



Home-Start UK

Self-Care for Living and Working

**Full Day Workshop & Seven Weekly Drop-In Sessions Spring 2022
Delivered via Zoom**

Evaluation Report

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Overview

As Covid-19 restrictions were eased and the economic consequences of Covid-19 and Brexit began to be felt by low-income families with young children, Douglas Guestⁱ recognised this would place further pressures on Home Start staff. He voiced concern about the potential for stress, compassion fatigue and burnout to distress and demoralise Home Start employees and volunteers. After the successful delivery and positive evaluation of the *Self-Care for Living and Working* course in 2021, Be Mindful Fife was commissioned to deliver a second course to meet the self-care needs of Home Start UK staff. The course is designed to develop self-awareness, create a personal self-care plan, and establish peer support networks to support the self-management of stress, compassion fatigue and burn out. The *Self-Care for Living and Working* full day workshop was delivered on Wednesday 20 April and the seven drop-in sessions started 4.30 – 5.30 pm on 27 April 2022. This report outlines the rationale and findings of the evaluation of this workshop and seven drop-in sessions.

The data illustrates the success of the *Self-Care for Living and Working* course, as the essential qualities identified in the literature for self-managing stress, compassion fatigue and burnout were understood, appreciated, and actioned by a significant number of the participants.

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Rationale

Over the years, work-related stress has been responsible for 35% of ill-health and 43% of working days lost at a cost of £26 bn to employers in the UK.ⁱⁱ During the COVID restrictions 32.5 million working days were lost to work-related ill health in 2019/20, with stress, anxiety, and depression accounting for almost 18 million of these.ⁱⁱⁱ It is recognised that these restrictions added significant stress on an already stressed Third Sector workforce.^{iv} Fatigue, compassion fatigue and burnout have long been acknowledged as a consequence of working in an environment where care and emotional support are given to those in most need.^v Subsequently, isolation, emotional outbursts, physical ailments, sadness, apathy, flashbacks, recurring nightmares, and substance abuse are some of the symptoms experienced by many in the caring professions.^{vi} Yet sadly, for many, the very idea of ‘self-care’ can be often said, but is rarely understood and even less practiced. The result is that fatigue, compassion fatigue and burnout are ever present in caring professions.

Home Start staff work at the front-line with low-income families struggling to cope with everyday life. Prior to COVID 19, child poverty, homelessness, and food poverty were increasing, which was linked to an unprecedented rise in infant mortality, mental health problems, and stalling life expectancy, especially for women in the poorest areas and cities. Containment and lockdown measures have disproportionately affected low-income families with young children.^{vii} Predicted long term economic effects include loss of future earnings and unemployment, pushing more adults, particularly parents, into poverty.^{viii} Sadly COVID 19 restrictions has seen a rise in the cases of domestic abuse in families.^{ix} Consequently, given that Home Start employees care for those families with children most in need, they are often confronted with daily scenes and stories of individual trauma, abuse, poverty, and family suffering. They are therefore at high risk of fatigue, compassion fatigue and burnout.

Ultimately, organisations shape the way care and support are delivered, since they either facilitate or militate against certain styles of working or cultures that lead to fatigue, compassion fatigue and burnout.^x Developing self-awareness, a personal self-care plan and a community of supportive camaraderie have been identified as central to addressing fatigue, compassion fatigue and burnout.^{xi} Therefore, there is an urgent need for organisations to provide training to unpack the concept of compassionate self-care and encourage the application of self-care plans and networks of support for staff.

Self-Care for Living and Working and Drop-In Sessions

The aims of the one-day workshop were to educate staff about mental health and self-care; to train staff to develop self-awareness, that feeds into creating a personal self-care plan and to develop a community of supportive peers. It was experiential in nature and exercises were drawn from Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, Compassion Training, Low-Intensity CBT, Solution Focused Therapy and Person-Centred Therapy. This introduced participants to techniques and attitudes for settling the mind and body. Activities were also used to encourage identification of personal strengths and ways of being that promoted soothing, nourishing and self-mastery as an alternative to depleting working and living choices.

Through different activities the seven weekly drop-in sessions consolidated learning, created a space for communicating shared experiences and thus, develop a sense of community. It provides a space to listen and be heard when sharing the struggles and difficulties (it’s not just me), but just as importantly the successes and achievements experienced in work and life. The central outcomes from the sessions were for participants to

1. Develop an understanding of why they may be vulnerable to experiencing compassion fatigue and burn out.
2. Become familiar with simple exercises for self-managing stress, anxiety, and overthinking.
3. Reflect on working and living patterns, and then to create appropriate personal strategies, practices, boundaries, attitudes and planning for self-care.
4. To establish networks of mutual support for implementing individual self-care plans, during and after the course. At the end of the course, it was anticipated that participants would have begun to develop a supportive network for regular connections.

