



## **Understanding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on NHS staff mental health, coping and well-being**

### **Participant Information Sheet**

You are being invited to take part in a study looking at the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health, stress and resilience of NHS staff in the Hywel Dda region. Before you decide if you wish to take part, please read the below information to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve.

#### **What is the purpose of this project?**

Aberystwyth University, in partnership with the Hywel Dda University Health Board, are interested in determining the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has on the mental health, stress and resilience of NHS staff over the next year. As well as looking at how the pandemic affects staff, we are interested in which staff may be more or less impacted, and in how best the health board can help to safeguard the wellbeing of staff.

#### **Why have I been asked to take part?**

You have been asked to take part as you are a member of staff working for Hywel Dda University Health Board during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are interested in looking at the effect that this pandemic has on a wide range of NHS staff and roles, including those who stay in their usual role, those who perform a new role during the pandemic, and those who may be required to work from home during this time period.

#### **What will happen if I take part and how long will the study last?**

If you would like to take part in the study, you will be asked to complete a consent form. If you have an iPhone or iPad, you will then be asked to download an App onto this so that you can participate in the study. If you do not have an iPhone or iPad, you can still take part in the study. You can complete the study online in a web browser and will be sent a link to a site containing the questionnaires for the study.

There are three small sections to the App. (1) A survey that will contain some initial questions for you to complete about yourself, where you will then be prompted to complete a set of measures about how you are feeling, coping and any stress experienced. (2) A brief computerised task where you will be required to respond or not to specific letter-based stimulus as quickly as you can for approximately 1.5 minutes. (3) An opportunity to provide more open, informal responses in a diary format about how you are experiencing the health crisis and how this makes you feel. You should allow approximately 25 minutes to complete the first two tasks, although you do not need to complete them in one go. You can spend as long as you wish to upload your open-ended responses but after 1 week, access to the

measures will close until the next time point. The journal will remain available continuously for you to update whenever you feel like it. Entries to the optional journal can be created in writing or audio and submitted at any time over the course of the study, as frequently or infrequently as you like.

We are interested in how your survey responses might vary over the next year and so whilst your participation will be on a monthly basis, the full study will last up to 12 months. You will receive automated reminders asking you to complete the survey responses at monthly intervals and you will have one week to complete the responses at a convenient time for you.

### **Qualitative interviews**

You will also have the opportunity to indicate whether or not you would like to opt-in to take part in some additional interviews designed to explore the experiences of some staff in more depth. These will be arranged at your convenience and conducted via telephone or videoconference (e.g., Skype or Microsoft teams). Interviews (lasting approximately 45 mins – 1 hour) will be audio recorded and will ask about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected you and the work that you do in more depth. We will only be contacting a portion of participants who agree to take part in these at various time points. Further verbal consent will be taken at the time. If you do not wish to opt-in to this part of the study, simply respond with “no” to the question on the consent form which asks “Do you consent to take part in interviews about the effects of the pandemic?”

### **What are possible disadvantages, risks and benefits of taking part?**

Taking part in the study will involve a small amount of time. As we are aware that you are particularly busy during this period, we have designed the study to be as unobtrusive as possible. The study will not impact on your clinical work, and both the questionnaires and the diary entries can be completed at a time that is convenient to you. Whilst the questions we ask are not considered to be particularly sensitive, we are very aware that we are asking participants for responses at a particularly difficult time. It is possible, therefore, that some participants may find reflecting on their experiences emotive, or more difficult to talk about than usual. We will provide a list of sources for support in the App and in the online survey platform for your reference. We also hope that by taking part in the research, NHS staff have an opportunity to talk about their experiences in a way that some might find beneficial. The information provided will also help to inform Hywel Dda UHB about strategies and support that could be beneficial for staff at different points in time.

### **Will my participation be confidential?**

Individuals can remain completely anonymous and provide no identifiable data, or can provide a pseudonym, NHS email and/or Cymru ID as a manner to be able to identify their data for later withdrawal or to link data to Hywel Dda's existing staff survey on stress and burnout (if you participated). Providing a pseudonym would maintain anonymity whilst email and Cymru ID are potentially identifiable.

