



BAA HEADS OF SERVICE - HEALTH AND WELLBEING

As Heads of Service and Service leaders we have to look after the health and wellbeing, including mental wellbeing, of all our teams in these unprecedented times. We have had very little time to react to this but there have been some really useful suggestions for all that came out of the BAA HOS meeting.

The clear message throughout is to stay connected.

Support for Heads of Service/Leads?

First, we need to ensure that we have support. Apart from our own Trust, where can we turn to for advice? We need to support each other. Being a leader of our teams can still be a lonely place for us, especially when we need to make some difficult decisions about who may be suitable for re-deployment, who can work from home and who comes under the risk categories.

BAA will be hosting online meetings every 2 weeks for as long as possible to support Heads of Service and others who would like to join use.

What can we do for our teams?

How do we support our teams stress and anxiety and who will be doing this when they are working in areas they are not used to and possibly with very fragile people? It is important that they know we are supporting them.

Staying connected

Several services have already set up online groups and videoconferencing. The most popular so far is WhatsApp. Some have found that two groups work – one for general supportive chatter and one for important information. Teams need to have both if possible.

Other suggestions are Microsoft Teams; Zoom (free for 40 minutes each time); Star Leaf; Workplace and Siilo (this is encrypted). Some can be accessed via Apps. Some services are using these to have regular online meetings at set times and to make daily decisions on staffing rotas. We need to be mindful that any information we need to discuss needs to be done in normal working hours, but we can be there 'out of hours' for support.

We need to be mindful of those who do not use Apps or have difficulty getting online from home. Ensure that e-mails can be used to pass information when needed. For those who are using any of these methods, the feedback is very positive.

Support for mental health and wellbeing

Most Trusts have their own staff support resources via employee health and wellbeing. There are also some useful Apps that everyone can access for relaxation, stress and anxiety relief, general mindfulness. At the present time [Headspace](#) (app) is offering free access for NHS staff until December. You just need to register with your NHS email [here](#).

NHS in Mind have free resources to help NHS staff with high anxiety, panic and fatigue:
<https://www.nhsinmind.co.uk>.

Keyworker support

There was a lot of discussion around access to schooling for NHS staff. There appears to be confused messages. Some schools are only allowing pupils in where *both* parents are classed as frontline staff, others will take children if there is just one key worker in the family. This can add to the pressure and stress on families and the ability for staff to be able to work. People are advised to contact your HR departments who may be able to provide a letter to help support you. And speak to the Head of your child's school.

Flexibility will be key, and we will need to risk assess those of our teams where getting into work may be an issue. We are aware that a few staff will be anxious and not wish to come into work. The NHS options are that they can take annual leave or unpaid leave if this is the case and they are unable to carry out any work at home.

Some services have already started redeployment, and this will be taking many of us out of our 'comfort zone'. We wish you all the best for all your endeavours and please keep up to date with BAA. Any useful information please send to us and we will add these to the website.

Other app and podcast recommendations

- The [Insight Timer](#) app offers a vast collection of free guided meditations for anxiety, stress and much more. There is a helpful section for beginners who wish to learn to meditate, cope with anxiety, handle stress, improve your sleep or help with mindfulness at work.
- [Ten Percent Happier](#), a podcast and meditation app, offers a free sanity guide.
- Andrew Weil demonstrates a speedy intervention for bodily calm, the 4-7-8 breathing technique on his [website](#).
- The meditation teacher Jack Kornfield explores Buddhist paths to peace of mind amid the pandemic in a [Tim Ferriss Show](#) podcast.
- [The Unwinding Anxiety app](#), developed by American psychiatric researcher Judson Brewer, adapts traditional mindfulness practices to target the modern epidemic of anxiety.
- [Three Jungian analysts](#) discuss the deeper meanings and unexpected opportunities of the coronavirus outbreak in their podcast.
- [The Calm app](#) is the #1 app for Sleep, Meditation and Relaxation, with over 50 million downloads and over 700,000 5-star reviews, that helps with mental fitness, relaxation and sleep.

Bereavement and counselling support

Some members of your team are likely to be affected in one of several ways during the Covid-19 outbreak. If counselling or bereavement support is needed, the first place to check is with your line manager/Trust. Most Trusts will already have their own bereavement services and counselling in place, so make sure you access those services.

If there isn't any support in place, you can look external to organisations such as the [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy](#) or an employee assistant programme such as [Lifeworks](#). BAA is looking at how it can support members further during this, potentially, distressing time.