

## Staff Information leaflet

Sometimes events can be too severe, or too personal, for the reactions to fade as they might be expected to. If this happens you might want more help, particularly if:

- Your bodily sensations remain overwhelming.
- Memories and flashbacks continue to intrude and disturb you.
- You remain exhausted or wound-up, or sad.
- You cannot function at work.
- You have nightmares or sleep problems.
- You cannot relax.
- You are constantly irritable.
- You feel lonely and isolated.
- You become accident prone, or cannot concentrate.
- Your relationships suffer, or other people comment that you've changed.
- You drink, eat or smoke much more than usual.

### WHO TO ASK FOR HELP

In the early stages after an event talk to your line manager. They should offer you time and space to debrief.

Ensure you understand what will happen next, useful contacts for this are:

- Head of Risk ext 2496
- Head of Customer Care ext 2743
- Head of Litigation ext 2169

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AUTHOR: HEAD OF RISK MANAGEMENT

Have a look at the Trust Policy on supporting staff which can be found on the intranet:

- Adverse Events: Supporting Those Involved

Other sources of help within the Trust:

- Occupational Health and Safety
- Trust Counsellor

If you continue to experience the symptoms described or if they are particularly severe do talk to someone who you feel comfortable with.

External to the Trust your GP may be able to offer alternative sources of support.

*“please remember that these feelings are a normal reaction to an extreme event - and that it is possible to get help”*

## Appendix G

## Staff Information: Psychological responses to extremely stressful events

### INTRODUCTION

This leaflet has been prepared to help you make sense of how you feel after a very stressful event- and how to understand and manage the reaction.

Such events can happen to anyone, and can range from being involved in a serious incident, to dealing with a complaint.

These events are distressing for everyone and can produce strong reactions in people that they may never have had before.

### FEELINGS AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT

At various stages following a traumatic incident you can experience many strong feelings, such as:

*flashbacks* where you re-live the feelings from the event, *shocked and numb*, sad and tearful, *helpless and hopeless*, restless and wound-up, *irritable*, tearful, *vulnerable*, worried, *angry*, Fearful, *guilty*, bereaved, *easily startled*.

### RELATIONSHIPS

Traumatized people can withdraw and cut themselves off from others and you can feel that nobody understands what you are feeling.

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### PHYSICAL FEELINGS

The body also reacts to this trauma, sometimes straight away and sometimes much later on. Some of the feelings you may experience are:

- Tiredness and fatigue;
- Muscle tension;
- butterflies and palpitations;
- heart racing;
- stomach churning;
- hands shaking;
- Sweating;
- nausea, vomiting;
- diarrhoea.

These reactions are all part of the normal reaction to a traumatic event- but they can be unhelpful and difficult to cope with.

### LONGER TERM REACTIONS

You may experience a loss of interest, in self-care, in family and in social occasions. You may lose self-confidence in doing things.

You may become emotionally detached, feeling cut off from people to whom you are normally close, or become irritable or annoyed with them.

### THINGS YOU CAN DO

Make sure you know what really happened. Hard facts help in the long run.

Talk to others about what happened.

Don't bottle up your feelings- they may hurt, but it will help if you let them out.

Try not to smoke or drink too much- the same with shopping- be careful you don't go on too many spending sprees.

Coming to terms with a traumatic, stressful event can take time, particularly if there is no neat explanation for what happened. Give yourself time.

Be very careful – accidents happen more frequently after severe stress, especially in the home or on the road.

### WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

The traumatic feelings should improve quietly over the next 3-6 months.