

#LookingAfterYouToo
Coaching support for all
primary care staff

NHS



Case study



Role and context

The social prescriber was based in a large GP practice covering over 33,300 patients in the North East of England. The role was new to the practice, and they had only started the role in February, spending that first month designing the service to help people in the locality become involved in community groups and activities.

When the COVID-19 lockdown started, "I then had to spend the next month redesigning the service that I had just designed." As they could no longer do their patient facing role, they worked from home "trying to be as useful as I could", triaging emergencies, contacting shielding patients who may have been struggling to get prescriptions and dealing with urgent requests that had arisen as a result of lockdown.

The interviewee reported that the practice coped really well implementing the necessary changes and keeping up to date with policies and guidelines, and that existing systems and structures adapted really quickly to prioritise patient service delivery.

Challenge of COVID-19 on own wellbeing

The impact on their overall wellbeing was significant.

"I had just moved jobs; I was still new to the team. I didn't know the norms of the organisation and how people would respond. I was already at the maximum comfort level of being challenged, and Covid took it over the edge."

"I was also dealing with the same issue that I was trying to help people with."

Although they had always been employed in a position that involved helping others, they had never been in a position where it became very difficult to decompartmentalise work and non-work concerns, leading to increased anxiety, and finding themselves "snapping and not being able to concentrate". They were concerned that if situation continued, they would become burnt-out themselves and discussed the implications this would have had on patient care.

How #LookingAfterYouToo coaching helped

When they saw the #LookingAfterYouToo virtual coaching advertised they knew straight away this is what they needed as "I know that no-one is exempt from worry, but I wanted help to know

how I can keep going to do my job well". They explained that as a social prescriber they have discussed using coaching type activities with patients, and saw this as "a work version of me, where I can externalise concerns, bounce off ideas and get clarity about how to manage situations well." They wanted to use the coaching sessions to help manage nerves in meetings, and how to get clarity and focus to get what they want to achieve from discussions.

They really appreciated how the "coach allowed me to reflect on current practices and questioned where the focus needed to be put". In the four sessions that they had, the coach had provided a number of 'grounding techniques' that they now implement to help them recognise when a situation is becoming stressful so they can re-focus and "not tie myself up in knots every day". These included simple measures such as: 'feet on the floor' and being mindful about what is going on; 'dusting your shoulders off at the end of the day' to remove any lingering anxieties and 'mindfully making a cup of tea' to take time to reflect on situations instead of reacting in a knee-jerk manner.

Personal impact of the coaching

Part of the success of the coaching was the acknowledgement that "if I do this, I have to take it seriously to put it into practice". They say:

"I am on a positive spiral and I can use this now in the next few months as my role settles down."

The coaching has helped them to realise that they have the techniques to effectively manage and control a stressful situation, they just had to be drawn out of them, and it has led to a motivation to change and move things forward positively.

Since using #LookingAfterYouToo they have since recommended it to others, both in the practice and in the wider social prescribing network. They really believe that the coaching will lead to sustained behaviour change, due to the structured nature of the support provided. "That is why I loved the fact that it was coaching and not counselling that was available. I didn't want to just wallow, I wanted real focus."

#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.

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