

Personal Tutor checklist for Healthcare Students on ward placements during Covid-19

The purpose of the checklist is to ensure students are looking after their wellbeing and practising self-care also to identify any students who might be struggling.

It's essential to discuss the importance of prioritising our basic daily needs to protect our physical and mental health, particularly during times of stress. For example, good diet, enough fluids, exercise, enough quality sleep, connecting with others.

1. How are they sleeping? *(adequate sleep improves concentration, refreshes the body and restores energy)*
2. Are they eating regular healthy meals? *(A balanced diet improves immunity and makes you feel healthy)*
3. Are they drinking plenty of fluids? *(Stress the importance of staying hydrated)*
4. Are they participating in any form of exercise? *(important for physical and mental health)*
5. Are they connecting with family and friends? *(How regular is this?)*
6. Are they getting adequate downtime between shifts? *(What are they doing to relax?)*

If they are only meeting some or none of the above they might be at higher risk of developing poor mental health.

Further questions to identify more vulnerable students:

7. Are they feeling well supported on placement?
8. Do they have any caring responsibilities e.g. children, elderly relatives?
9. Who do they live with? *(If they live alone, ask for their consent to refer to student support services for extra contact)*
10. Are they currently struggling with their mental health? *(If yes, ascertain whether they feel they are managing this, whether they have reached out for extra support, if not, do they know how to access support. If appropriate you can also advise about Big White wall, self-help apps, staff counselling service, therapeutic listening service, staff counselling helpline)*

Pathways and Signposting

The UK government have approached all NHS hospitals nationally to request that they support all staff during the Covid-19 pandemic using the 3 Pillars of Health and Wellbeing i.e. Social, Physical and Emotional. Therefore all hospitals across the country have specific plans and resources in place to provide a coordinated approach to supporting staff. Students will be paid members of staff and should be able to access the same support as any member of staff at the hospital trusts where they are completing their placement.

As Personal Tutors you will be the first point of contact and support for students whilst on placement. The following has been put together as guidance for you whilst supporting students and advice regarding appropriate pathways for students who are experiencing mental health difficulties.

- WHO and PHE recommend that short interventions, for example, Psychological First Aid, Diffusing, Stress Management and Self help are the most appropriate strategies when supporting clinical staff during the pandemic.
- There will be a 2 hour training session provided via Zoom or Teams by Jan Summerfield Head of Staff Support and Counselling at Combined Healthcare, this is being offered to **all** personal tutors. The training will equip you with the necessary skills for supporting students in **Diffusing techniques, Stress Management and Fostering Self Help**. It is recommended that everyone participate in this when it becomes available. **Pending Confirmation by Jan**
- Counselling is **not** recommended for trauma associated with immediate experiences during the pandemic, counselling would only be advised if someone is experiencing symptoms associated with trauma months after the immediate stresses are no longer evident.
- With this in mind, if a student is experiencing distress and symptoms due to ongoing difficulties with their mental health, the **Staff Counselling Services** are deemed to be more appropriate than student counselling services during this time. Staff counselling services are functional 24 hours a day to offer flexibility around shift patterns. Also if a student is placed out of the area they will have a better knowledge of external local mental health services should the student require signposting. ***Students should be signposted to the relevant service within the Trust they have been placed.***
- **Student Support Services** at both Keele and Staffordshire University are fully operational and offering remote support. If a student is living alone, is a parent to young children or a carer to someone else at home, it would be advisable to gain consent to speak to Student Services who can offer them extra support. [Keele Student Support](#) or [Staffordshire Uni Students](#)

- If you have any concerns regarding **Safeguarding** or **Fitness to Practice** follow the usual procedure in place at the University, including alerting Student Support Services.
- **Staffordshire University is working in partnership with Keele University** to ensure that healthcare students are well supported. So, with this in mind we have set up a joint arrangement for students to access support from Mental Health Practitioners/ Wellbeing Advisors and/or Counsellors, in the form of a **Therapeutic Listening Service**. Within these current circumstances they may need someone to talk to and share concerns, experiences, feelings and benefit from someone with therapeutic listening skills. **The hours of availability will be 7pm – 10:30pm and 9am-11am, seven days a week apart from Bank Holidays.** To access the **Listening Service** you can email: nhsstudent@staffs.ac.uk -. Please leave your name, and telephone contact details so that our Mental Health and Wellbeing professional can contact you.
- **Recommended APPS** the following are currently **available to all NHS staff for free until December 31st 2020.** The RCN suggests [Headspace](#), [Unmind](#), [Sleepio](#), [Daylight](#)
- **NHS Helpline - NHS Staff FRONTLINE phone and text line** is also available for mental health support for NHS staff. Phone lines are open between 7am and 11pm every day, alongside a 24/7 text service. Phone **0300 131 7000** or text **FRONTLINE** to **85258**.