**NHS 24 - MENTAL HEALTH HUB TEAM STORY**

**Expanding mindfully, to meet the needs of the people of Scotland during Covid**

The Mental Health Hub (MHH) was a newly established as a team within NHS 24 in February 2019. iMatter reporting from 2019 showed the team to be successful, engaged and supportive of each other.

The service itself was developing and, just as lockdown was beginning we changed from a 4-day service, only operating Thursday-Sunday from 6pm to 2am, to 24/7. There was a noticeably greater demand for the service as the lockdown was clearly taking a toll on people's mental health. There was a lot of anxiety, uncertainty, instability and of course illness and bereavement from the virus itself, which was greatly affecting the general public's wellbeing. The service therefore developed further and the hub was quickly expanded in order to respond to this need, with new Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners, Mental Health Nurse Practitioners (MHNPs) and Senior Charge Nurses (SCNs) recruited. Many team members had never worked day shifts or full night shifts, which was a significant change in their personal circumstances and required them to adapt. Discussions and one-to-ones were had with staff members to ensure they were willing and happy with rota changes and at times compromises were made in order to honour some longstanding commitments or difficulties people had in changing their rotas.

*"It was almost like a war cry - you dropped everything and would do whatever was necessary. People just went, ‘What do you need and when?’ Everyone in the NHS was pulling together so we felt like we were doing our job. Even though we weren't on the 'frontline' dealing with COVID patients we were always doing an important job that couldn't just be put on hold."*

Team morale and support has also not faltered through this testing time, if anything it has brought us closer together and made us look out for one another more, as we know there are a lot more challenges in people's lives.

*"The prospect of more restrictions is less daunting since I have been part of this team because I know that no matter what there is always a supportive environment available to me. So bring it on covid!"*

SCNs and MHNPs keep an eye out for staff throughout shifts and if they notice them having a difficult call they check in with them and send them on a walk away to clear their own head. This is then always checked up on during debriefs and even on the team member's next shift to ensure that a call or experience they had on the phone with a patient has not affected their own wellbeing or that they have not been thinking about it out with work. The 45 minute debrief we have at the end of every shift is particularly effective for this. We are able to discuss openly and in confidence any tricky or interesting calls we have had as well as any learning points. We even do mindfulness every Sunday and leave the debrief on a positive quote, so we can determine staff’s wellbeing before going off shift.

 *"(The debrief) is incredibly useful for self regulation which is essential during these times where our emotional resilience can be tested. It allows us time to reflect on our practice and learn from our experience. I particularly value when our MHNP SCNs join because it gives us an opportunity to draw on their years of experience, and to learn and share together." - PWP*

In every call our patients are asked about COVID symptoms and we are able to signpost anyone to the various COVID helplines and the Clear Your Head website, if they need it. As a team we are working together to help identify COVID early and also support people to cope with any changes to their mental health as a result of the pandemic.

We cover shifts when people are in quarantine and make sure to check in on one another regularly. We have never had to shut the service since going 24/7 and our lights never go off. We will continue to do whatever it takes to support each other and the mental health of the Scottish general public.

To finish on another quote from one of our SCNs: *"Not all superheroes wear capes."*  ☺