

Back on Track

Staff wellbeing project

May 2019

1 Introduction

The Back on Track team is the IAPT team for Hammersmith & Fulham. The service launched in 2009 when the national rollout of IAPT was taking place. There was a period of rapid expansion and a large cohort of trainees were used to establish the new service. In first few years since the launch the service priorities were to support the trainees to move to qualified positions and to implement many new operational procedures e.g. using a new patient database to record clinical contacts, recording standardised IAPT outcome measures, performance management of staff based on the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) of access and recovery.

The team was able successfully expand, generated rapidly increasing referral rates and soon became one of the highest performing services in London. However, it was recognised that in the push to establish the service and deliver KPI's the wellbeing of staff had not been a priority. Furthermore, the target-driven culture of IAPT tended to overlook wellbeing and this was leading to lowered morale in the team. So, in September 2014 the service started to focus on the wellbeing of the team as a key priority.

2 The wellbeing project

2.1 Outline of the project

A key step was to find a group of clinicians with a particular interest in wellbeing. This became the wellbeing group and they took ownership of the task of assessing and improving the team's wellbeing.

The wellbeing team that was formed initially consisted of three frontline clinicians and leadership was provided by a senior member of the Back on Track team. Members of the team attended training and/or conferences to understand more about best practice for improving staff wellbeing.

One of the first actions of the wellbeing team was to carry out an anonymous baseline assessment of wellbeing. This was based on a published wellbeing assessment although minor adaptations took place to ensure that all questions were applicable to the team.

Part of this baseline assessment asked for suggestions for how to improve wellbeing and these were supplemented by suggestions generated during a team away day. The wellbeing team then worked to implement these suggestions over a year. A repeat assessment was carried out in April 2016 to measure any changes as a result of the wellbeing programme and again in 2018.

2.2 Specific ideas that were implemented

A variety of ideas were implemented as part of the wellbeing project, including the following:

- **Reflective practice group** scheduled for once a week at the end of the working week. This was based on the principles of Compassion-focussed therapy (CFT)¹. An additional ad-hoc meeting was scheduled following the referendum in order to provide support to staff in relation to political changes.
- **Mindfulness practice to start all team meetings:** for the first 5 minutes a team member provided a guided mindfulness exercise in order to help everyone to get the most out of the meeting.
- **Raising concerns flowchart** – A one page flowchart for how to go about raising concerns was written and is on every noticeboard in the team base and is referred to in team

¹ Gilbert, P. (2010) *The Compassionate Mind*. Constable.

meetings. This was to help ensure staff felt able to raise concerns sooner rather than later and have the right information available to do so.

- **Mindfulness and Qigong groups for staff:** Mindfulness and Qigong practice groups were provided once a month (15-45 minutes per session).
- **Thankyou emails:** The wellbeing team co-ordinated sending out thank you when anyone in the team had helped someone else.
- **Wellbeing exercise emails:** Emails are sent regularly by the wellbeing team to remind everyone to spend time looking after themselves. They include short poems, prose and exercises based on the principles of mindfulness and compassion as well as reminders to each lunch.
- **Monthly team social events:** these ensured everyone could regularly participate in a social event.
- **Better workstations:** New equipment was purchased to trial as a way of improving physical wellbeing (larger screens, sit-stand desks)
- **Staff wellbeing information shared:** A wellbeing zone was established on the team shared drive and includes information on wellbeing exercises (e.g. six ways to spend three minutes mindfully), benefits for staff (e.g. discount schemes) and information on accessing further support (e.g. referral for staff counselling). All noticeboards were updated to ensure information about the wellbeing programme and staff counselling were visible in all offices.

3 Results from the wellbeing survey

In both September and April 37 team members took part in the survey. There was some turnover in the team (16% of posts were vacated and filled during this time period) which means the results are not from an identical cohort of staff. The results showed a consistent pattern of increased self-report of wellbeing in all areas. Some of the key questions are summarised in the table below:

	2014 (%)	2016 (%)	2018(%)	Change
Does Back on Track care about my wellbeing?	60.00%	83.78%	95.60%	35.6%
To what extent do you feel able to raise and discuss difficult and controversial topics? (% who answered YES)	50.00%	75.68%	82.22%	32.2%
Am I able to adopt and healthy work-live balance?	57.00%	74.29%	95.12%	38.1%
Is my mental health good? (% who answered YES)	84.00%	65.71%	97.56%	13.6%
Is my physical health good? (% who answered YES)	56.25%	65.71%	90.48%	34.2%

4 Next steps

The staff wellbeing programme is mentioned in all adverts for posts in the Back on Track team. This has generated considerable interest with a number of recent candidates citing this as a reason for choosing to apply to the Back on Track team. The wellbeing team now have a further set of suggestions from the most recent wellbeing survey and the wellbeing programme will continue to develop in line with these ideas. They are also looking at varying the timings of the wellbeing programme elements to ensure that part-time staff are able to attend regularly.