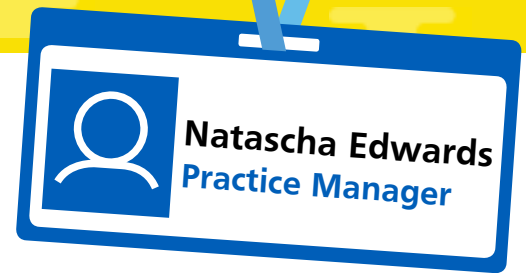


#LookingAfterYouToo
Coaching support for all
primary care staff

NHS



Case study



Role and context

Natascha has been a practice manager for a practice in Kent for four years. The practice is based in a more deprived area of Kent that has approximately 10,300 patients. Natascha explained that the practice has been through a period of change in the last few years, as three partners retired over the course of a year, and two new partners have taken over. Currently the practice is comprised of two partners, three salaried GPs, a nursing team and a pharmacist, and she views her role as “settling the ship through the change and managing the day-to-day running of the practice.”

The impact of COVID-19 was described as “massive”. Natascha reported that at the start of lockdown the practice was receiving over 600 calls a day from concerned patients, “an unprecedented number”, as well as having staff needing to take time off work, either through having contracted COVID-19 or having to socially isolate.

Challenge of COVID-19 on own wellbeing

Practice staff still working were under increased strain from workload in combination with high levels of anxiety regarding transmission risks, as despite perceptions of primary care, the practice remained open as patients still needed to be seen. Natascha was ensuring that the Practice kept up to date with the “constantly changing guidelines”, but also spent a lot of time trying to re-assure staff.

Being aware that the practice was going through a period of unprecedented change, and wanting to keep an element of positivity in the practice, she introduced a range of strategies including having daily huddles (which later on in the pandemic reduced to occurring every one-two weeks) and a ‘worries and positives’ board so staff could openly discuss their concerns, but also what had gone well. Natascha had previously used leadership coaching when the practice was going through the restructure, and when she saw the #LookingAfterYouToo service advertised she knew that coaching would be worthwhile. She says:

“Re-assuring staff is really difficult to do when you are not sure of things yourself.”

“Being a practice manager, you can sometimes feel you have a lot responsibility on your shoulders.”

“I thought I would crack up ... honestly at some points I thought I was going to lose it at my desk.”

How #LookingAfterYouToo coaching helped

Natascha recognised that the current way of working was not productive and wanted to try and enhance better team working across the practice. The coach helped her to recognise that all individuals can react to stressful situations differently, and thus provided her with strategies and methods about how to read this and broach difficult situations. Importantly, she found that the coaching provided “the headspace to process issues”, and that she did know how to deal with challenging situations, but she just needed “clarity to discuss what was happening and help in pulling out the answers.”

What she really appreciated was how the coach helped her to view what she had done in a more positive mindset, so instead of viewing responses as ‘firefighting’, it had been a period of ‘learning and growth’. As a result, she has started to consider the language that she used in team situations during more challenging conversations.

Throughout the sessions, Natascha reported that she “really felt listened to” by the coach and that there was a great sense of rapport. She described being encouraged to discuss concerns that she may not have had an alternative avenue to voice them to.

Personal impact

Natascha says the coaching sessions enabled her to try and view the situation from different team members viewpoints, and use the information that she has gained to encourage the team to work towards common goals, and the steps needed to reach them. In terms of the implications for her own wellbeing, Natascha says:

“The coaching has 100% helped me. There is no way I could have come up with some of these solutions on my own.”

Practice impact

Natasha says she was determined not to let the situation turn into a ‘pity party’, but wanted to use the COVID-19 challenge as a way of moving the practice forward as a team, to build resilience and to work collaboratively in the future.

“The coaching gave me the confidence and structure I needed in team settings. I kind of knew where I needed to go but didn’t quite know how to get there.”

#LookingAfterYouToo is free coaching support available to all primary care staff.

Book your session at a time that suits you.

Sessions are available 7 days a week, either by video or telephone.

people.nhs.uk/lookingafteryoutoo