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Staff Wellbeing Good Practice Guide 2: Supporting Staff after Incidents at Work

Introduction

This guide has been developed by MacIntyre's PBS and HR teams in partnership and is the second of a pack of guides to help you support staff wellbeing. MacIntyre considers that focus and investment in the wellbeing of our staff should be awarded high priority by leaders at levels within MacIntyre. Please read Part 1 of the guidance alongside this guide.

Whilst it has been shown that most people who do caring jobs have higher levels of personal wellbeing than the general population (1), more recent research that has found that supporting a person with very complex behaviours of concern can have a detrimental effect on wellbeing for some staff (2). Getting our support for staff who experience incidents of behaviours of concern at work right is a critical part of MacIntyre's overall Staff Wellbeing strategy.

To support implementation of this guidance, Area and Programme Managers should ask to see records of support provided (see appendices) during service visits and supervisions with managers.

Feeling supported after an incident or incidents

As with general wellbeing support for staff, one size does not fit all when it comes to support after behaviour of concern incidents. Each person will react differently to similar incidents and need different types of support. The important steps are:

- Immediate response (diffuse) – typically 15-30 minutes
 - Develop a plan to address immediate safety of everyone
 - Support the person to move from a stressed 'fast thinking' state to 'slow thinking' or if this isn't possible arrange for them to 'swap out' or have a break
 - Give the person a chance to share any initial emotions in a non-judgemental way
 - Assess the need for any immediate support due to a physical injury or signs of significant trauma (extreme emotions, confusion, denial, shame, numbness, withdrawing)
 - Begin to assess the need for a full debrief and explain what actions will happen next
 - Before they leave work, ensure they know how to seek further support if they need it
 - Check that any people we support have access to this support as well – detailed plans for individuals should be within their PBS plans.
- Create opportunities for people to talk about how the incident, or a series of incidents, have made them feel. Consider everyone who might have been affected, including people supported, even if they were not directly present. These opportunities should include:
 - Specific incident debriefing for major incidents (see below)
 - Supervision



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- Team meetings
- Information about how to access external support options such as Life Works or their GP.
- Offer opportunities for staff to discuss the impact of the incident with a variety of people.
- Also consider setting up group practice reflections / debrief sessions with someone outside of the Line Management structure such as a Lead PBS Coach, Life Works or a councillor.
- Support the person to make a factual record of what happened on an incident form or online system. This is important to do from a learning perspective but does not support staff wellbeing. In fact recalling the incident can risk re-traumatising a person so this should be done carefully and with awareness of the person's emotional state. You should be willing to stop the process and seek advice if you are concerned. The process of recalling the facts of the incident should also be separated from the opportunities to discuss feelings. You should explain this to the staff member and ensure they are ready to focus on the facts and know there will be opportunities afterwards to talk about the emotional impact.
- Some staff may need ongoing support following an incident. If you think this may be the case you should discuss this with MacIntyre's HR team and / or a Lead PBS Coach.

Specific Incident Debriefing

This should happen after the incident once enough time has passed for people to feel ready to talk about what happened. It can happen 1:1 or in groups. Where there is a risk of trauma impact from the incident this should be led by someone with professional experience of supporting trauma.

Aims:

- Draw people together – sense of safety and containment
- Establish shared picture of what happened
- Assist expression of thoughts & feelings
- Limit feelings of self-blame / isolation
- Normalise stress reactions
- Share coping mechanisms
- Give opportunity for further support
- Pick up on more serious difficulties (3)

Steps of a Group Debrief

- Sharing of facts about what happened. Everyone invited to share facts and build the picture. You could use large post-its to enable everyone to have a voice and to enable the facts to be sequenced.
- Sharing of thought, emotional reactions and (multi-sensory) memories linked to what happened.
- Helping the team understand their reactions (understanding stress and how it impacts different people- see above) and helping to normalise the feelings people have.
- Exploring coping strategies and supports the team used and can use now to move forwards positively.



