

caring for
those

who care
for us.



Mental wellbeing in
health and social care.

foreword.

It is no secret that health and social care professionals often endure long hours, with shifts lasting up to 12 hours, whilst going above and beyond their duties. The passion that drives many of the country's care workers to support service users throughout lengthy shifts is not always recognised; and these long hours can impact wellbeing.

Putting on a brave face every day while helping others deal with personal issues as well as physical injury can be difficult and take its toll. Although nurses and medical staff are typically amongst the healthier members of the UK workforce due to their education and knowledge, mental health is typically something that can be overlooked. Many may have seen the harrowing story of a young nurse who took her own life last year due to the stresses of juggling 12-hour shifts with a social life. This tragic news highlighted the greater need for support and awareness to help to protect some of the nation's most valued and devoted workers.

While there are services out there to aid health and social care staff with mental health support, there is still room for improvement. Last year, Health Secretary Matt Hancock announced the introduction of a 24-hour mental health service to support NHS staff. While clarification of eligibility of nurses being able to access this service is still outstanding at the time of publishing this report, it raises the questions - what is the current state of mental health in nursing, and what can employers be doing more of to support?

Randstad has surveyed over 1,300 health and social care staff to find out more. Although we've seen a very small decline of respondents describing their mental wellbeing as poor or very poor from our previous survey, indicating that some progress has been made, unfortunately new findings show that care professionals still they aren't necessarily getting the support they need.

Skills for Care predicts that 580,000 more workers will be needed in the adult social care sector alone by 2035 due to an ageing population. In order to provide the level of care the public know and expect, awareness needs to be raised of the positives of such a rewarding career to inspire more people to join the profession.

Factors such as stress and the ability for the role to bring on a decline in positive mental health need to be addressed more fully. Employers have a big part to play to help health and social care workers to ease the burden and to reduce the strain, allowing more of these workers to flourish and enjoy a more satisfying career.

Victoria Short, managing director,
Randstad Public Services

introduction.



checking the wellbeing of health and social care staff.

With staffing shortages becoming more and more prevalent in the health and social care sectors, there has been plenty of media coverage about the pressures on understaffed and overstretched teams. According to a report referenced by the BBC, last year three leading think tanks predicted that nurse shortages will double in the next five years unless action is taken promptly. The future of other sectors within health and social care looks to be similar with IPPR research estimating that there will be a shortage of over 400,000 workers in social care by 2028.

With increasing pressures on the workforce of health and social care, what impact is this having on the mental health of our workers? We recently asked 1,322 workers about their mental health and the factors that influence the state of their wellbeing. To find out more about the changing state of mental wellbeing within the care sector, our findings have been cross referenced against a similar survey we carried out in 2017.

29%

of respondents said their mental wellbeing has worsened in the past year, and 36% of respondents said that it has declined in the past five years. Unfortunately, **only roughly a third (35%) say that mental health has improved over the past five years.**

what we found.

Findings from our survey revealed that the number of health and social care workers who believe they have 'poor' or 'very poor' mental health remains unchanged over the past two years. Our data revealed that 19% describe their state of mental wellbeing as 'poor' or 'very poor', compared to 20% in 2017. This suggests that little progress has been made over the last two years to improve the mental health and wellbeing of workers.

the problem.

close to burnout.

The top two reasons stated for the change in mental wellbeing are 'work-related stress' and 'personal life'. This data raises the question of what more can employers do to combat work-related stress and support the mental wellbeing of their staff? Another report by NACAS (National Association of Care and Support Workers) supports these concerns, with 79% of care staff saying that they have experienced or felt 'close to burn out'.

Increasing work pressures continue to contribute to mental health conditions in organisations, according to 68% of respondents. Yet two years on from our last survey, and half of employers are apparently still not doing enough to support employees with mental health issues. Just under half (49%) of respondents said that their employer does not do enough to support them, similar to 2017 when the responses were split 50/50.



“Persistent tiredness brought on by too many hours covering shifts”.

63% of workers recommend the industry.

Despite the findings above, 63% would still recommend working in healthcare to someone else, but there is still room for improvement. Taking a closer look at which roles are most likely to recommend their field of work, results revealed that allied health professionals seem to be the happiest in their sector with 80% saying they would recommend this profession to someone else. They were followed by support workers/care assistants at 79%. Nurses and social workers ranked lowest at 48% and 49% respectively, suggesting that they are the least satisfied with their role or working conditions compared to support workers and allied health professionals.

caring for your workers.

It goes without saying that the mental wellbeing of your staff is a priority and has the ability to impact other areas of your organisation, including the standards of care delivered to your service users. It could also impact your reputation within the market, both as a service provider and as an employer.

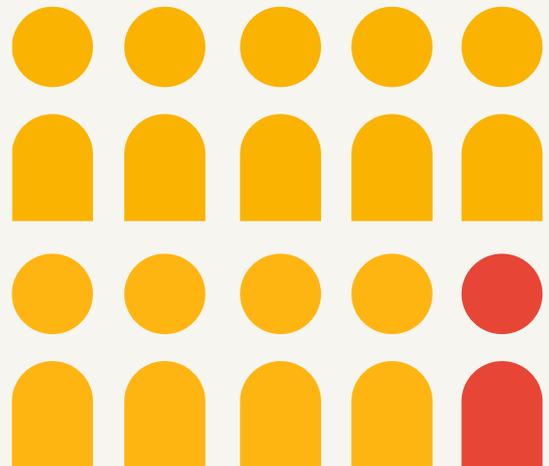
With one in ten workers taking 16 or more days off work a year due to mental health, there is a direct link between your team's mental health and its productivity. Although mental health and wellbeing awareness has increased over the last two years, our findings suggest little has changed in the impact this greater awareness has had on the number of people taking mental health related absences.

building pressure.

