



# Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace during Covid-19: Guidance for Leaders & Managers

November 2020

Prepared by the multi-agency Workforce Wellbeing Group  
Sub-group of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Cell responding to Covid-19

**As we have moved into a second national lockdown many businesses and employees are facing even tougher challenges which will impact on the mental wellbeing of everyone.**

Therefore this month, in place of our regular monthly newsletter, we would like to share this relevant and informative guidance for managers paper prepared by the Gloucestershire 'Multi-agency Workforce Wellbeing Group' - a Sub-group of the Mental Health and Wellbeing Cell responding to Covid-19.

We hope this paper will help all organisations in Gloucestershire from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through to larger organisations to support their staff and managers with mental wellbeing. Some of the content is particularly relevant for businesses with staff who are in public facing roles, affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

If you are a leader or manager and want to know more about how you can sustain and improve the wellbeing of your workforce, then the following pages will be able to help you understand possible psychological needs of the workforce that have arisen due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

**This document also aims to provide practical recommendations to support individuals at management and organisational level.**



# British Psychological Society guidance on different psychological responses & how to provide support

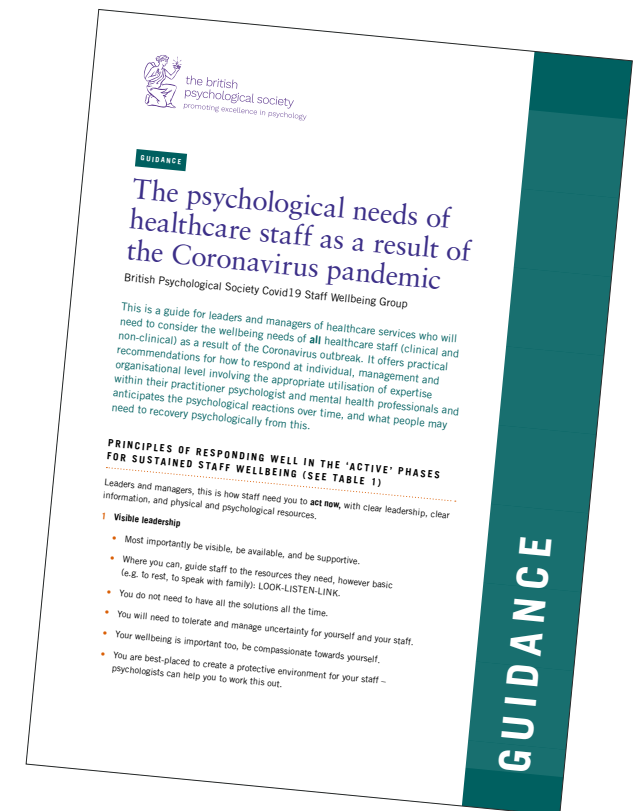
**This BPS paper specifically focuses on healthcare staff, but the premise can be applied to all workforces. For those that have been working in customer facing roles this guidance may be particularly relevant.**

The BPS guidance notes that it is likely that staff will experience three psychological response phases as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. Preparation Phase, Active Phase and the Recovery Phase are described in more detail with practical recommendations on how an employer can respond in order to support staff wellbeing.

You may find this document useful to consider as part of the overall wellbeing strategy for your organisation.

[You can read the summary and download the 5 page guide on the BPS website here.](#)

Hopefully this document will help you to understand your workforce's current psychological response; or put another way their wellbeing and morale levels. It offers insight to help leaders and managers spot the signs of different psychological responses to our current challenges in the country.



# Embedding wellbeing support within your organisation

**One way to do this is to use existing staff management systems as a means of offering mental health and wellbeing support to your workforce such as:**

- One-to-One Supervisions – have conversations about how it is ok to not be ok (normalising psychological responses), offering informal or more structured support as required
- Appraisals – recognising achievement during a time of adversity, providing thanks in a formal way
- Team meetings – time for reflection on past events that have been challenging, recognising what has been learnt from these events, an opportunity for peer support

Some workers may feel uncomfortable talking to their line manager about how they are feeling. You could consider implementing a peer support system with wellbeing champions trained to listen and signpost, or simply make sure that information about how to get help is promoted and shared across your workforce.

Also, see the local wellbeing support and National resources sections below for alternative means of seeking support.

## **Training**

To equip leaders and managers to have better conversations about mental health and wellbeing, training is important. Feeling confident and knowledgeable to support your workforce in this way is helpful and leads to better outcomes.

**To find out more about training opportunities see the Local Training section.**

# Supporting staff that are vulnerable or more at-risk

**Leaders and managers should carefully consider individuals within their workforce that may have been more impacted by Covid-19 and the subsequent effect on their mental health and wellbeing.**

This could include the following groups:

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Groups
- Carers
- Frontline health and social care workers
- New mothers and parents of new-borns
- Older adults
- People recently bereaved
- Those living alone or self-isolating
- Those recently discharged from hospital
- Those that have been shielding – being considered 'extremely clinically vulnerable'
- Those that have been temporarily laid off / made redundant
- Those that have long-term health conditions
- Those with existing mental health needs
- Those with Learning Disabilities and/or Autism
- Those working from home or remotely
- Volunteers
- Young People

You will find additional information for these groups on the Looking after Your Wellbeing pages on the [Gloucestershire County Council website here](#).

