



Issue 6 | Autumn 2020 Support Worker Newsletter

Welcome to the NMAHP Support Worker Newsletter

We hope you enjoy our newsletter which is aimed at Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions (NMAHP) Support Workers across health and care. We plan to publish this newsletter quarterly, look out for the next issue coming Winter 2020/21.



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Get in touch at HCSW@nes.scot.nhs.uk and tell us what you think – we'd love to hear from you – your voice matters.

This newsletter includes:

- **NHS e-mail migration – your newsletter subscription**
- **** SPOTLIGHT: Insights from Support Workers during the pandemic**
- **Wellbeing and resilience**
- **HCSW Induction Standards and Codes**
- **TURAS Professional Portfolio**
- **Future events and webinars**
- **Support Worker learning and development Turas site**

NHS e-mail migration – your newsletter subscription

Due to the ongoing changes to all NHS email addresses in Scotland you will be required to make updates to your contact information on our HCSW newsletter distribution list if you would like to continue to receive it.



We ask that you update your preferences. You can do this by selecting [update your preferences](#). You then select “**email me a link**” and you will be sent a link which you can use to provide your new email address.

Experiences from Support Workers during the pandemic

We recognise that the last few months have been challenging in a variety of ways. Services have been suspended, staff redeployed, new teams rapidly formed and all this happening in fast-paced environments to deal with the impact of COVID-19.

We asked the HCSW Advisory Group to share their experiences during the pandemic and how this affected their role. This is what they had to say:

I and my 5 colleagues worked together to develop and deliver a programme of face-to-face small group induction courses for redeployed staff and students. We received really powerful feedback from medical students working as HCSWs via staff bank.

Supporting a COVID-19 unit meant learning new skills in risk assessment and close working with the Infection Control Manager

Routine admissions stopped, no face-to-face contact, all virtual. Most of my AHP support worker colleagues were redeployed, so I felt quite isolated in the community hospital.

I worked from home supporting unpaid carers. All respite services ceased, placing increasing stress on carers.

I have experienced some emotionally draining conversations with carers who often feel forgotten and invisible.

We are sharing two stories from support workers highlighting the positives they have taken from their experiences during COVID-19.

*** Spotlight Story ***



Donna Coulter, MSK Physiotherapy Support Worker, NHS Dumfries & Galloway

“I have worked with the Community Nursing team, part time for 16 years. When my Physiotherapy service changed overnight due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was no longer seeing multiple patients per day face-to-face but changing to telephone or virtual appointments, it was the obvious and easy decision that I would be redeployed full time to work with my Community Nursing family.

That’s not to say, that first morning I was a nervous wreck, I shouldn’t have worried; I was welcomed with open arms and felt part of the team straight away. I had an advantage; I mostly knew where everything was and what to do so hit the ground running, armed with my additional transferrable skills from my physio role.

We were kept busy every day, cleaning everything and anything we touched and washing our hands constantly! Visiting our patients in their homes was a scary thought, when mostly all other services had stopped, but patients still had to be seen and we continued seeing them. Dressed in our PPE and visiting the most vulnerable patients who had not seen anyone for days. Doing our best to keep them well, keep them moving and keeping them out of hospital but always in the back of your mind worrying that I might contract this awful virus and take it home to my family, thankfully touch wood, I have been lucky.

Night Shift was quickly introduced into our rota, another change, which is now here to stay. I worked all night and went home to join my bored, lonely teenagers asleep, as they had turned night into day! A frustrated and anxious husband, sent home on furlough, wondering if he would have a job to go back to. I dropped food parcels off to my parents, talking to them through a crack in the car window, terrified I might pass on what my daughter renamed as “Rona”. In our wee corner in Dumfries and Galloway, we have been some of the lucky ones. We have some of the most beautiful countryside and beautiful beaches to explore on our one walk a day adventure.

Thankfully things are looking up, kids returned to school, husband returned to work and three months to the day, I returned back to my physio post. Although not completely back to normal, I’m currently helping out my acute & rehab physio colleagues on the wards as our MSK service is not fully back up and running as before. Again, being resilient and adaptable makes it easier to jump from role to role and I’m learning too, I’ve started an SVQ which I hope to complete in the New Year.

I have made some beautiful new friends, we’ve had some laughs and giggles, we’ve eaten too many take aways, we’ve shared stories, supported one another. We’ve taught Granny’s to face time, we’ve danced in our PPE, we’ve cried and worried, but hopefully this journey is nearing its end and we have sight of over the rainbow. I’m ever hopeful things will return back to normal soon and we will be able to throw away our masks and once again hug our loved ones, go back to socialising, celebrate with one another and lie on a beach with a cocktail and think, WE BEAT YOU RONA!!”

*** Spotlight Story ***



Nicky Stewart – Speech and Language Support Worker, Adult Learning Disabilities and Mental Health, NHS Tayside/Dundee Heath and Social Care Partnership

“At the very start on the pandemic I was in contact with COVID-19 infected people so therefore isolated and stayed away from work for 2 weeks. During that time, I received a letter that said due to the medication I’m taking, I was to shield. I had mixed feelings about this – I would be protected at home but not able to support my colleagues or patients. However, I received everything I needed to carry out resource making at home so continued to work from home from the time I isolated. The first week was quiet, as I expected, then when ‘lockdown’ began in earnest my department - made up of 7 therapists, manager, secretary and me – met virtually to set out a plan of action and gather ideas to reach our vulnerable service user group and develop different ways to support both them and their carers in terms of their communication needs and any eating and drinking problems.