Historically, other reports have also suggested that individuals working within the health and social care are at higher risk for mental health issues. When looking at the number of suicides by occupation in England, care workers and home carers are at the top of the list with 416 suicides across the time period of 2011 to 2015 according to ONS's latest report. This high number suggests the great pressure on the individuals working within the health and social care sector, putting them at higher risk for mental health issues.

“Every day is challenging, the role is getting more diverse with little to no recognition how much a mental health nurse has to do and know, not just about mental health but also social care, with social services taking steps back. The amount of risk I carry is massive and the responsibility we hold now as opposed to eight years ago is huge”.

one in ten
workers take 16+
days off due to
mental health.



the solutions.

what next?

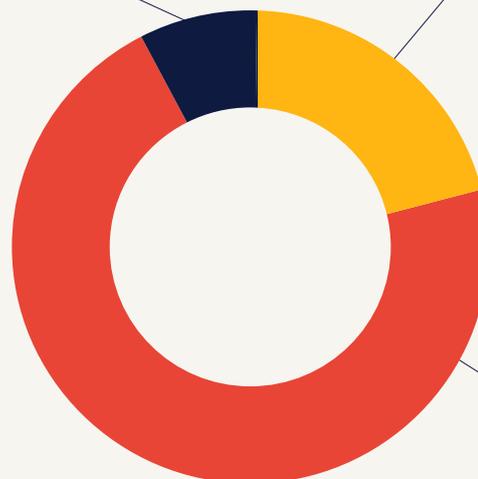
With 21% planning to leave the health and social care professions in the next 12 months due to work-related mental wellbeing concerns, it is important that steps are taken now to put measures in place that support health and social care workers' wellbeing. With waiting lists increasing in both hospitals and care homes and increasing pressure on the healthcare workforce, it is pivotal to retain valued staff, attract new talent and keep service levels up.

Are you planning on leaving the health and social care sector in the next 12 months?

I plan to leave but not because of work-related concerns

8%

yes
21%



no
71%

With their commitment to improving mental health, the NHS has worked closely with the mental health charity Mind to promote good mental health in the NHS. The two organisations have worked together to compile tools and resources designed to support workers. Three simultaneous types of activity are recommended:

1. The preventative: raising awareness of mental health in general, creating a culture where it isn't stigmatised, and having regular check-ins to see how staff are doing
2. Targeted interventions when people need them, either provided in-house or by effective signposting, when issues like burnout, stress or resilience are a problem
3. A culture of self-care, where mechanisms for staff to look after themselves are shared and encouraged, such as mobile apps, mindfulness techniques and lifestyle changes.

work life balance.

Many respondents commented on how workload pressure is having a negative impact on their mental wellbeing and have expressed that they would like more support from their employer. Many recognise the positive different their roles make in the community and therefore are motivated but still find it difficult to cope with one commenting “Pressures of work always increasing. Trying to get a good work life balance without guilt”.

Whilst employers may be focused on improving their service level, there needs to be a clear focus on supporting the staff who support the service users too. One respondent comments “The content of the work was incredibly traumatic and there was no support or supervision” while another states that “The stress and pressure being put on me by the company I work for has caused my mental well being to go downhill”.



“It’s hard to keep a check on your mental health when you are working on other people’s”.

conclusion.

There may not be a quick fix to solving the mental health concerns in our workforce but as our survey suggests, if as employers, action isn’t taken soon enough then there is a serious risk of losing current and future staff. During a severe skills shortage and increasing pressure on healthcare year on year, this needs to be addressed. This risk is not only financially detrimental but also has long-term consequences for both the individual and the health and social care industry. Perhaps one solution lies in asking the 63% who would recommend working in this industry and the employers they work for, about how to look after mental health within the organisation.

resources.

- 1) <https://www.registerednurses.com/nurses-work-12-hour-shifts>
- 2) <https://www.nursinginpractice.com/mental-health/matt-hancock-nurse-mental-health>
- 3) <https://www.carehomeprofessional.com/social-care-may-need-580000-more-workers-by-2035-report-reveals/>
- 4) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-47616491>
- 5) <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/fair-care>
- 6) <https://www.carehome.co.uk/news/article.cfm/id/1614466/Care-workers-say-their-work-impacts-on-mental-health-but-fail-to-pay-for-food>
- 7) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/suicidebyoccupation/england2011to2015>
- 8) <https://www.nhsemployers.org/news/2019/11/new-toolkit-to-improve-the-mental-health-of-nhs-staff>
- 9) <https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/toolkit/supporting-healthcare-workers-mental-health/>

about us.

As one of the leading health and social care recruitment providers within the UK, Randstad Care has over 60 years' experience providing specialist care within the sector. We work hard to provide high quality social care, social work, nursing and allied health staff to both public and private sector clients. Our goal is to unlock a world of exciting career opportunities for our candidates, whilst ensuring that our clients are supported with all of their recruitment needs. Through a network of offices and a database of over 30,000 talented health and social care professionals, our specialist recruiters use their market knowledge combined with the latest technology to fill roles at hundreds of services each week.

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