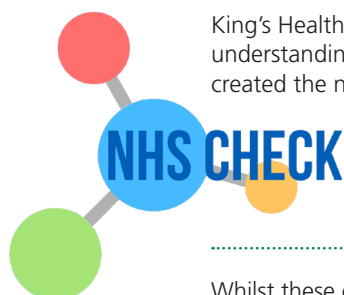


Mental Health and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic placed extreme pressure on our health and care workforce, with 4,645 COVID-19 patients treated in the first wave of the pandemic alone (March-July 2020), of whom more than 533 were admitted into intensive care.



King's Health Partners have been focused on understanding and supporting these effects, and we created the national (UK Research and Innovation funded) **NHS CHECK study** to understand the short-medium and longer-term psycho-social impact of the pandemic.

Whilst these effects are explored, we directed our efforts to successfully and rapidly implement a hospital staff wellbeing response. This brought together multiple disciplines to proactively manage the impact of COVID-19 on King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust's 14,000-person workforce; an initiative which won the **Health Service Journal Award for Workforce Initiative of the Year in 2020**.



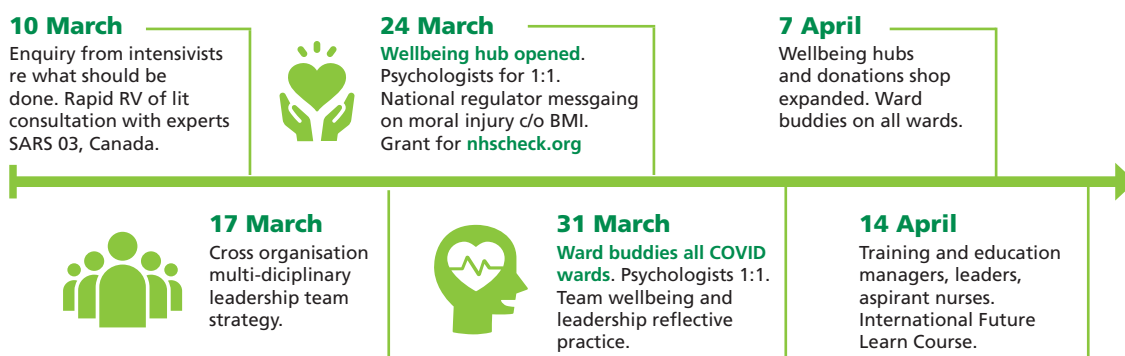
King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust did not have a pre-existing structure in place to provide such an extensive range of staff wellbeing initiatives. Working with King's Health Partners pioneering Mind & Body programme and the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, the collaboration aimed to address the psychosocial impact of the pandemic on healthcare workers in the face of limited evidence, guidance or planning on how to best support staff by designing and implementing a novel, evidence-informed and sustainable organisational response.



"Our team session was one of the most helpful and positive experiences during COVID at work. I really valued having a safe space to openly discuss my experiences and emotions during this time and to share these with my team. It would be great to roll this out as a regular support."

The strategic approach used by the programme designed and delivered a tiered and targeted model to maximise impact and scaffold key units of the organisation.

Programme initiation and implementation timeline



The specific core interventions included:

- **Tailored self-management resources** and accompanying wellbeing communications strategy.
- **Wellbeing hubs:** accessible areas for food, rest, peer support and wellbeing information.
- **7/7 face-to-face access point** in the hospital for psychological first aid and signposting to more support.
- **Tele-psychologists** for those with higher levels of need.
- **Embedded mental health experts** on wards (ward buddies).
- **A multi-functional support service** providing bespoke education, coaching, reflective practice, quality improvement and leadership tools.



"I found that direct access to the wellbeing team in the hubs was incredibly useful – I had staff suffering personal bereavement and at times felt out of my depth – but being able to take staff directly to wellbeing staff without an appointment was so helpful."

The programme's key successes were its scale, speed, reach, sustainability and impact on staff wellbeing and engagement.

 **3,000** staff visited the **wellbeing hubs** per day during the pandemic.

2,000 staff per day are still accessing the **wellbeing hubs**.

28 wards had **in-reach mental health experts ('ward buddies')** embedded providing up to three times weekly in-reach sessions.



70 team or leader problem-solving conversations were conducted and accessed a suite of **leadership resources**.



73 teams, wards and departments received support to embed these changes.

13 regular **reflective practice groups** were established during the peak, focusing on teams in distress or leaders of high acuity wards.

95% of **reflective practice groups** attendees reported to have found them extremely helpful or helpful.



700 **staff interviews** and a **survey of 300** **staff** revealed a series of benefits at individual, team, leadership and organisational level, including improvements in mental health literacy, self-management skills, use of wellbeing strategies, management and organisational skills in supporting staff, reduction in acute stress and distress, and prevention of deterioration in mental health systems or 'burn out'.