Participants

Initially 24 Home Start staff attended the *Self-Care for Living and Working* workshop, and 10 different staff members attended the weekly drop-in sessions. Only women attended. The participants were from very diverse areas of the UK, and delivery by Zoom enabled connections to be made and peer groups developed. In addition, the use of Break-Out Rooms facilitated deeper connections amongst colleagues.

Evaluation

Two separate links to Microsoft Forms were sent to participants to evaluate the course. One [link asked ten questions to evaluate the full-day Workshop](#) and this was sent immediately after the workshop. The other [link asked thirteen questions to evaluate the seven drop-in sessions](#), and was sent to all participants immediately after the end of the final drop-in session. Both evaluations used a mix of qualitative and quantitative questions. Nineteen participants completed the workshop questionnaire, and ten participants completed the drop-in evaluation. This report is based on these evaluation forms.

Evaluation of Self-Care Workshop

1. How would you rate your experience of the workshop

19
Responses

★★★★★
4.63 Average Rating

2. Please use one or two words that captures your experience of the **Workshop**

19
Responses

Latest Responses
"Relaxing, informative"
"Enlightening!"
"uplifting, relaxing"

All responses question 2

- calming, informative
- thought provoking
- thought provoking
- Eye Opening
- Invaluable
- Thought provoking, motivational.
- thought-provoking, experiential
- Time to think and reflect
- Thought provoking
- enjoyable and interesting
- Informative and accessible. I liked Bill's teaching style
- Enlightening & much needed
- Enjoyable, thought provoking
- engaging, thought-provoking
- Interesting
- Relaxing
- uplifting, relaxing
- Enlightening!
- Relaxing, informative



3. What, if anything, was the most important thing you learned at the **Workshop**, and why?

17
Responses

Latest Responses

"To take more care of myself, as no-one else will."

"It's necessary to balance work and self care awareness"

"The mindfulness techniques, they really helped to de-stress me"

"

All responses to question 3

to recognise and attempt to break the cycles

looking at activities/places/people that are depleting, nourishing, soothing

Self care is very important

To be more self aware in order to be able to really achieve optimal self care.

Having studied self-care and mindfulness in different formats before, I was able to revisit lots of things at this workshop. The one thing that was really important and interesting this time round was other people's experiences and insights, some of which resonated with me and taught me something new.

Having the permission to take time out

I need to sort my workload balance as I'm risking burnout

being more self aware of my thoughts and how they contribute to what emotions, sensations and behaviours I experience

Poly vagal tuning

The importance of self awareness and reflection - use of MBCT model

The major importance of self care

The table about depleting, nourishing and soothing activities- this was incredibly helpful and thought provoking in terms of gaining clarity about how my time is spent

I'm always feeling my thinking, and although I can't change my thinking, I can change my behaviour.

Impact of emotion on behaviour

The mindfulness techniques, they really helped to de-stress me

It's necessary to balance work and self care awareness

To take more care of myself, as no-one else will.

4. Since the workshop I am more aware of my depleting activities

● Strongly agree	6
● Agree	9
● Not sure	4
● Disagree	0



5. Since the workshop I am aware of activities that sooth and nourish me

● Strongly Agree	7
● Agree	9
● Neutral	3
● Disagree	0



6. I intend to use my self-care plan

● Strongly Agree	9
● Agree	10
● Neutral	0
● Disagree	0



7. I have a new sense of caring for myself in my life

● Strongly Agree	6
● Agree	11
● Not Sure	2
● Disagree	0



8. I feel more connected to my peers at work

● Strongly Agree	3
● Agree	7
● Neutral	9
● Disagree	0



9. I would recommend this workshop to colleagues

● Strongly Agree	15
● Agree	4
● Neutral	0
● Disagree	0



10. Is there anything else that you would like to mention about the workshop?

15
Responses

Latest Responses

"It was nice to spend some time on myself and not being trying to do 100 things at once and feeling stressed"

"So glad I signed up for it!"

"excellent workshop, really helpful & interesting."