All personal information relating to you (e.g., contact details) will be kept confidential and stored separately to your response data and will only be accessible by the research team and not co-investigators at Hywel Dda. Your employer will not be told whether or not you are participating in the research, however co-investigators at Hywel Dda will have access to the anonymised datasets. Data will only be made available to third parties, or to Hywel Dda University Health Board, in an aggregate and anonymised form. Audio journal entries and interviews may be transcribed by external companies who will be bound by confidentiality agreements. Short extracts from journal entries and optional interviews may be published, but you will not be identifiable from these. This includes in any quotes taken from the open ended responses. Anonymised data sets may also be made available for other researchers in accordance with open access policies to avoid duplication of research and transparent comparison of research results.

In extreme circumstances we may be forced to breach confidentiality if an individual is deemed to be a risk to themselves or others or discloses illegal activity.

### **Am I able to withdraw?**

Your participation will be voluntary. You can withdraw from the study at any time up to 6 weeks after the end of the 12 month project. To withdraw, please either delete the App or email Dr Rachel Rahman (contact details below). Please be aware that by emailing, your participation in the study will no longer be anonymous to the research team.

If you have not provided any personal identifying information (e.g, Cymru ID, email) please note that we will be unable to retrieve any of your data at the point of withdrawal.

Providing you have submitted some way of identifying your responses (Cymru ID or email) you have the opportunity to request that any information provided is removed from the study. However, in all cases we will be reviewing the submitted data at monthly intervals and writing interim reports based on our analysis. Therefore, please be aware that whilst your data can be removed from any subsequent analysis any data provided up until that point may have been included in previous reports.

### **What happens after the study?**

We will analyse the data and publish the findings of the research. The findings will also be shared with Hywel Dda University Health Board to give them a better understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the wellbeing of their staff, and how best they may be able to support their staff during this and any future crises.

### **GDPR compliance**

GDPR stands for the General Data Protection Regulation. In the UK we follow the GDPR rules and have a law called the Data Protection Act. All research using personal data must follow UK laws and rules. Universities, NHS organisations and companies may use data to do research to make health and care better. Universities and the NHS are funded from taxes and they are expected to do research as part of their job. They still need to be able to prove that they need to use personal data for the research. In legal terms this means that they use personal data as part of 'a task in the public interest'.

If they could do the research without using personal data they would not be allowed to get your data. Researchers must show that their research takes account of the views of ordinary members of the public. They must also show how they protect the privacy of the people who take part. A research ethics committee checks this before the research starts.

This research is being conducted in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation guidelines. The data controller for this project will be Aberystwyth University (AU). The AU Data Protection Manager provides oversight of AU activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at [infocompliance@aber.ac.uk](mailto:infocompliance@aber.ac.uk). Your personal data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this notice. The legal basis that would be used to process your personal data will be 'a task in the public interest'. If you are concerned about how your personal data is being processed, please contact AU in the first instance at [infocompliance@aber.ac.uk](mailto:infocompliance@aber.ac.uk). If you remain dissatisfied, you may wish to contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Contact details, and details of data subject rights, are available on the ICO website at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/overview-of-the-gdpr/individuals-rights/>

### **Who has reviewed the project?**

This project has been reviewed by the Research and Development Department of Hywel Dda University Health Board. It has also been reviewed by Aberystwyth University Research Ethics Committee.

### **Further information.**

If you would like to make any further enquiries about this research, please contact the lead investigator **Dr Rachel Rahman** [rjr@aber.ac.uk](mailto:rjr@aber.ac.uk), **01970 621749**

If you want to complain about how researchers have handled your information, you should contact the research team. If you are not happy after that, you can contact Dr Rhys Thatcher who is the lead sponsor representative on behalf of Aberystwyth University: Contact details: Dr Rhys Thatcher, Aberystwyth University, [ryt@aber.ac.uk](mailto:ryt@aber.ac.uk), 01970 628630. If you remain dissatisfied, you may wish to contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Contact details, and details of data subject rights, are available on the ICO website at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-reform/overview-of-the-gdpr/individuals-rights/>

### **Sources of support.**

If you feel that you would benefit from support with any of the issues discussed in this research or more generally, Hywel Dda offer a range of internal support services available to view on their internal intranet including the Staff Psychological Wellbeing Service which you can contact on 01437 772527 or [wellbeing.hdd@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:wellbeing.hdd@wales.nhs.uk) as well as the Care first – employee assistance programme.

The following external services may also be able to help:

The Samaritans can be contacted at any time of the day on 116 123

Mind provide support with mental health and can be contacted on 0300 123 3393  
[info@mind.org](mailto:info@mind.org)