

Guidance for Leaders

Supporting Our Workforce to Stay Well Through Winter

Supporting the health and wellbeing of our workforce is always essential. When we take care of our people, they are better equipped to deliver the high-quality care our patients and service users need.

Across Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland, organisations have been working hard to look after staff, particularly in light of challenges such as workforce vacancies, increasing demands, and the long-term impact of recent years on overall staff wellbeing. These pressures can be even more pronounced during the winter months, when services are stretched even further.

As we navigate through the busy winter period, it is important to ensure that we continue prioritising our workforce's health and wellbeing. By doing so, we support both the growth and resilience of our workforce to meet rising demands across health and social care.

This document highlights key wellbeing initiatives and interventions available to help support our teams through the coming winter season.

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Wellbeing Conversations:

Make sure all staff have the chance to talk about their health and wellbeing and feel supported in addressing their needs and concerns. These conversations could happen with their manager or a trusted colleague, like a health and wellbeing champion, a trade union representative, someone from a professional body, or a staff network representative.

During these chats, staff can learn about resources available to them, including systemwide wellbeing tools and local services like Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). Financial support may also be an option. Managers should also prioritise their own health and wellbeing, seeking support to manage stress and stay proactive.

Team members supporting each other informally is also key to creating a healthy workplace. Managers can help by creating opportunities and safe spaces for colleagues to share support, especially after challenging situations. Staff should also feel encouraged to reach out if they notice a colleague who may need help.

Improve the quality of your conversations to help support people to manage and improve their own health and wellbeing with [Making Every Contact Count, Healthy Conversation Skills Training](#). On the webpage find plenty of tools support you in having a healthy conversation including a 45min e-learning, healthy conversations concept postcard and access to book onto the full training.

If you still aren't sure how to have a wellbeing conversation, check out our [prompts for a wellbeing conversation document](#) which guides how to plan and deliver a wellbeing conversation as well as some helpful open questions for you to consider asking.

Prompts for a wellbeing conversation:

Be prepared:
Familiarise yourself with the resources and support available before starting the conversation to avoid unnecessary delays.

Choose the right time and place:
Think about when and where the conversation will take place. If working remotely, consider the challenges of finding a private moment. Ask your team member when it's convenient for them to ensure the conversation is uninterrupted.

Ask open-ended questions:
Encourage discussion by asking questions like, "How can we work together to support your wellbeing?" Open-ended questions help the conversation flow naturally.

Practice active listening:
Avoid interrupting and allow pauses so the person can reflect and gather their thoughts.

Stay open and non-judgmental:
Everyone's circumstances and emotions are different! Be mindful that people may face unique challenges, like working from home, caregiving responsibilities, or childminding.

Collaborate when possible:
Aim to find solutions together and remember there are other colleagues or resources available to help if needed.

Summarise the conversation:
Clearly outline any agreed actions to ensure both sides understand. This can be done through email or by using tools like the Wellbeing Review template.

Follow up regularly:
Schedule consistent one-on-one check-ins and team meetings to ensure everyone feels supported and stays connected.

Open questions to ask during a wellbeing conversation:



How are you feeling?

What's going well for you right now? What challenges are you facing?
• Have you experienced any health issues recently?
• Are you a caregiver for a child, elderly person, or someone else?
• Have you recently experienced a loss or bereavement?
• Are you worried about financial stability?

What is your biggest concern at the moment?
What do you need to address this concern?

Who supports you at work and outside of work?
Would additional support help? If so, what kind of support do you think would be most beneficial?

Are you okay? If not, have you reached out to someone for help? (mention available resources like team members, staff groups, Employee Assistance Program, Occupational Health, and LLR Talking Therapies)
What do you usually do to take care of yourself? Have you been able to keep up with those activities?

Are you getting enough sleep?
Are you taking regular breaks?
Are you eating well and staying hydrated?

Finally, ask again: Are you sure you're okay?



Supporting Staff with Rest and Wellbeing:

Supporting staff with rest and wellbeing is essential for maintaining a healthy, productive, and motivated workforce. Regular breaks and access to proper facilities help employees recharge, reduce stress, and prevent burnout, enabling them to perform at their best. Prioritising rest not only enhances individual health and morale but also fosters a positive team culture where people feel valued and supported. By addressing the physical and emotional needs of staff, organisations can improve overall resilience, retention, and the quality of service delivered.

Below are some things to consider for:

- **Encourage and protect rest breaks:** Rest breaks are essential for staff to step away from work, recharge, and recover. Managers should make sure everyone takes their breaks as needed and remind the team of their importance. Highlight rest areas available and set an example by taking breaks yourself.
- **Check in regularly:** Keep an eye on your team throughout their shift to ensure they are taking their breaks. Where you are not available to regularly check-in, why not consider diarising rest breaks when appropriate to ensure staff are reminded to take a break.
- **Provide access to facilities:** Make sure staff can easily access water, toilets, and places to store and heat food. If needed, think about adding extra facilities, especially for night shift workers. Find, create, and agree accessible comfortable rest areas where staff can recharge and connect with their peers for support.
- **Encourage the use of leave:** Make sure everyone can take their full annual leave allowance and feels encouraged to do so. Where needed, consider flexible working arrangements to support individual needs.

View the NHS's handy [Mental Wellbeing Tips](#) to share with your colleagues. You can send it in an email, add it to a newsletter and even print them out to put on staff notice boards, doors and beside desks! You can find local support and signposting on the [LLR 'Get In The Know' webpage](#).

More wellbeing resources can be found on [our webpage](#) (you can also use the QR code below). Consider scheduling these resources to share across the year. You can include a recurring wellbeing item in meetings, emails, newsletters or around the office.



