

**Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust**  
**Supporting Colleagues involved in Traumatic,  
Stressful Incidents & Complaints Policy**

<b>Department/Service</b>	<b>Human Resources</b>
<b>Accountable Director</b>	<b>Chief People Officer</b>
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<b>Target Organisation</b>	<b>Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust</b>

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**As a controlled document, this document should not be saved onto local or network drives and should always be accessed from the intranet.**

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## What this Policy Covers

The aim of the policy is to ensure guidance is provided to all colleagues requiring support that have been involved in an incident, complaint and/or claim regardless of the extent of their involvement.

The Trust has a duty of care to look after the psychological as well as the physical well-being of colleagues who have been exposed to a traumatic incident to ensure that they are appropriately supported. In the event of a traumatic incident, colleagues need to be aware of what support is available to them both internally and externally, and in the short and longer term.

This policy covers colleagues employed by the Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust and those colleagues contracted via the Trust for their services.

## What is a traumatic event?

Examples of such incidents may include the following, although the list is not intended to be exhaustive:

- Being involved in a serious or major incident
- Unexpected patient death
- Serious medication / treatment errors
- Allegations of gross negligence
- Involvement in cases of safeguarding children or adults
- Cases of harassment and/or bullying or disciplinary investigation
- Involvement in an incident of violence or aggression, whether as a victim or witness
- Any other situation that the colleague considers to be of a traumatic nature.

## Responsibilities

### Chief Executive and Trust Board

The Trust is committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of its colleagues and recognises that workplace incidents cause stress. The Trust Board and Directors are responsible for effective risk management within the Trust and recognise that there is a need to support all colleagues who may be involved in an incident, complaint or claim or who may be required to appear as a witness in a Court of Law or at an internal hearing.

### Line Manager

The line manager will ensure this policy is communicated and operationalised within their areas of responsibility and will be a source of direct support or advice in this process.

The line manager will assess the situation and the colleagues involved and provide immediate support and advice. Colleagues may be referred for wider support and be provided with ongoing support if the situation is not resolved.

### **Senior Manager**

Senior managers will be a source of direct support to line managers and team leaders in the event of a traumatic event in their service areas and ensure line managers are aware of this policy and supporting documentation.

The Senior Manager is encouraged to seek advice from the Trust Lead Clinical Psychologist in the event of a traumatic incident.

### **Human Resources**

Colleagues involved in colleague relations investigations or required to attend internal hearings or industrial tribunals as a witness will be advised by the HR Department/Trust solicitors accordingly. HR colleagues will provide support and signposting to appropriate policies, procedures, support teams and resources.

### **Trade Unions**

Colleagues are reminded they can seek advice and support from their Trade Union representatives and should do so at the earliest opportunity in the event that they are asked to provide a statement.

### **Staff Psychological Service**

The service will lead on Critical Incident Stress Debrief. Individuals can self-refer or be referred by their manager to this service during symptoms of distress.

### **All colleagues**

Colleagues should take responsibility for their own feelings and request support as necessary by contacting their manager or one of the departments listed in the Supporting Colleagues through Traumatic/Stressful Incidents Poster in Appendix 2. Colleagues should also be supportive of colleagues reporting a serious incident or concerns to their line manager.

If a colleague attends a traumatic event or is experiencing any personal difficulty they should raise this with the appropriate person e.g., line manager or senior manager, human resources or colleague in order that preventative action or immediate support be actioned.

## **Policy in Process**

### **Process in the event of a traumatic incident**

In the event of a traumatic incident, the Flowchart for staff support debriefing following a traumatic event should be enacted which includes the following stages (Appendix 1);

- Immediate Support Huddle (immediate support following event) facilitated by a Senior Person 'on the ground'
- Post Event Follow Up (within 48 Hours of event) facilitated by the clinical area lead (considering support from a Professional Nurse Advocate as appropriate)
- After Action Review (within 1 - 4 weeks after the event) facilitated by clinical area lead.

In some circumstances following the Post Event Follow Up, where there is pervasive or continuing distress, a Critical Incident Stress Debrief – facilitated by a Clinical Psychologist may be appropriate before or after the After Action Review. The Senior Manager is encouraged to seek advice from the Trust Lead Clinical Psychologist in these circumstances.

Any DATIX or incident investigation will run separately and in parallel to the above process in line with the Trust Incident Reporting Policy and Investigating Serious Incidents Policy.

### **Support**

Where a group of colleagues is involved in the traumatic event, providing support to the whole group (as outlined in the Flowchart for staff support debriefing following a traumatic event) may be appropriate, perhaps in addition to individual support.

Where a single colleague requires support this should be assessed by the line manager and if it is within their competence to do so, offer it in the first instance. If this is insufficient or there is an immediate need for specialist support, then the colleague should be referred to Occupational Health as the first line of support with consideration of support from the Trust Clinical Psychology Team.

### **Attendance at Court, Hearings, and Tribunals as a Trust Witness**

Advice and support for these events is provided through Trade Unions (should the colleague be a member of a Union), Human Resources, Legal Services, Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and line managers. Members of Trade Unions should contact their representative for support at the earliest opportunity. All team contacts details in addition to wider agencies can be found in Appendix 2 Supporting Colleagues through traumatic/stressful incidents poster.

### **Links to other Key Documents & Resources**

Supporting documents connected to this Policy

- Appendix 1 [Flowchart for Staff Support debriefing following a traumatic event](#)
- Appendix 2 [Supporting Colleagues through traumatic incidents poster](#)
- Appendix 3 [Staff Support Brochure](#)

### **Implementation Plan**

This policy will be available on the Trust Intranet.

A policy briefing will be developed for Divisional Management Boards, Directorate Meetings and Worcestershire weekly.

[HR Key Documents Supporting Documents](#)