All responses to question 10

I enjoyed the course , very eye opening on what i personally need to do for myself . Making a self care plan and making these become a natural way of my day

Bill was a brilliant facilitator - he described everything really well and made everyone feel comfortable to take part and join in. I have just finished some counselling for my mental health and this is a great follow on from those sessions - developing a self care plan is exactly what I didn't know I needed!

I really feel a small workbook, even emailed and we individually print, would have been beneficial to write notes down alongside the invite requests for task to complete, even down to the break out sessions, for my learning this is more helpful to retain knowledge.

It was great, thank you. I was a bit worried about what we would do for 6h and who would be there but the workshop was well attended, well-paced, full of varied activities, and with plenty of timely breaks. The content was interesting to revisit as I have a background in wellness and resilience coaching, and it was nice to connect with some people. Sadly, I tick too many burnout boxes, and I am not sure how far self-care can really stretch. But thank you for the workshop. I may be able to attend some of the drop-ins over the next couple of months.

Really enjoyed the day, was starting to loose focus by the afternoon break but overall a good day thanks you

Excellent workshop and very helpful - but feel two sessions would have been better for Zoom. 10-4 is personally too long on Zoom for me.

I found the content relatable, particularly in relation to my experience of supporting families through the pandemic and lockdowns. Having completed the course, it's enabled me to re-focus on the importance of self-care which can all too easily become neglected when I am busy.

I thought the workshop was informative. I'm looking forward to the other sessions. I would like to have had the handout before the workshop as I tried to make notes as we went along and missed some bits.

I really enjoyed the workshop. Very engaging with a mix of slides, group discussions and practical learning.

Found the trainer very engaging and knowledgeable. Course delivered at right pace

The only thing I would suggest is warning people in advance about the smaller group breakouts/encouragement to share- as the content is quite sensitive people might feel a bit uncomfortable about sharing their thoughts, so advanced warning might be useful. However, overall the session was absolutely excellent and I learned a great deal. It was a brilliant mixture of physical exercises, discussions and informative presentations. The day went so quickly which is miraculous given it was delivered entirely over Zoom, and the breaks were well placed. Thank you.

I feel I'll be in a better position to fully evaluate the workshops at the end of the 8 weeks, once I've been putting my self-care plan into practice.

excellent workshop, really helpful & interesting.

So glad I signed up for it!

It was nice to spend some time on myself and not being trying to do 100 things at once and feeling stressed

Evaluation of Self-Care Drop-In Sessions

1. How many of the seven drop-in sessions did you attend?

10
Responses

Latest Responses

"7"

"3"

"3"

All answers to question 1

6

6

2

4

4

1

2

3

3

7

2. How would you rate your experience of the Drop-In Sessions?

10
Responses



4.50 Average Rating

3. Please use one or two words that captures your experience of the drop-in sessions

10
Responses

Latest Responses

"Interesting, thought-provoking"

"mindset changing"

"time for myself to relect / relax"

All answers to question 3

Invaluable

Reassurance and Safe

Relaxing, eye-opening

Welcoming, insightful

Helpful, reinforcing

Experiential, relaxing

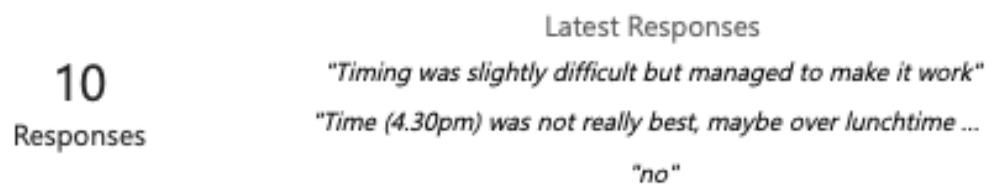
insightful, safe

time for myself to reflect / relax

mindset changing

Interesting, thought-provoking

4. Did you experience any barriers to attending the drop-in sessions? Please tell us more.



All answers to question 4

No

The time was a little tricky having young children but made it work, know it would be hard to choose a time that didn't interfere too much with job and personal time etc for both Bill and the people on the course.

Work commitments

Work commitments meant I couldn't attend all sessions

workload

Not really but Wednesday is my day off and I normally do yoga in the morning so I already feel okay that day.

Ironically, other commitments. Work and family mainly!

no

Time (4.30pm) was not really best, maybe over lunchtime would allow more people to connect

Timing was slightly difficult but managed to make it work

5. What, if anything, was the most important thing you learned at the drop-in sessions, and why?

10
Responses

Latest Responses

"To just spend time checking in with how you are feeling - p...