Work Capacity Preparedness:

Seasonal illnesses will affect how much work your team can handle and managers should think ahead and support both their teams and themselves through these pressures.

Staff are encouraged to ensure that they are up to date on all their routine immunisations and seasonal (COVID-19 and flu) vaccinations. Routine vaccinations and immunisations include tetanus, diphtheria, polio, and MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) – these can be accessed free of charge via the GP or through an Occupational Health team. The MMR vaccine is particularly important for staff members who have contact with patients.

Information about which vaccinations to have and when to have them can be [found on the ICB website](#).

Here are some simple steps to help:

1. **Accept limits:** Be upfront about how seasonal illnesses will affect your team's ability to meet demands. Do not assume others can just take on more work without support.
2. **Support extra efforts:** If staff take on additional tasks, show understanding and flexibility. Be kind and work with them to balance their priorities with the needs of the business.
3. **Check in on outside pressures:** Ask employees about challenges they might be facing at home or elsewhere, this can be through a wellbeing conversation. Try to help them manage these, even if it is not always convenient for the business.
4. **Set a good example:** Do not overwork yourself or contact staff outside of work hours. Show your team that taking breaks and setting boundaries is important.
5. **Be honest but balanced:** Share your own challenges even if this includes staffing—but be careful not to burden your team with your problems, instead, ask they speak out about their own reality too. Focus on working together to find solutions.
6. **Encourage seeking help:** Make it normal to ask for help—whether it is from colleagues, managers, or professional services.
7. **Value your team:** Remember, your employees are the heart of your business. Ignoring stress and mental health issues can eventually lead to bigger problems.

Consider preparing your staff to find and use techniques to prioritise their workload making it less intimidating. The Eisenhower Matrix (also known as the Urgent-Important Matrix) is a popular method which divides tasks into four quadrants based on their immediacy and significance. Find a version of the matrix to share [on our webpage](#).



Communication for Better Teamwork:

Good communication is key to effective teamwork, especially during the busy winter season. To understand the basic principles of good communication and to check if you're incorporating the [seven C's of Communication, here's a short video by NHS Elect](#).



Here are some simple strategies to improve communication within health and social care teams during busy periods of work:

- **Hold regular team meetings:** Schedule regular team check-ins to touch base, share updates, discuss challenges, and address any concerns. These meetings create space for open conversations and ensure everyone is on the same page.
- **Practice active listening:** Listen carefully to your colleagues, understand their concerns, and show empathy. Create an environment where everyone feels heard, respected, and supported.
- **Keep records clear:** Make sure documentation is accurate, timely and up to date. Clear communication in records helps prevent misunderstandings and ensures smooth coordination, especially when it comes to patient or service user care.
- **Use technology effectively:** Take advantage of tools like secure messaging platforms or electronic health records to share information quickly and securely, even during busy times.

By following these tips, teams can work better together, provide high-quality care, and handle additional pressures more efficiently.

Build a Culture of Appreciation:

Creating a culture where team members feel valued can improve morale and strengthen teamwork. Here are some simple ideas to try:

- **Reflect on appreciation:** Ask team members to think about ways they can show appreciation to each other, such as inviting ideas, saying thank you, giving recognition for contributions, offering new responsibilities, or sharing a small gesture like a thank-you note or a treat. Write these ideas on a whiteboard or chart and keep it visible as a reminder.
- **Celebrate teamwork:** Encourage team members to share something they are proud of about how the team has worked together over the past month.
- **Acknowledge the good:** Ask everyone to think of something they have appreciated about a colleague in the past week—be specific, like a time they helped or supported you. Then, encourage them to share this appreciation directly with that person. A simple way to do this is to introduce a 'circle of appreciation' at the end of team meetings.

These activities can help foster a positive and supportive team environment.

Celebrate Team Efforts:

When times are tough, it is important to recognise and celebrate how the team pulls together to get things done. Take time to acknowledge what the team has achieved and use the opportunity to ask for ideas on how things could improve in the future.

Here are a few simple ways to celebrate:

- Plan a **team time out** where everyone can attend and participate.
- Consider a **team lunch** and ensure extra time is allocated to spend time to celebrate.
- Look into **funding opportunities** from your organisation, or local charities to improve your workplace.
- If possible, set aside **30 minutes at the start or end of the day** for an activity that supports wellbeing, either as a team or individually.
- Get a **date diarised now** for some time in the future, when you envisage work pressures to be reduced, to get the team together and celebrate achievements.

Celebrating together helps build team spirit and shows appreciation for everyone's hard work. Sometimes, acknowledgement via a card to the team is enough- it is about recognition and appreciation for what has been achieved together.

Share what is Already Available:

LLR Talking Therapies Services:

[LLR Talking Therapies, Vita Health Group](#)

[Podcasts](#)

[Webinars](#)

[Eventbrite session booking page](#)

Mental Wellbeing Tips:

[Mind- Tips for everyday wellbeing](#)

[Every Mind Matters- Mental Wellbeing Tips](#)

Support for Leaders around Mental Health:

[Mind- Supporting staff experiencing a mental health problem](#)

[Mind- Thriving at work guide](#)

[Mental Health Foundation- How to support mental health at work](#)

Additional Resources:

[LLR Staff Health and Wellbeing](#)

[LLR VCSE Directory](#)

[Joy App](#)

[Inspired to Care- Wellbeing & Support for Carers](#)

[Skills for Care Wellbeing Resources](#)

[Support available for NHS staff](#)

[Emotional and Mental Wellbeing Self Assessment](#)

Access all our wellbeing resources free to download on [our webpage](#)



#more good days
LLR

