



Content warning: This guide mentions trauma, suicide and bereavement.

Introduction

Further education (FE) sector. The reality is, our entire education system relies on you all being physically and mentally well enough to carry out your roles.

Despite this truth, we know you are navigating a complex set of shared challenges; some will be sector specific and others are influenced by external factors. These challenges have the potential to not only profoundly affect you as an individual, but the entire FE workforce collectively.

In this guide we shine a spotlight on these shared experiences, how they manifest through various channels and the impact on FE communities. We also consider types of trauma that may arise, such as collective trauma, and offer strategies to help you maintain workforce wellbeing.

We also suggest proactive steps you can take while leading through crisis, with real-life examples and look at the importance of creating trauma-informed FE settings.

Navigating FE pressures

As FE leaders and staff, we know your main focus is helping your learners to thrive. But often there are factors affecting the sector that can make you feel under pressure, or pull your focus in other directions. These pressures may also lead to heightened stress levels among FE staff.

Below we consider some of the common sector pressures you face then give examples of how other FE settings are approaching them.

FE sector influences

1.Redundancies

Risk of redundancy is not only a worry for FE staff against the backdrop of a cost of living crisis. Redundancies also mean that more work is done by fewer people and some are on insecure contracts.

2.Staff recruitment and retention

96 per cent of colleges have difficulty recruiting, with an average 25 posts per college remaining unfilled at the start of the academic year.¹ In the TWIX 2022 report, 61 per cent of staff are on insecure contracts.

diabetes¹⁴, problems with our immune system¹⁵ and musculoskeletal conditions¹⁶.

But what about after a stressful or traumatic event? When the source of stress is gone. By this, we mean that even though a source of stress is no longer present (i.e. someone we are in conflict with leaves the room) we will still have stress hormones present in our body. We are still physically under stress. We need to find a way to tell our bodies that we are no longer under threat and it

Take a look at our guide [Looking After Yourself and Supporting Colleagues while Supporting Learners. Secondary Trauma](#) for seven evidence-based strategies to help you turn off the alarm system.

Supporting staff following a traumatic event

Sometimes traumatic events happen while people are

5. Allow dedicated periods for staff to spend time with each other (although, as mentioned below, this should not be a replacement for professional support).

When to seek professional help

All of these actions above can have a positive impact on FE staff wellbeing. But remember, they are not a replacement for professional support. Sources of further support for staff after a traumatic event to consider are:

The NHS Talking Therapies, for anxiety and depression programme (formerly known as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies, IAPT) - <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service> or Helpline 24/7 for 0800 562 561

Offers telephone counselling and support to individuals and families in the aftermath of trauma. Tel: 01788 551919. <http://assisttraumacare.org.uk/>

You can call the Education Support Helpline 24/7 for free on: 08000 562 561 and speak to a trained counsellor.

Five strategies for leading through crisis

However, you can watch this quick [video](#) by Inspire North, about what becoming trauma-

modelling wellbeing behaviour and how this can spread across your whole FE community.

If you or a colleague are struggling and need further support, you can call the Education Support Helpline 24/7 for free on: 08000 562 561 and speak to a trained counsellor.

Sources of support after a traumatic event to consider are:

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2. **The NHS Talking Therapies, for anxiety and depression programme (formerly known as Improving Access to Psychological Therapies, IAPT)** - <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-nhs-talking-therapies-service>

3. **Assist Trauma Care** Offers telephone counselling and support to individuals and families in the aftermath of trauma. Tel: 01788 551919. <http://assisttraumacare.org.uk/>.

Sources

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