"only I can make time for myself and need to remember this...

"to be comfortable to talk to others"

All answers to question 5

Developing a peer support network and practicing of the polyvagal tuning was hugely beneficial not just in the 7 weeks but long term too.

To listen more, to myself and others. To be kinder to myself.

To make sure I take time out to think about my needs so my mental health will stay good

It's good to take time for me

Refocusing on the learning and implementing it regularly

I understood the format of them which, as mentioned above, after a yoga session in the morning was not as useful to me as maybe it would have been on a working day.

The importance of self care and that, particularly in my line of work, it is a necessity not an indulgence.

to be comfortable to talk to others

only I can make time for myself and need to remember this, it's not just all about work

To just spend time checking in with how you are feeling - physically and mentally

6. Since the drop-in sessions I am more aware of my depleting activities

● Strongly agree	5
● Agree	4
● Not sure	1
● Disagree	0



7. Since the drop-in sessions I am aware of activities that sooth and nourish me

● Strongly Agree	4
● Agree	5
● Neutral	1
● Disagree	0



8. I intend to use my self-care plan

Strongly Agree	4
Agree	4
Neutral	1
Disagree	1



9. I have a new sense of caring for myself in my life

Strongly Agree	4
Agree	5
Not Sure	1
Disagree	0



10. I feel more connected to my peers at work

Strongly Agree	1
Agree	5
Neutral	3
Disagree	1



11. I would recommend the drop-in sessions to colleagues

Strongly Agree	6
Agree	3
Neutral	1
Disagree	0



12. Is there anything else that you would like to mention about the drop-in sessions?

6
Responses

Latest Responses

"Really enjoyable sessions. Trainer very engaging. A very po...
"i found the time was well spent with others in a safe place"

All answers to question 12

Bill was a fantastic facilitator who made everyone feel at ease. He shared so much useful knowledge and tools to take forward.

The sessions were good to help connect HSs. Thank you to Bill

Found very useful thank you

I am sorry I did not join more of these sessions. It really was down to the fact that they were held on my day off when I already took time to look after myself. A great offer though, thank you.

I found the time was well spent with others in a safe place

Really enjoyable sessions. Trainer very engaging. A very positive experience

Conclusions

The findings strongly indicate that the *Self-Care for Living and Working* workshop and drop-in sessions had a positive impact on those participants that completed the evaluations. The data from the respondents very clear illustrates the course outcomes were successfully achieved for a significant number of participants, namely developing self-awareness, creating a personal self-care plan and cultivating a community of supportive peers.

For example, evaluation of the workshop illustrated that 89% of the respondents agreed that they had a new sense of caring for themselves; 78% agreed they were more aware of depleting activities; 84% agreed they were more aware of soothing and nourishing activities; 100% agreed they would use their personalised self-care plan; 52% agreed that they felt more connected to peers; and 100% agreed that they would recommend the workshop to colleagues. This demonstrates that workshop participants had begun to develop self-awareness for self-management of stress, compassion fatigue and burnout. All respondents asserted that they would use their self-care plan going forward. The workshops promotion of peer support was recognised as none of the respondents disagreed that they felt more connected to peers. Since all participants agreed that they would recommend the workshop to colleagues it clearly has value Home Start staff.

Similarly, evaluation of the drop-in sessions illustrated that that 90% of the respondents agreed that they had a new sense of caring for themselves; 90% agreed they were more aware of depleting activities; 90% agreed they were more aware of soothing and nourishing activities; 80% agreed they would use their personalised self-care plan; 60% agreed that they felt more connected to peers; and 90% agreed that they would recommend the drop-in sessions to colleagues. Again, the data demonstrates that drop-in participants had begun to consolidate

self-awareness for self-management of stress, compassion fatigue and burnout. Nearly all respondents asserted that they would use their self-care plan going forward. The majority of respondents felt more connected to peers. Since all but one of the participants agreed that they would recommend the drop-in sessions to colleagues, participating Home Start staff clearly valued the drop-in sessions.

Therefore, I would argue that the data illustrates that due to the *Self-Care for Living and Working* course, the essential qualities identified in the literature for self-managing stress, compassion fatigue and burnout have been understood, appreciated, and implemented by a very high number of the Home Start staff.

