

HERE TO HELP

A SAFE SPACE FOR EVERYONE

Hugh Baillie-Lane, Education Officer at the IBMS, outlines the latest resources and work around wellbeing for members.



In the Education Team, we try to provide as much help to colleagues as we can. We have formalised this support recently with the creation of the IBMS Support Hub, which aims to provide targeted support and advice regarding IBMS qualifications and processes. We have also identified a need for more personal support and on 29 January we launched our Wellbeing Forum.

The intention of the Wellbeing Forum is for it to be a safe space for all of us to share how things are going, any difficulties we are facing and how, or if, we are coping. A shared willingness to discuss our mental health and wellbeing can be helpful, especially at this difficult time. We want it to be open, safe, and relaxing for all attendees. Contributions are not required, and we are happy for people to join with cameras and microphones off too. We will not record the sessions.

During the first session, colleagues across the country shared their experiences of the past year, and the strategies and mechanisms that have helped to create some sense of normality, and some space away from the pressures of the pandemic and the laboratory. We heard of the difficulties of keeping morale high in the laboratory, managing staffing levels, and the fact that people who do not work within the service only ever want to talk about the pandemic with us, when all we want is a break from it!

We discussed the value of finding space away from the noise and the stresses of work and ways to do this. For some, the support of apps has been



extremely beneficial. Apps such as Headspace (free for those with an NHS email address), or the CALM app, were two that colleagues had found helpful for relaxation and meditation. Others had discovered that reading a book or magazine was an opportunity to escape for a period and to relax. We also discussed the benefits of creating an environment, perhaps at home, where discussion about the pandemic was limited to ensure that we can separate work from the rest of life.

One laboratory has set up a mental health group utilising Time To Change resources available online. They have also created a mental health noticeboard where resources,

signposting and guidance can be placed, as well as positive stories and inspiration. Perhaps this is something others already do – we would love to hear your stories of how you, or your colleagues, are supporting each other.

We are your professional body, and we will do what we can to support you during these difficult times. We will be continuing our Wellbeing Forum regularly, perhaps every couple of weeks, to check in with colleagues across the country.

In the meantime, why not take a look at the NHS Employers website, or Time To Change, for resources and suggestions for providing support in the workplace. Alternatively, you can contact Mind or the Samaritans for support too.

It's good to talk. 

