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# Keeping you strong – A selfcare and wellbeing initiative

Initiative Type

Framework

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## Summary

To keep teams mentally and emotionally strong during the disruption caused by COVID-19, Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service (DDHHS) developed a multi-modal staff wellbeing support system, including support from the clinical psychology team and resources for self-guided mental health strategies.

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This fast-tracked selfcare and wellbeing initiative commenced in March 2020, offering a range of simple tools and strategies for immediate use. The focus was to prompt early action to build resilience and maintain strength.

### Key dates

Mar 2020

Dec 2020

### Implementation sites

29 facilities at Darling Downs HHS

### Partnerships

Metro South and Mackay HHSs

## Key Contacts

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## **Aim**

- To implement a multi-faceted self-care and wellbeing initiative that would help keep the Darling Downs HHS staff strong - mentally and emotionally - during the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Benefits**

COVID-19 prompted an increased focus on supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our staff and has provided us with the perfect launch pad to continue this important work. In early 2021 DDHHS launched a Mental Health Wellbeing Framework for our organisation which aims to further safeguard the wellbeing of our employees.

## **Background**

Darling Downs HHS knows that selfcare and wellbeing looks different for everyone and that people experience a wide range of thoughts, feelings, and reactions, especially when presented with the challenges posed by a global pandemic.

## **Solutions Implemented**

Check-in sessions with an experienced counsellor were offered from mid-March 2020 face to face and later virtually. Sessions were promoted as a normalised check-in for either teams or individuals which was an opportunity to talk about experiences and be proactive about self-care. Sessions of 45-minutes were bookable through our online learning platform and offered in various locations across the health service before converting to a virtual video conference offering. A self-care and wellbeing toolkit was developed with the help of our clinical psychology team and made available in April 2020 to all staff. The kit contains simple tools, strategies, and information suitable for immediate use, to build and maintain strength and put people in the best place physically, mentally, and emotionally throughout the changing situation posed by the global pandemic. The tool was distributed across Darling Downs Health and linked with our internal Resilience and Self Care training program, which during the pandemic was offered via Microsoft Teams. Recognising that it is difficult for managers to lead effectively when they too are struggling, Darling Downs HHS was conscious that its leaders needed to be practicing and role modelling their own selfcare. Our intention was to help managers with strategies for being positive role models and actively using the practical tools in the wellbeing kit, setting a powerful example for their teams while creating a more positive culture

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throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wellness checkpoints were set up in our cafes and in key areas across the organisation. Each checkpoint contains resources and tips for keeping staff strong during the pandemic. A Renewal Zone was set up online within our existing Leadership Portal and hosted within our online learning platform. The renewal zone is accessible from anywhere and equipped with a wide range of resources for renewal and wellbeing. A self-paced resilience program was developed for our graduate nurses to allow our staff access to training anytime, anywhere.

## Evaluation and Results

This initiative was met with great positivity by our staff in the early stages of the pandemic. In a six-week period between 7 April to 18 May our Staff Wellness Intranet page saw a fourfold increase in traffic with 1,897 visits up from the baseline of 450 for a similar period. This also led to more than 700 downloads of the various resources within the kit.

In a similar period, 103 staff participated in 53 pre-booked counselling sessions as individuals or with their teams. This along with the 180 graduate nurses who enrolled in the Self-Paced Online Resilience Program allowed our staff many opportunities to proactively safeguard their mental health.

## Lessons Learnt

In many ways 2020 provided us with amazing opportunities for collaboration beyond the norm. We worked in collaboration with our clinical psychologists, divisions, teams and with other HHSs in ways we have not in the past and this is certainly a learning we are continuing to work with even now.

## References

"The Self-care and wellbeing kit and resources were adapted from the following:  
[https://mindspot.org.au/assets/pdf/10\\_Tips\\_for\\_Coping\\_with\\_Infectious\\_Diseases.pdf](https://mindspot.org.au/assets/pdf/10_Tips_for_Coping_with_Infectious_Diseases.pdf) <https://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/csd/employee-centre/workhealth-safety-wellbeing/employee-wellbeing-overview>  
<https://www.psychologytools.com/downloads/cbt-worksheets-and-therapy-resources/>"

