

Welcome to your Coaching Programme

FAQs

1. What does this programme set out to do?

The programme's intention is to be of service in a way that's tangible, professional and sustainable to NHS and care sector staff who have been in the past - or are continuing to be – directly impacted by COVID-19. The intention of the core team behind the programme is for staff to be equipped to feel and be more resourceful for themselves and others, and able to attend to their own health and wellbeing as they work through the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath.

2. What is coaching?

Coaching is a process of conversation and reflection that's intended to inspire greater release of an individual's potential, delivered through one-to-one confidential conversations.

Its aim is to enable learning that's entirely tailored to your needs and what you're interested in working on. It can release more of what you're capable of (we're all capable of more than we're currently doing!) and it can enable change in the way you resource yourself, the way you think, or the way you respond to situations, so that you can enhance your own and others' wellbeing and your own and others' effectiveness.

Coaching offers you a chance to pause, step back and reflect – and learn and create new ways of addressing your challenges. It can be an oasis.

3. What is not within the bounds of coaching?

Coaching is not:

- Mentoring, whereby a more experienced individual offers guidance, and sharing of professional advice and/or experiences to support development within an organisation
- Consulting, where a consultant uses their own experience and offers advice to resolve organisational issues and challenges
- Training, where a trainer is directive in transferring knowledge, skills, techniques and tools to others
- Counselling or therapy to support individuals to work through past events and feelings in order to bring about healing. This is offered by trained and qualified counsellors and therapists

- The treatment of mental health challenges.

Note, however, that our coaches are equipped to work with people who have mental health challenges in the sense that the coaching can help facilitate a coachee to flourish by taking into account those challenges, rather than because the coach can, or sets out to, treat mental health challenges as a mental health specialist would. We encourage coachees to be transparent with their coaches in this respect so that together they can make appropriate judgments about how their needs can best be served.

Coaching through COVID coaches know the limitations of what they can work with, and can recognise when a coachee needs support that is beyond their expertise. They are also equipped to signpost coachees, as appropriate, to further sources of support, including counselling and therapy.

Equally, this coaching programme is not intended to address issues such as progressing up the career ladder or bedding into a new role following a restructure.

4. How is coaching different from counselling, therapy or psychology?

Although it may call on techniques typically used by these disciplines, coaching is different from counselling or therapy in its intent and scope, as counselling and therapy set out to heal. People who have experienced coaching may incidentally find it therapeutic, and healing in the broadest sense, but there may be some conditions that the coach may choose not to work with, such as PTSD or acute depression.

With coaching, there is an assumption that those being coached are well enough to solve their own problems, albeit with coaching support at first. Coaching seeks to facilitate you to create or find new resources, to learn, to develop and to change by gaining fresh perspectives and a new sense of what you're capable of. It's also different from psychology in intent, although again, coaching often calls on psychological approaches.

Psychology typically sets out to describe, predict and change or influence an individual's psychology (including psychological problems) and behaviour.

5. What is mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a form of mind training. It's about paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally. In recent years corporates including Google, McKinsey and Transport for London have increasingly recognised mindfulness as a significant way in which to enable greater resilience, creativity, emotional regulation and focus, and an effective route to diminishing stress.

6. Why does the coaching relationship matter?

At the heart of coaching is the quality of the relationship between you and your coach, in which you will be deeply heard but not judged, and which allows the coaching to relate to what matters to *you* and to have an impact for *you*. For some people coaching can be simply a listening ear. Others want to achieve or change something specific. Your coach will be there for both, and for everything in between. He or she has no vested interest in the outcomes you achieve, but they care very much that you achieve or change what you want to.

Your coaching relationship is one of trust, openness and honesty, within the container of confidentiality, including patient confidentiality. While your coach will be invited by Coaching through COVID to feed back themes they're coming across amongst the people they coach on this programme, they will only reveal the content of the coaching under three circumstances:

- 1) In the interests of quality: supervision helps the coach ensure they're behaving ethically, helps ensure safety for both them and their coachees, and provides them with an opportunity to learn from their own coaching how they might have done things differently or better. With their supervisor your coach anonymises the stories they bring and does not release any identifying detail, although general themes may be gathered for the purposes of organisational development (and may be shared with your trust's organisational development, and learning and development, functions) and for understanding the needs that the programme is serving. We anticipate that this information will be gathered in coaches' reflective practice sessions and possibly in occasional surveys of coaches which can provide anonymity around coach names
- 2) For legal purposes: for suspected breaches of the law and/or if instructed by a court of law
- 3) In relation to the coach's duty of care, i.e. if the coach has good reason to believe that you are in danger of harming yourself or someone else.

7. What can I expect from coaching?

If you've never had coaching before, you'll probably find that the learning process is very different from any learning you've done before: the learning you will gain in coaching is more about opening up fresh perspectives in your thinking, gaining awareness, and discovering realisations and insights that you can convert into change. Your coach is impartial, non-judgmental and committed to what matters for you. They'll prioritise your wellbeing and how you can best resource yourself, they'll build on your strengths, and they'll respect and engage with who you really are.

