**Caring has a Cost: Health and Self-Care for Health Professionals**

1.1 Caring is personal skill set that health and all professionals use (including doctors, nurses, AHPs, teachers, social workers, and many others), when applying the cognitive and intellectual tools, knowledge and skills that they have learned

1.2 Organizations that have compassionate care at their core have better clinical outcomes, better staff and patient outcomes, and fewer complaints. (though we have to say that any adverse COVID outcome is because it is a very nasty virus, despite high quality and compassionate care)

1.3 Many organizations appreciate the benefit of supervision and support, and understand the importance of emotional intelligence, and have put in support structures and measures

2.1 Organizations are fortunately recognising the importance of Health and Self-Care and provision of structures of care to support and mitigate the emotional cost of caring in times of challenge and crisis

2.2 Caring compassionately involves ‘giving oxygen’ to others in a caring way – if staff do this without being trained to ensure their own health, then inevitably they *will* end up with **chronic personal oxygen deficiency – which manifests as exhaustion, burnout, or other illnesses**.

2.3 If one is caring within one’s capabilities, in a supportive environment, with adequate rest and refreshment, and balance elsewhere in life (adequate sleep, hydration, nutrition, etc), then **caring is a positive and enriching experience**. If one is caring and stretched beyond abilities for long periods of time, or unsupported, or unrefreshed, or there is imbalance in life, then the act of caring becomes a drain on the carer.

2.4 If we visit the fuel station regularly, and maintain the vehicle, then the tank cant run empty, and the car keeps us going on our journey. If we fail to refuel, then we grind to a halt. Caring begins to have a cost as self-care fails. This is particularly difficult for working parents, who have children at home – O for a quick answer or a magic wand, but unfortunately these are in short supply

2.5 Empathic people are at particular risk of this – because as well as caring and observing what is going on, they may absorb emotions from others and the environment. If taught a skill-set to support themselves, they can care more effectively whilst becoming personally enriched, without becoming depleted. More on empathic people in another session..

Conclusion: A pastoral support and training strategy that addresses the psychological needs and knowledge gaps of health and other professionals in the area of Health and Self Care is valuable in helping prevent later problems, and in enhancing the easier delivery of care. This includes self-care at a psychological as well as physical level as well as organizational approaches and support. Somerset is working on this, building upon the great work already done by many organizations.

Further strategy is being developed to support healing resolution of problems that may become apparent at later stages

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