Recommendations

Given the positive evaluation of *Self-Care for Living and Working* from these respondents, I would recommend commencing with another Workshop and set of Drop-In Sessions in the autumn of 2022. The findings suggest that staff at all levels of Home Start UK could benefit, but the more leaders and management level that participate in *Self-Care for Living and Working*, the more it illustrates that staff health and well-being are taken seriously by the organization. In this way, self-care values and practices can be best initiated and implemented at the management or leadership level so that they set an example for the workforce.^{xiii} Extending the invitation to a wider number of staff would also promote equality and inclusion throughout the whole organization. By doing so, Home Start UK can explicitly develop working practices and strategies that enable staff to better care for themselves, their colleagues, and the families and children in their care.

About the author

Bill Paterson (PhD Philosophy) career illustrates a commitment to work with people of all ages and ability so that they might realise their unique potential. He is recognised as a qualified mindfulness teacher by both the Mindfulness Association and British Association of Mindfulness Based Approaches ([BAMBA](#)). For over 8 years, Bill has worked at the front line of mental health, sharing Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Low-Intensity CBT, Compassion Training, Solution Focused Therapy and Employability with diverse audiences, including adults with anxiety and depression. He is currently studying for a Post-Graduate Diploma in Person-Centred Approaches to Counselling and Psychotherapy.

Be Mindful Fife is a very successful business providing health and well-being training courses/workshops and 1-2-1 coaching in the public, private and third sector of Scotland. This includes Home Start, Fife Education, Fife Cultural Trust, NHS and Social Care staff, Scottish Ambulance Service, Police, St. Andrew University, Edinburgh University, and UK military veterans to name a few. Working with CAMHS, Bill (founder of Be Mindful Fife) was instrumental in creating and managing a Fife wide mindfulness programme for teachers, parents, and school children for Fife Education (Our Minds Matter). Working with five different mindfulness teaching organisations from Scotland, Be Mindful Fife played a key role in the co-creation of Mindful Nation Scotland and its launch in the Scottish Parliament in September 2019. Since 2019 Be Mindful Fife has also been a consultant, writing content and offering insight for the development of a mental health App for young people with [Voxio](#) (funded by Scottish Government and NHS Scotland).

Contact <https://www.bemindfulfife.co.uk>

Endnotes

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- ⁱ Head of Development and former Acting Director for Scotland at Home-Start UK
- ⁱⁱ HSE (2015) Health Priority Plan: Work-Related Stress
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/strategiesandplans/health-and-work-strategy/work-related-stress.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ CIPD 2020 Employee Health and Wellbeing: Explore The CIPD's Point of View on Health and Wellbeing at Work, Including Actions for Government and Recommendations for Employers
<https://www.cipd.co.uk/news-views/viewpoint/employee-health-well-being>
- ^{iv} Delahunty, S. (2021) Are charities facing a wellbeing crisis?
<https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/charities-facing-wellbeing-crisis/article/1704602>
- ^v Figley, C.R. (2002). *Treating Compassion Fatigue*. Routledge.
- ^{vi} Mathieu, F. (2012). *The compassion fatigue workbook: Creative tools for transforming compassion fatigue and vicarious traumatization*. Routledge.
- ^{vii} Hefferon C, Taylor C, Bennett D, et al. Priorities for the child public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic recovery in England. *Arch Dis Child*2020;9:archdischild-2020-320214. doi:10.1136/archdischild-2020-320214. pmid:33298551
- ^{viii} Whitehead M, Taylor-Robinson D, Barr B. (2021) Poverty, Health, and Covid-19 *BMJ*; 372 :n376
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- ^{ix} Tirion H. (2021) Domestic abuse and Covid-19: A year into the pandemic
<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/domestic-abuse-and-covid-19-a-year-into-the-pandemic/>
- ^x Thompson D, Ciechanowski PS (2003) Attaching a new understanding to the patient–physician relationship in family practice. *American Board of Family Medicine*, 16: 219–26.
- ^{xi} See Figley, C. R. (2013). *Compassion fatigue: Coping with secondary traumatic stress disorder in those who treat the traumatized*. Routledge; and RCP (2015) *Compassion in care: ten things you can do to make a difference*, https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/members/faculties/general-adult-psychiatry/general-adult-fr-gap-02-compassionate-care.pdf?sfvrsn=e6852ee1_2
- ^{xii} RCP (2015) *Compassion in Care: Ten Things You can do to Make a Difference*,
https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/members/faculties/general-adult-psychiatry/general-adult-fr-gap-02-compassionate-care.pdf?sfvrsn=e6852ee1_2