8. What sort of things can I talk about?

As it's holistic you can bring anything at all to your coaching, both personal and professional, within the boundaries set out under 3 above. Topics that coachees typically bring include:

- building health, wellbeing and resilience – for self and others
- work-life balance
- coming to terms with distressing situations
- feeling overwhelmed
- feeling anxious or uncertain
- addressing dilemmas, challenges, and tough decisions
- creating influence
- leading a team
- making a success of unfamiliar situations and transitions
- dealing with uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity
- establishing and nurturing effective working relationships
- feeling stuck
- feeling frustrated
- knowing something needs to change, but not knowing what or how

9. What outcomes do people typically achieve?

Outcomes achieved by coachees cover a very broad range in terms of benefits to the individual, benefits for their behaviour and approach, and benefits for their team, their department, their organisation and sometimes for their family. They can include:

- greater resilience and capability to manage stress
- a focus on wellbeing and improved wellbeing overall
- a more positive outlook
- a greater sense of motivation
- greater focus and clarity
- how to manage constantly changing work patterns
- working relationships that function more effectively
- increased enthusiasm
- increased self-confidence
- better prioritisation; sorting out what's important
- a more strategic approach

10. What do I need to prepare for my coaching sessions?

People sometimes wonder '*Will they be just another task on my already overloaded list and brain?*' You won't need to prepare in any way for your sessions; just arrive. The sessions are

for you to talk about whatever you want. Your coach is there in the first instance as a totally impartial listening ear, however you are and however you feel, and you don't in any way need to achieve anything or 'perform' in the sessions.

If you don't really know what you want to bring to coaching, your coach can help you clarify what's important to you and what would represent a good use of your time together. Many people discover what they want to explore just by talking to someone who's a skilled listener. Your coach is by your side as a learning partner: they won't give you solutions, advice or answers, but they will help enable you to work through the topics you bring so that you create your own solutions.

A mindful compassionate approach underpins the coaching and can also be used explicitly as a practice to bring a more resourced, calm and creative way of thinking.

Most coaches aren't trained or qualified therapists or counsellors, although a small number are. However, your coach will be psychologically-minded, will be aware of his or her own professional boundaries, and will signpost you to other sources of help if it emerges that your needs relate to another professional field.

11. How can I get the most out of my coaching?

The most important criteria for the success you make of your coaching is to be up for learning and committed to the relationship. People often find that it takes a session or two to experience what that really means, so just go with it and enjoy the space and the opportunity to learn and reflect in a new way!

12. How's the programme structured?

Very simply, the plan is to provide coaching sessions to healthcare and social care workers who request them, at whatever intervals they wish, whenever they wish (excluding nights). Under the programme users can have as many or as few sessions as they wish up to a maximum of 12, agreed between coach and coachee. At session 6 you and your coach are invited to feel free to recontract for 6 more pro-bono sessions if this is what they and you want. However, if at Session 1 the coach feels that as coachee you have not been *significantly, directly impacted by COVID-19* we invite coaches to:

- Use their judgement and feel free to contract for an appropriate number of sessions. It could be a total of 1 or 2 sessions
- Be transparent with their coachee about their reasoning. If you are bringing something outside our intended remit (support in climbing the career ladder, for example) we wouldn't match you to another coach.

We expect sessions to be typically between 60 and 90 minutes each. Sessions need to take place in a private space in order to preserve confidentiality and ensure no interruptions. They will take place online (Skype or Zoom videoconferencing, for example) or, if videoconferencing isn't possible, by phone.

Feedback from users is very important in order to build learning, and as a participant in the early stages of this novel programme you will be asked to provide brief but above all honest feedback at various stages. If you'd like to continue your coaching after the first session, please do so, either with the coach you've started with, or by requesting a different coach.

13. What if I feel my coach isn't right for me, or my coach doesn't feel there's a fit?

Coaching is in support of you as a coachee. If you feel your coach isn't right for you, please discuss it with them – or if you would rather not, please know that there's absolutely no need to persevere. This is perfectly normal in a coaching scenario: the relationship with your coach is the most important factor for the success of your coaching. If you decide not to go forward with your current coach, please agree that with them, or, if you haven't been able to discuss it in person - please drop them a line to say you won't be taking coaching any further with them. Please also inform us at info@coachingthroughcovid.org. Another coach can be arranged for you with no problem, and there will be no repercussions.

Equally, your coach may feel that the fit between you both isn't right, perhaps because they may sense that what you need falls outside their area of expertise, or because the connection isn't 'clean' in the sense that it may encompass another relationship (family, friends, work contact etc), or for some other reason. In this case they will share this with you and you can agree the way forward together.

14. What will happen next?

Once you've signed up (which you can do at www.coachingthroughcovid.org) you will be contacted by your coach and you will be able to arrange your first session at a time convenient to you.