

GUIDANCE FOR SUPPORTING THE TRAUMA-FOCUSED WELLBEING PLAN



A guidance document
for line managers and
colleagues to support
the implementation of
the Trauma-Focused
Wellbeing Plan



Liverpool University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust



WHAT IS THE TRAUMA- FOCUSED WELL-BEING PLAN?

The Trauma-Focused Well-being Plan (which can be accessed via QR code above) is designed for staff who may be experiencing difficulties with their well-being as a result of experiencing trauma. It will help them (and you) to think about how their difficulties may be impacting them and to think about any support they may need in the workplace.

It aims to support staff to manage their well-being in and outside of work and create a platform in which conversations about well-being and adjustments can happen. This is a document supported by best practice guidelines and the evidence base, it should not be considered mandatory, rigid, or exhaustive.



HOW SHOULD IT BE USED?

The Trauma-Focused Well-being Plan should be used as a tool to facilitate ongoing conversations around an individual's well-being and support needs in the workplace.

When scheduling a meeting with staff to discuss the Trauma-Focused Well-being Plan, it would be helpful to:

- Assure them that the meeting and anything included in the Trauma-Focused Well-being Plan will be held confidentially. The staff member may wish to share this with others if they feel this is appropriate.
- Make clear that the focus is on supporting the individual to be well in the workplace.
- Confirm that any actions you take as a manager are recorded and timeframes agreed.
- Ask the individual if they would like a referral to Occupational Health to discuss any reasonable adjustments further.



WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT STAFF?

It is important that staff feel able to talk, formally and informally, about their well-being and any difficulties this may lead to in their work.

Staff in NHS settings are more likely to experience difficulties as a result of trauma (during or outside of work), so it is best to identify this as early as possible. Some signs you might notice in staff members if they are struggling with the impact of trauma may be that they are avoiding certain areas/tasks. There are further examples of signs of trauma in the corresponding *Understanding Trauma* document. If their well-being is heavily impacted, you can encourage an early referral to occupational health or suggest they see their GP.

You're not expected to be an expert in mental health. If you don't know what to say, remember that listening will let them know you are there. Your job in conversations about well-being is to empower the person. Ask "what do you think would help?", and give information rather than advice.

TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH & TRAUMA

While sometimes it may feel uncomfortable to talk about mental health and well-being, simply letting someone know you are open to conversations can make a big difference. It is vital not to underestimate the importance of just being there for someone.

Pick the Environment

Pick an environment where the person will feel comfortable so you can talk without distraction. This might be going for a coffee or finding a quiet, confidential space away from where you are usually based.

Here are some suggestions on beginning to talk well-being:

- You don't seem yourself lately, what's going on?
- Tell me about what's happening for you
- I've noticed you have been struggling recently, is there anything you'd like to talk about?

Talking and Listening

The key within your interaction is that you're not trying to fix or find a solution. What would help one person will be different for another, so we're not trying to give advice as a first response to someone talking about struggles or difficulties.

Listen carefully to what they are saying. Try not to interrupt while they are talking and leave any comments or queries you may have until they have finished.

TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH & TRAUMA

Don't try to silver line the situation or make the person feel better about what they are telling you, e.g., if they tell you they feel worthless, and we respond "no you're not, don't be silly", as this might invalidate their feelings.

Some phrases that may be useful in encouraging them to talk about how they are really feeling while showing you care:

- Take your time, there's no rush
- It sounds like you're going through a tough time
- Please tell me more so I can understand what is happening for you

Comments such as "what happened next" or simply stating "I understand" can reinforce that you are actively listening and paying attention to what they are saying.

Reflect back and clarify. If they say something that isn't clear and you don't know what they mean, repeat back what they have said and ask them to explain. Paraphrasing what they have said back to them can also help to reinforce your interest and understanding.

Let them know you are thankful that they have shared what they are going through. Let them know you understand how hard it is to talk to someone about how they are feeling and reassure them that they have taken a positive step by talking about what is happening.

TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH & TRAUMA

The most important thing you can do at this time is to listen and show understanding, rather than give advice. Using phrases like “what can we do to make things better?” and “I’m here for you” lets them know you are supportive of them. You don’t have to have all the right answers, but are there to help if they need it.

It is also important to remember to respect their privacy, and don’t share anything you have spoken about without consent unless you are concerned someone may be at risk of harm.

Your Role as a Supporter

Reassure them they are not alone, and there is hope that things can get better.

Be patient and understanding. It is important to remember that setbacks will occur. Help them overcome any setbacks and ask questions such as “What can I do to support you in this?”