I was part of the team put together to develop what we named ‘Universal Activities’. These were to be activities service users and carers could carry out and ‘play’ but be based on supporting communication skills, as well as giving carers ideas and adding to their cache of knowledge and skills in terms of visual supports. We quickly realised that the printed activities needed an additional video support and therefore we started making videos of ourselves which could be accessed on YouTube. I had received training at work on iMovie editing previously, and this came in extremely useful. I spent some time at the start figuring out all the technical issues, but once we had done that, we got into a routine of meeting together, using templates for activity instructions which were laid out in a way advised by the other team who developed an evidence based accessible information layout, and found we were able to create an activity every week to email out to our mailing lists. We are currently carrying out a survey to find out how effective they are and make changes accordingly.

I also teamed up with a therapist to develop a virtual sensory story/Makaton group. We thought using everyday objects people could get hold of was important for easy involvement, and lots of calls and responses. We have the same short songs at the start and the end of the group with a different song that’s chosen by the service users before the story, which we always repeat. We usually get around 5 users joining the session, all of whom would usually have attended a Profound and Multiple Learning Disability Day Centre. The day centre staff technically facilitate the sessions. The sessions have evolved over time slightly and having regular ‘patient contact’ has been an important factor in sustaining my positive mental health over this time. The group has been so successful that we are now running a second identical group to get additional users to join, with further virtual groups in the planning.

I have always been busy at my work, but never more so than now. I am only in the office once or twice a week as we rotate our time there to ensure distancing and I am fully supported to work at home by both my department and our IT department. I know I have been extremely lucky to be able to not only keep doing my role but to also be part of developing new ways to support patients. I’m hoping that we can keep some of what we are learning but look forward to the time when I can see patients again.”

Wellbeing and resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all in different ways and continues to do so: physically, emotionally, socially and psychologically. Staff on the front line of health and social care services will experience varying levels of stress and distress at different points and times.

Remember we all need to look after ourselves first to ensure we are then able to take care of other people. There are a number of useful resources to support your wellbeing and resilience, we highlight a few that you might like to explore.



The Scottish Government have published [Clear Your Head](#) resource to give good practice tips for staying resilient during the pandemic. Well worth a visit.

Visit the [National Wellbeing Hub](#) to find information and advice for those working in health and care on everything from your everyday needs at home and work, to tips on coping, professional resources and where to find help.

[Self-care infographic with advice for working in a crisis](#) Key points to consider before you start work, during work and after your work.

[Going Home Checklist](#) provides advice to allow health and care staff to successfully switch off when leaving work. Take a look and see if this helps you and your colleagues.



In this brief [animation](#), Dr Russ Harris, author of the international best-seller *The Happiness Trap*, illustrates how to use ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and the fear, anxiety and worry that goes with it. It might not sound like your 'cup of tea', but why not give it a try, you never know.

HCSW Induction Standards and Codes

The last few months have really highlighted the importance of working safely. We are delighted to see through Twitter that HCSWs across the country are completing the HCSW Induction Standards. Congratulations to them.



Fiona and Chole, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary Johanna, Western General Hospital

Review of Induction Standards and Codes education resources

The Scottish Government mandatory Induction Standards and Codes for new healthcare support workers have been in place for over 10 years. Whilst the Standards themselves remain unchanged; a review of the educational resources that support the Induction Standards was initiated earlier this year.

We have been working with stakeholders from a variety of health boards across Scotland to review and update the workbook and guidance documents. Our thanks to everyone who has been involved. We are delighted to announce that the revised HCSW Workbook and reviewer's Guidance are now available to download and use. You can access these on [HCSW Toolkit](#).

TURAS | Professional Portfolio

Turas Professional Portfolio (recognition of prior learning) is available to all Support Workers who wish to use an individual educational Portfolio to record evidence of their learning. The Portfolio can be used to record evidence of learning from experience gained in the workplace and through life experience to obtain recognition (formal or informal).

How do I register for the RPL Professional Portfolio?

For all Support Workers in Scotland including the NHS, social care, voluntary and independent sectors, you can self-register at <https://www.turasnportfolio.nes.nhs.scot>

Future events and webinars

The HCSW team are working hard planning the next round of virtual events. Feedback from the HCSW Advisory Group and Education Network has been helpful in informing priority topic areas.

Look out for information on the next webinar in the series, planned for January 2021, around the HCSW Learning Framework, the four Pillars of Practice and how this can be used in practice to support HCSW learning and development.

Support Worker Learning and Development - Turas Learn site

On behalf of the team, thanks to everyone who participated in the survey to help inform and influence the site structure and content for the new Turas Learn site. We are now in full development mode, working hard to bring you the new site. We will keep you posted, so look out for updates.



We would love to hear from HCSWs or those working with and supporting HCSWs so we can help to share your stories of learning and development opportunities, journeys and projects happening locally with a wider audience. Contact the team at HCSW@nes.scot.nhs.uk

In the next edition we will explore:

Learning activity to support the four Pillars of Practice

Support Worker Turas Learn site

Future events and webinars



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