Raising Mental Health Awareness

The Coronavirus Pandemic has claimed the lives of over 35,000 people in the UK. For the UK's 1.3 million-plus care staff, many of whom work on the frontlines, the virus has shone a spotlight on their compassion, bravery and resilience. Care Staff have shown incredible resilience, but this has taken its toll and has potentially impact on peoples' mental health and wellbeing.

While nobody knows how many frontline carers will develop mental health issues in the future, it is likely that rates of burnout, psychological distress and PTSD will be high.

In this challenging landscape, how can Registered Managers protect their staff? What are the key indicators that something is not right and, most importantly, how can they help them to cope and recover from their experiences?

In Mental Health Awareness Week, QCS has referenced evidence-based best practice and guidance from several organisations, including the British Psychological Society, Age UK, The National Care Forum and TRICRES, to create this guide.

Key points

1 **Leadership is key**

In the crisis, outstanding Registered Managers and senior staff are demonstrating accessible visible and proactive leadership.

2 **Never be afraid to delegate**

Managers could enlist the help of experienced staff. Creating a 'buddy system', where senior care staff are paired with junior carers, can prove highly effective.

3 **Spotting the key indications of poor mental health**

Develop an overall awareness of what good mental looks like. Look out for changes in behaviour and appearance.

4 **Look after your own mental health in addition to helping others.**

Registered Managers might enlist the help of their line manager and peer support groups.

5 **Address mental health issues as and when they occur**

It's best to tackle distress, burnout and PTSD during the Pandemic rather than when it ends.

6 **Managers could check in with staff throughout the day**

Team meetings and coffee breaks present an ideal opportunity to check staff wellbeing.

7 **Find the right moment to reach out to staff**

Often a relaxed conversation over a tea or coffee is the best initial approach.

Raising Mental Health Awareness

8 **Patience and perseverance can break down barriers**

Staff may not choose to open-up straight away. It can take time to win their trust. Listening, comforting and supporting staff can often make the difference.

9 **Embedding a 'Safe' culture within a service is key**

Work in partnership with your care team to instil a culture where staff feel able to show their emotions.

10 **Managers could create new spaces**

Staff rooms are therapeutic environments for staff to de-stress, relax and process their thoughts.

11 **The best services make good use of technology**

Managers could enable video conferencing systems, which enable staff and service-users face-to-face contact with loved ones.

12 **Domiciliary Care staff**

For those feeling isolated, managers could provide one-to-one support by phone or video to aid wellbeing.

13 **Policies and Procedures**

Consider subscribing to a compliance management system, which enables Managers to supply care staff with the right guidance at the right time.

Useful Resources

The British Psychological Society
www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources

WHO (2020) Mental health and psychological consideration during the COVID-19 outbreak
https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?s-fvrsn=6d3578af_2

COVID-Minds
https://www.covidminds.org/empiricalpapers

COVID-19: living map of the evidence
http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/COVID19_MAP/covid_map_v8.html

Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine, Oxford COVID-19 Evidence Service
https://www.cebm.net/oxford-covid-19-evidence-service/

Centre for Mental Health
https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/

Skills for Care Registered Managers advice line
https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/support-for-registered-managers/Advice-line.aspx