



CORONAVIRUS

Appeal for mental health helpline for nurses treating Covid-19

30 MARCH, 2020 | BY REBECCA GILROY



The government should create a mental health helpline dedicated to supporting health staff who are on the frontline of the Covid-19 response, a charity has said.

The Laura Hyde Foundation, set up in memory of a nurse who took her own life, is urging ministers to act now to prevent a "ticking time-bomb" of mental health problems going off in future.

"We're playing with people's lives quite frankly and it has to be right"

Liam Barnes

To do this, the charity is calling for a 24-hour phoneline to provide support and clinical expertise to staff who are struggling to cope.

The foundation was created after the suicide of naval nurse Laura Hyde to support emergency service professionals with their mental health and wellbeing.

Founder and trustee Liam Barnes spoke to *Nursing Times* about how necessary a tailored approach was.

He said: "We need something that is not only relevant but also clinically supervised as well."

Mr Barnes noted that given the nature of the outbreak, and that a lot of people will die because of it, post-traumatic stress disorder was a likely consequence.

While this may not be seen immediately, it will surface in the coming months when the UK outbreak eases, he suggested.

He said that it was common for health professionals to defer trauma because they are busy "getting on with the job".

"These people didn't sign up for the amazing pay. They didn't sign up for the amazing work-life balance," he added.

"They did it to go and genuinely care because that's the type of people that they are. [When] that power to help people is reduced or removed and they don't really have any options, it really goes against their inner grain."

"A helpline would basically provide a resource that will understand what they're going through"

Liam Barnes

Being unable to care to the best of their ability can go on to "accentuate" mental health issues, he said.

The charity has seen a 60% rise in traffic and an 88% increase in "acute requests" – which often involve an individual in need of counselling.

The government has given £5m in funding to some mental health charities, including Mind, to provide services for people struggling with mental health during the outbreak.

However, being apart from family members, the physical and mental exhaustion of long shifts and fear of catching the virus can make things especially difficult for health professionals at this time.

Mr Barnes continued: "A helpline would basically provide a resource that will understand what they're going through and then provide a level of personalised support and screening to get them through the initial hump that they are feeling.

"It has to be open for 24 hours, 7 days a week. It has to be tailored for their role."

For example, a professional working in paediatrics will need a different type of service than someone in adult services.

Mr Barnes said he believed people taking the calls needed to have a clinical background to understand what the staff were going through and to be able to direct them to the right support.

"I can't stress enough they have a clinical supervision. It's too dangerous not to have that kind of capability," he added.

"We're playing with people's lives quite frankly and it has to be right."

This service has been needed even before the coronavirus outbreak, stressed Mr Barnes, as NHS professionals were already working under increasing demands that put pressure on their mental health.

The Royal College of Nursing has published tips of self-care and mental health in this challenging time, as well as offering a counselling services to their members.

The Department of Health and Social Care has been contacted for comment on mental health support for NHS workers.

- [Click here for news and opinion on coronavirus](#)
- [Click here to visit the coronavirus clinical zone](#)



Related articles



Extra help during the virus crisis

Cavell Nurses' Trust is the charity supporting UK nurses, midwives and healthcare...



Intensive care nurses first in line for Covid-19 testing

Nurses working in intensive care units will be the first in line...



Calls to name Covid-19 hospital after Mary Seacole to honour BME nurses

A petition to name the second field hospital in England after Mary...



More temporary hospitals announced ready for coronavirus peak

More NHS temporary hospitals are to be opened across England, Wales and...

HAVE YOUR SAY

[Sign in](#) or [Register](#) a new account to join the discussion.

Please remember that the submission of any material is governed by our [Terms and Conditions](#) and by submitting material you confirm your agreement to these Terms and Conditions. Links may be included in your comments but HTML is not permitted.

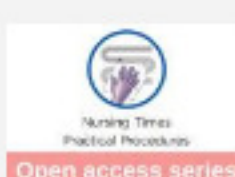
CLICK ON IMAGE BELOW TO VISIT THE SECTION >>



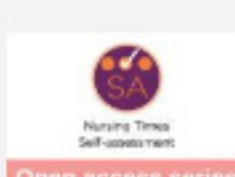
EDITOR'S PICKS >>



Novel coronavirus: key questions and answers on the outbreak



Infection control 1: decontamination of non-invasive shared equipment



Environmental decontamination 1: what is it and why is it important?



Support your nurses and improve your quality of care with a group subscription

FIND OUT MORE

FROM OUR SPONSORS >>



Extra help during the virus crisis



The critical role of the specialist heart failure nurse



'Our teams are passionate about supporting patients'



Nursing expertise in hospital design: the Nuffield Health perspective



Best-practice guide on male continence problems



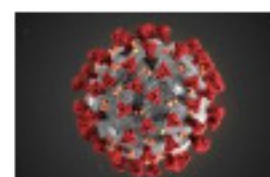
Feel safe and in-the-know



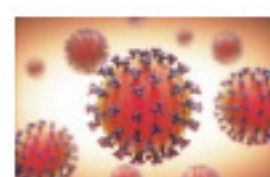
MOST POPULAR



Nurses on coronavirus frontline facing 'abhorrent' abuse from public



Nurses among confirmed deaths from Covid-19 around the world



Students can 'opt' to see out studies on placement to support Covid-19 response



Covid-19 places critical care nurses 'front and centre' as leaders



'Fit and healthy' UK nurse in critical care after contracting coronavirus

JOB OF THE WEEK



Staff Nurses - Band 5

Band 5

LATEST JOBS

[Staff Nurses - Band 5](#)

Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust

[Band 5-7 nurses & Health Visitors](#)

Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust