

Taking Care of the Carers? A Checklist for NHS Board Members

This checklist sets out some of the questions NHS Board Members should be asking to obtain assurance that their respective health bodies have effective, efficient, and robust arrangements in place to support the wellbeing of their staff. The questions are aligned to the recommendations we have set out in our report – Taking Care of the Carers? How NHS bodies supported staff wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic

1.



What wellbeing services does the health body currently offer to staff?

The Board should have a clear understanding of the health body's current wellbeing offer to staff. In particular, the Board should seek to understand: (a) what provision has remained largely unchanged during the pandemic, (b) what provision has been enhanced during the pandemic, and (c) what new provision has been introduced during the pandemic. The Board should also seek to understand which services are available to all groups of staff and which services are available to particular groups of staff, such as staff at higher risk from COVID-19.

2.



How much do they cost?

The Board should have a clear understanding of the costs/resources associated with the health body's current wellbeing offer to staff and how they are funded.

3.



How accessible is the health body's current staff wellbeing offer?

The Board should have a clear understanding of how the health body's current wellbeing offer is promoted to and accessed by staff. In particular, the Board should seek to gain an understanding of staff experiences of accessing the services they feel they need and/or have been assessed as requiring in order to meet their wellbeing needs. Boards should seek assurance that appropriate action is being taken to address any issues or difficulties experienced by staff.

4.



How effective is the health body's current staff wellbeing offer?

The Board should have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of the health body's current staff wellbeing offer. In particular, the Board should seek to understand which services are the most effective and the least effective based on staff feedback and/or user evaluations. The Board should also consider any evidence which might be available on the clinical effectiveness of particular approaches and interventions adopted by the health body.

5.



Which wellbeing services should the health body offer to staff in the short-, medium-, and long-term?

The Board should consider which wellbeing services the health body should offer to staff initially in the short-term to deal with the immediate impact of the pandemic on the physical health and mental wellbeing of staff. Whilst the longer-term impact of the pandemic is difficult to quantify at this stage, Boards should nevertheless start to consider which wellbeing services will be required in the medium to long term.

In refreshing the health body's wellbeing offer to staff, Boards should consider the following questions in line with staff needs, staff feedback/user evaluations, evidence of clinical effectiveness, and value for money:

- which existing services should be scaled back or stopped altogether?
- which existing services should be enhanced or reconfigured?
- which new services should be piloted or introduced?

As part of this exercise, Boards should also seek to distinguish between services aimed at all staff groups and services required by particular groups of staff, such as those at higher risk from COVID-19 and those that have directly worked at the front-line throughout the pandemic.

6.



How should the health body deliver its wellbeing offer to staff?

Boards should have a clear understanding of the opportunities that exist to collaborate with other health bodies to procure, commission, and/or deliver wellbeing services on a joint basis particularly in specialist areas, such as psychotherapy. Boards should also seek to understand the opportunities that exist to share learning and resources more widely in respect of general approaches to staff wellbeing.

Boards should also have a clear understanding of how services will be funded with a view to providing stability, ensuring sustainability, and achieving value for money.

7.



How should the health body continue to engage with staff?

Boards should have a clear understanding of how the health body will continue to engage with staff to ensure they have meaningful opportunities to highlight their needs and share their views on a regular basis, particularly during the recovery phase of the pandemic. Boards should also seek to understand what arrangements are in place or will be put in place to engage meaningfully with underrepresented groups of staff, such as ethnic minority staff. Boards should also seek assurance that the health body's staff engagement arrangements compliment, rather than duplicate, other arrangements that might be in place at a national level.

8.



What assurance does the Board require going forward?

The Board should ensure there are robust arrangements in place to receive assurance on all relevant matters relating to staff wellbeing. The Board should provide clarity on which matters should be scrutinised by the relevant committee with responsibility for workforce matters and which matters should be reserved by the Board and/or reviewed by the Board on a regular basis (such as monitoring performance against key workforce indicators).