## **Risk assessments**

A risk assessment for any vulnerable group is essential, especially for those unable to work from home, so may be exposed to the virus in the workplace. There is some good national guidance for employers which includes the following

- The British Association for Social Work provide a [covid-19-staff-risk-assessment-guide-and-flowchart here](#)
- The HSE have a comprehensive guide to [covid risk assessments on their website here](#)



# Working from home

Whilst working from home has its advantages, it can also be difficult for people, which may lead to a deterioration of their mental health and wellbeing. The physical environment may not be appropriate, perhaps an uncomfortable workstation or a room temperature that is too cold / hot. There may be other people at home making it difficult to have conversations or concentrate. Alternatively, people may feel isolated and miss the support that they would normally have in the workplace.



The [top tips for supporting a remote workforce](#) that were put together by our Healthy Workplace Team at the start of this pandemic still very relevant for ideas links and information.

Active Gloucestershire



Active Gloucestershire has a [good blog here with tips for working from home](#) that you may want to share with your staff.

**MENTAL HEALTH AT WORK**

The Mental Health at Work website includes a Coronavirus resourceful toolkit: [Coping with the challenges of working from home](#) which can be found here.

# Promoting the Five Ways to Wellbeing within the Workplace

**Introducing the Five Ways to Wellbeing within your organisation can be a positive way of improving people's physical and mental health. This could be at an informal level or introduced in a more structured way, such as part of a weekly team meeting where one aspect of the Five Ways is considered.**

What are they and what does this look like in the workplace?

**Connect** with the people around you, your colleagues, customers, clients

**Be active** - go for a walk or run, step outside at lunchtime, hold a walking meeting

**Give** - do something nice for a colleague, thank a team member, volunteer your time

**Keep Learning** – take on a new responsibility at work, engage with training

**Take notice** - remark on the unusual, notice changes, savour the moment

The NHS provides [further insight here including some really good do's and don'ts](#).

The Looking after Your Wellbeing web pages on the Gloucestershire County Council website talks more about the [benefits of the Five Ways to Wellbeing here](#).



# Local wellbeing support

It is useful for leaders and managers to find out more about the local resources that are available to them so they are able to effectively signpost their workforce who may be struggling to find the appropriate service.



Providing free support for local employers of any size, with a comprehensive framework to guide you through all aspects of health and wellbeing in the workplace. Contact the team to find out more.

Freephone: **0800 122 3788**

Email: [workplaces@hlsqos.org](mailto:workplaces@hlsqos.org)

Visit [their website](#), which is full of tips, ideas and guidance on how to get started with your workplace wellbeing strategy. They have brought together a wide range of free, trusted and government supported resources to help businesses work through their framework.

For more ideas on promoting and supporting positive mental wellbeing in the workplace have a look at the Mental Wellbeing and Stress Reduction Pages from [Healthy Workplaces Gloucestershire here](#).



## Gloucestershire County Council

There is a comprehensive guide on the [Looking After Your Wellbeing pages](#), which offers advice on how to follow the '5 ways to Wellbeing' model, as well as a comprehensive list of local and national mental health support services.

GLOW – Gloucestershire Positive Actions for better Mental Wellbeing. Show your organisation's commitment to this initiative by [declaring your pledge here](#).



The Access to Work Mental Health Support Service in Gloucestershire is a free service to help you manage your mental health at work. [Find out more here](#).



# National resources

## **CIPD,**

in collaboration with Mind, has developed a [People managers' guide to mental health at work](#). There is advice, suggestions and tips on how to have conversations around mental health and wellbeing in the workplace, as well as facts and information on mental health. They also have a new comprehensive section on [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Mental health support for employees](#).

## **Health and Safety Executive (HSE)**

offer [Advice for managers on mental ill health conditions](#) and a [Talking Toolkit: preventing work related stress](#) on their website. If your company does not yet have one, it is worth developing a stress policy. The Health and Safety Executive offer advice and an example [stress policy](#) on their website.

## **Mental Health at Work**

have collated information on [Coronavirus and Isolation: supporting yourself and your colleagues](#).

## **Mental Health First Aid England**

offer [mental health training](#), both as online and face-to-face options. They have a [wide range of free seminars](#) on their website, covering topics such as managing mental health in different sectors and supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues.

## **Mental Health Foundation**

has put together information on [Looking after your mental health while working during the coronavirus outbreak](#). They also have published a guide on [How to support mental health at work](#) for employers.

## **Public Health England,**

in partnership with Business in the Community, have produced a toolkit called [COVID-19: employee health and wellbeing](#) to support employers.

## **Time to Change**

is a growing social movement working to change the way we all think and act about mental health problems. There are [many free workplace resources](#) on their website that can be used to show employees that you are open to talking about mental wellbeing, making them more likely to open up.



# Local training



**Gloucestershire County Council has developed training resources for professionals and volunteers that includes:**

- Mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus outbreak – accessible to all, which gives an overview of what mental wellbeing is and how it is likely to be affected during the coronavirus pandemic
- Remote Psychological First Aid – accessible to all but is particularly relevant to NHS and social welfare staff, first responders and co-ordinators of community-led initiatives providing supportive, practical assistance to those people who have been exposed to serious stressors
- A conversation guide (or “script”) for supporting people through emotional distress to help those who may be contacting vulnerable people or people in states of emotional distress. It includes guidance on wording, appropriate questions to ask, how to phrase your questions, things to be aware of when speaking with someone, the types of support that can be put in place and signposting information
- Suicide Prevention Training online is also available locally through the [Zero Suicide Alliance](#)

Healthy  
lifestyles  
Gloucestershire

**Healthy Lifestyles Gloucestershire offers a Mental Health First Aid half-day course**

that is funded training for charities and public sector organisations.

To find out more, please phone **0800 1223788**