiety UK - Free to download Panic attack booklet:** <https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/products/anxiety-condition/panic-disorder/panic/>  
Helpline: 03444 775774  
Email: [support@anxietyuk.org.uk](mailto:support@anxietyuk.org.uk)
- **Coronavirus and Your Wellbeing** - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing>
- **Coronavirus: How to Protect Your Mental Health** - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51873799>
- **COVID-19: Our Mental Health** - <https://www.psy.ox.ac.uk/covid-19-info/covid-19-our-mental-health>
- **Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Stress and Coping** - [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fmanaging-stress-anxiety.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fprepare%2Fmanaging-stress-anxiety.html)
- **Exercise Indoors. Free online resources here – everything from HIIT to yoga:**  
<https://makeyourbodywork.com/how-to-exercise-at-home/>
- **Looking After Your Mental Health During the Coronavirus Outbreak** - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>
- **Managing mental health and COVID-19** - <https://www.matesinmind.org/news/covid19-mentalhealth.html>
- **Meditation/Breathing:**  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/bedtime-meditation/>  
<https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/mildmoderate/MindfulnessDownloads.asp>  
[www.headspace.com](http://www.headspace.com)
- **Samaritans:** call 116 123 OR email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)
- **SANEline Online support forum** - [http://www.sane.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/support/supportforum/](http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/supportforum/)
- <https://ics.ac.uk/ICS/Education/Wellbeing/ICS/Wellbeing.aspx?hkey=92348f51-a875-4d87-8ae4-245707878a5c>

## **SUPPORT FOR NHS STAFF**

'In it Together' is a free weekly psychological group, running for 1.5hrs over the next 4 weeks, for any NHS staff to come together.

This is a confidential and safe space for staff to 'offload' (if useful) and learn some tips to manage their own wellbeing and stress levels during this time. It is not a reflective session.

Please contact Jan directly on [janice@healthyyouultd.com](mailto:janice@healthyyouultd.com) if you have any questions.

Friday 3rd April 10-11:30am

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/954435709?pwd=STRlbVA5eFZPRmtteVFPRkVqNjl4Zz09>

Meeting ID: 954 435 709 Password: 005267

Thursday 9th April 9:30-11am

Join Zoom

Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/964117557?pwd=TG8yeGdPZndnN2tEMi9JWTRLmM45QT09>

Meeting ID: 964 117 557 Password: 050374

Wednesday 15th April 5:00-6:30pm

Join Zoom

Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/964117557?pwd=TG8yeGdPZndnN2tEMi9JWTRLmM45QT09>

Meeting ID: 964 117 557 Password: 050374

Friday 24th April 1:00-2:30pm

Join Zoom

Meeting <https://zoom.us/j/938998083?pwd=eGM0bVk5YS94OUxPQlJlc2NuTTVGdz09>

Meeting ID: 938 998 083 Password: 070332



# ADVICE FOR SUSTAINING STAFF WELLBEING IN CRITICAL CARE DURING AND BEYOND COVID-19

The anticipated needs of staff will vary across each of the phases, consider the following support mechanisms:

| Phases  | Issues and likely impact   | Needs and recommended approach   |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Pre-phase:</b><br><br><b>No cases on unit</b>            | Anticipatory anxiety about what's on its way.<br>Inability to think clearly, feeling overwhelmed, planning.<br>Communication errors.<br>Tension in working relationships.<br>"Readiness" burnout.  | Increase a sense of control - the team are in a safe pair of hands.<br>Reassurance and planning.<br>Communication updates are key (you may be thinking ahead, they are thinking now).<br>Escalation plan.<br>Support to managers who are making plans and holding the stresses.  |
| <b>Initial phase:</b><br><br><b>Case 1</b>                  | Starting to get going, lots of trying out, lost time, repetition and frustration.<br>Further anticipatory anxiety  | War room - planning central to allow centralised communication.<br>Management are visible and available.<br>Regular communication bulletins and open forums.<br>Have runners in PPE areas.<br>Promote peer support.<br>It's okay to say you are not okay - Senior staff to model this.<br>Rotate workers from high-stress to lower-stress functions.<br>Small pre-brief and debrief the day.<br>Partner inexperienced workers with their more experienced colleagues.<br>Psychological first aid - drop in sessions for staff with employee wellbeing if you have it.<br>Ensure the basics: Breaks, Facilities (food trolley in staff room), Sleep, Days off.<br>Manage visitors |
| <b>Core Phase:</b><br><br><b>Full scale -Multiple cases</b> | Biggest risk period.<br>Fear infection and implications for families.<br>Overwhelming workload.<br>Full go mode- adrenalin and automatic pilot.<br>Exhaustion.<br>Moral distress as healthcare rationed.<br>Distress linked to personal or family experience of COVID-19.<br>Experience fear or stigma when out in public. | Manage visitors<br>Debriefing.<br>Staff 1-1 and group sessions.<br>Learning and preparation for the future.<br>Organise thanks and reward.<br>Look out for signs of PTSD in staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• on edge and hyper arousal, poor sleep</li> <li>• flashbacks or re-experiencing</li> <li>• avoidance of reminders.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>End Phase:</b><br><br><b>Immediate aftermath</b>         | Exhaustion and post trauma recovery / stress   | Debriefing.<br>Staff 1-1 and group sessions.<br>Learning and preparation for the future.<br>Organise thanks and reward.<br>Look out for signs of PTSD in staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• on edge and hyper arousal, poor sleep</li> <li>• flashbacks or re-experiencing</li> <li>• avoidance of reminders.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Long term</b>  | Some ongoing PTSD<br>Reflection and learning   | Debriefing.<br>Staff 1-1 and group sessions.<br>Learning and preparation for the future.<br>Organise thanks and reward.<br>Look out for signs of PTSD in staff: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• on edge and hyper arousal, poor sleep</li> <li>• flashbacks or re-experiencing</li> <li>• avoidance of reminders.</li> </ul>  |

# SELF-CARE DURING COVID-19

## Most importantly this is unprecedented: It is okay to not be okay

- Seek information updates at specific times during the day once or twice. The sudden and near-constant stream of news reports can cause anyone to feel worried. Get the facts. [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)
- Feeling stressed is an experience that you and many of your colleagues are likely going through. It is normal to be feeling this way in the current situation. Stress and the feelings associated with it are by no means a reflection that you cannot do your job or that you are weak.
- Managing your stress/psychosocial wellbeing during this time is as important as managing your physical health.
- Take care of your basic needs and ensure rest and respite during work or between shifts, eat sufficient and healthy food, engage in physical activity, and stay in contact with family and friends.
- This is an unprecedented scenario, don't try to learn new strategies, use the ones that you have used in the past to manage times of stress.
- This is likely to be a marathon - pace yourself
- Consider your psychological energy levels - you will need to "fill up" after "emptying the tank"
- Be aware of your "bandwidth"- it might take longer to think things through and make sense of things if you are feeling overwhelmed
- Beware dramatic language that might panic your colleagues.
- Avoid using unhelpful coping strategies such as tobacco, alcohol or other drugs.
- Some workers may unfortunately experience avoidance by their family or community due to stigma or fear. If possible, staying connected with your loved ones including through digital methods is one way to maintain contact. Turn to your colleagues or team leader for social support - your colleagues may be having similar experiences to you.

**STOP, BREATHE, then THINK- slowing your breathing slows the stress cycle and re-engages your frontal lobes - then you can think.**