Check in with them frequently to see how they are doing. This shows that you care about them and provides an opportunity to talk if they need further support or adjustments in work.

Supporting someone else can be draining on your own mental health and well-being. Remember you need to look after yourself to ensure you are well enough to support others.

THEIR JOURNEY SO FAR

In this section, staff members are encouraged to use this space to think about how they have come to this point in their lives. This might include events that have happened to them, and coping skills that they have learnt. Holding space for the staff members' experiences is intended to help them see how far they have come, what they have tried regarding supporting themselves, and what they might still need some help with.

It might be helpful to review this with the staff member (if they are happy to), so that you can better understand their past experiences.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THEM?

This section asks staff members to think about their values, or, what things are most important to them. When we are not living in alignment with our values this can have a negative impact on our well-being. By consciously thinking about what values are most important to them, staff members can start to consider whether they are currently supporting themselves in a way that is consistent with their values and, if not, whether there is anything they can do differently to rectify that.

It might be helpful to have a conversation with the staff member about whether there is anything currently preventing them from engaging in activities that they value, and if there is anything you can think of together to support this. Examples include:

- If they value time with colleagues, trying to arrange for them to take their lunch with another person if possible.
- If they value organisation and meeting deadlines, try to reduce workload where possible so this is manageable.

WHAT KEEPS THEM WELL?

This section asks staff members to think about the things in their lives that make them happy and improve their well-being. Sometimes when we are having a hard time, it can be easy to lose sight of the things that make us smile, so the purpose of this section is to encourage staff to think about this and remind them of what they may already be doing to help themselves.

It might be helpful to discuss these with the staff member and see whether there is anything in their list that takes place during work hours or could be introduced during work hours or a break. Examples include:

- Things that they enjoy.
- Things that they need every day.
- Things that make them feel good about themselves.
- Things that give them a sense of achievement.

HOW DO THEY COPE WHEN THINGS GET TOUGH?

In this section staff members are invited to think about the coping mechanisms they already have in place when they are starting to find things more difficult. In doing this, it is hoped that some of these strategies will be transferable to the work environment.

It might be helpful to use this information to have conversations around how you can support the individual to practice these skills in situations that may be triggering. Examples of this might include:

- Identifying a space that they can take five minutes out if needed.
- Allowing time for supportive conversations following triggering events.
- Being aware of items the individual may have supportive, e.g. fidget rings, calming scents, sensory items.

WHAT MIGHT BE DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO MANAGE?

Consider with the individual the situations they have identified as being difficult to manage. Have some open conversations about when these might occur at work and any ways to minimise the impact they may have. Unfortunately, sometimes it isn't possible to ensure the person is never exposed to these situations, but in understanding what they might be, we can be aware of when they might need extra support.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS THEY ARE STRUGGLING?

This traffic light system is designed to support thinking about what might and might not be apparent to themselves and others when they are struggling. With this part of the plan, consider what you might notice in that person when are struggling (e.g., shaking, unable to focus). This will help you to recognise when encouraging the use of coping strategies may be helpful.





WHAT MIGHT HELP THEM IN WORK?

This section helps to bring together the previous pages into one comprehensive plan. It is up to the individual how they want to write this plan, however it should be specific to situations and accessible coping strategies in work.

Together, you can look at the situations that they may find difficult, and from that have conversations around what specifically might help for those situations. It might be that each situations has several different possible coping strategies, depending on the impact it has. It could be helpful to use the signs of struggling traffic light system to identify which strategies might be helpful in which situations.

If there are some points that may be difficult to implement between yourselves, at this point a referral to Occupational Health or the Staff Support Psychology Service can be considered. The QR code above links to the referral form.



ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW?

Where do I keep it?

Any information provided by an individual, either online or in paper format, is sensitive data and must be kept securely. We advise you follow HR's privacy policy.

Can it be updated?

The Trauma-Focused Well-being Plan can act as a live document, which can be revisited as the health and wellbeing of the individual changes or if their needs change.

Sharing the Trauma-Focused Well-being Plan

The Trauma-Focused Well-being Plan can be used to help an individual to understand their needs, but it's crucial that they consent for their information to be shared.

The individual is under no obligation to share the content of their Trauma-Focused Well-being Plan with line managers or their staff team.

If you'd like to learn more about trauma and mental health, scan the QR code above to the psychoeducation document "Understanding Trauma".

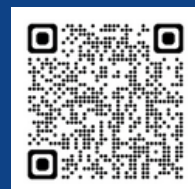




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This document was created by trainee clinical psychologists on behalf of the Staff Support Psychology Service within LUHFT.

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