



Recognise the emotional challenges of your work: ask for support when you need it

By Dr Phil Moore, Mental Health Clinical Co-Director for the NHS in London, co-chair of London's Suicide Prevention Group, and chair of the Mental Health Commissioners Network for NHS Clinical Commissioners

Primary care services are under pressure. Clinical and non-clinical staff continue to face unprecedented challenges from increased workload, struggles with waiting times for treatment, post-pandemic expectations, unfair press coverage and even some abusive patients.

Prolonged stress from the pandemic and its consequences has left many of us feeling drained, deflated or, at times, helpless.

As doctors, we know these may be symptoms of burnout, but we are often slow to recognise them in ourselves.

The recent World Suicide Prevention Day provided an important opportunity to remember that we can benefit from thinking and talking more about our mental wellbeing. This awareness day is a much-needed prompt for all of us to consider the impact upon our own wellbeing of the multiple stressors we are all facing.

It is vital we look after ourselves and one another. We can support one another to acknowledge the emotional challenges and be kind to one another.

We have a demanding winter ahead and mutual understanding and support will go a long way to helping us through tough times.

When we find we need support, there are options available for the general practice community through Our NHS People services, including support by phone, text, and a range of wellbeing apps.

Londonwide LMCs' GP Professional Support Network (GPPSN) platform is a source of support for GPs who are under pressure in their working lives. The platform provides a number of services, including peer to peer professional advice which can be invaluable.

The London Good Thinking website has a variety of free tools, apps and signposting to support.

We can refer ourselves confidentially to the NHS Practitioner Health Service if we feel we need help from professionals who really understand general practice.

Finally, most of us will be aware of Thrive LDN, the London-wide movement to improve the mental wellbeing of Londoners. So, whether we're looking for ourselves or others in our community, we can explore simple tools, ideas, and inspiration to help improve wellbeing on Thrive LDN's website.

It is important that we finish with a message of hope. Many of us have come through mental wellbeing challenges and with the help of those around us have got through to a better place. Let's be kind to ourselves and one another.

Whilst we can't ignore the growing pressures in general practice, our community has been at the forefront of the NHS's response to the COVID-19 outbreak. We can be proud of how we have adapted and responded to new demands and ways of working, not least through our delivery of a significant part of the vaccination programme. Let's not forget how well we have done.