A summary by

The King's Fund

Responding to stress experienced by hospital staff working with Covid-19: guidance for planning early interventions*

Staff may experience a wide range of normal feelings and anxieties during the early stages of dealing with Covid-19. The aim of planned responses to active ongoing stress is to **foster resilience**, **reduce burnout** and **reduce the risk of post-traumatic stress disorder**.

Good, clear, timely communication, information and training

- **Do** provide (ideally pre-trauma) **relevant training** on dealing with trauma, mental health awareness
- **Don't** offer generic training (eg mental strength training)
- **Do** provide open, honest and frank **briefings**
- **Do prepare staff** for what they might face and have to do
- **Do** create **feedback mechanisms** so staff can easily tell you what they need more/less of. Act on this feedback

Fostering team spirit and cohesion

- **Do** encourage staff to use both informal (eg, from peers) and formal **support mechanisms**
- **Do** allow time for staff to **support each other** – including through activities/discussion unrelated to Covid-19
- **Do** provide opportunities for staff to **talk about their experiences** at the end of shifts or significant points
- **Don't** offer single session interventions that require staff to talk about their thoughts or feelings – this may increase the likelihood of PTSD.

Promoting wellbeing through flexible, responsive resourcing

- **Do** help staff to **stay well** – food, rest, sleep, safety (inc PPE), taking breaks
- **Do** **role-model** a caring and cohesive approach, following guidance, especially by senior staff
- **Do** **buddy** less-experienced with more-experienced colleagues
- **Do** **rotate staff** between higher- and lower-stress functions
- While many staff can cope, **do** have a **low threshold** for referring to support services
- **Do** **monitor support needs** as the crisis recedes
- **Do** allow **flexibility** for staff affected by stressful events
- **Do** identify **vulnerable staff members** and proactively support them

High-quality psychological and wellbeing services for staff

- **Don't** rush to use psychological interventions too soon – they may interfere with people's natural coping mechanisms
- **Do** provide clinically appropriate **supervision**
- **Do** only use **trained and competent staff** to provide psychological interventions
- **Do** only use **evidence-based** psychological interventions