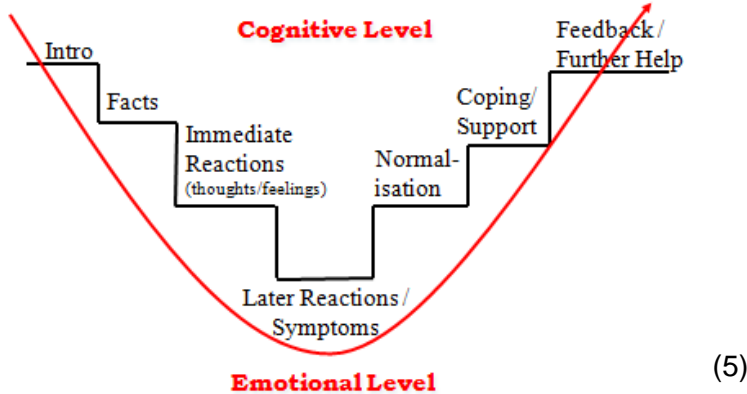
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- Agreeing what can we learn from what happened as individuals, teams and as an organisation. (4)

The Steps of a Debrief



(5)

Talking about the emotional impact

Talking about emotions can be difficult for everyone. Here are a few ideas that may help:

- Ensure you have the time and ability to focus on the person or people you are supporting.
- Arrange an appropriate place for the discussion to take place.
- Set the expectations at the start of the session eg that this is a safe space to talk about the emotional impact of your work / an incident and that you will listen and be non-judgemental. If you offer confidentiality remember to explain what you would do with any disclosures of a safeguarding nature.
- Consider using images eg emotion symbols to help the person give names to their feelings.
- Use active listening eg 'It sounds like..... Tell me a bit more about.....'.
- Make sure you do more listening than talking and leave time for the other person to think and respond.
- Normalise: Let the person know they are not the only person to react this way.
- Try to help them find their own solutions instead of trying to solve things for them. (6)

References

1. Skirrow and Hatton (2006)
2. Dr Peter Baker – results of MacIntyre questionnaires – not published
3. Dr Peter Baker, Tizard Centre, University of Kent. Presentation 'Emotional Welfare of Staff working in services for people with intellectual disabilities who present challenging behaviour: The debriefing controversy'
4. Brodie Patterson, CALM training, 2018 conference workshop
5. Mitchell (1988) & Dyregrov (1989)
6. Dr Sonya Wallbank – The Restorative Resilience Model of Supervision
7. Dr Peter Baker, IJPBS 2017



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Post-incident Support Record

This is intended to provide a quick reminder of the key points from the 'Staff Wellbeing Good Practice Guide 2: Supporting Staff after Incidents at Work'. Remember every person and every incident is different and good support should be led by the staff.

1. Immediate Response – On the day, 10-15 minutes

- Safe space to share initial emotions
- Physical injury or signs of significant trauma? Discuss medical support
- Remind staff member of support options (appendix 1)
- Let them know what will happen next
- Is the situation safe now? – Is everyone calm enough to make good decisions?

Who might have been impacted by the events today (including people supported)?

Notes on initial discussions with these people and agreed actions:

2. Follow up planning

Further opportunities for staff to talk about what happened

- Who can staff talk to and how would they arrange this?
- Group incident review?
- Supervisions?
- Team meeting?
- External support reminders?
- Group practice reflections



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How will you support other witnesses including people you support?

3. Completing the incident form / record

- Who will report the incident?
- Who else needs to be involved?
- How will they be supported to do this?

4. Review of actions and where to find any additional records eg supervision notes or support records

5. Identified ongoing support needs



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Post-incident Staff Support and Reflection Record (Individual or Group)

Staff Name(s)			
Supporter Name		Date	
Tell me about the facts of what happened? What happened throughout the day before the incident?			
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Wake up</div>			
What do you remember thinking as it happened? Do you remember any sounds, smells or other experiences? What were you thinking before it happened? What do you think now?			
How did it make you feel? Before the incident, during and now.			
Support the person to understand their reactions and normalise them (see Good Practice Guide for support with this) – key outcomes from this discussion			



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What can we learn from what happened as individuals, teams and as an organisation

- What went well?
- If you could go back knowing what you know now, what would you do differently?
- What could others have done differently?
- What could MacIntyre do differently?

How can the harm caused (eg to your confidence, relationships etc) be repaired? Discuss coping strategies and moving forwards positively (see GPG section 'Feeling Supported') – actions from this discussion

What help do you need now, going forward?

Summary of actions agreed