



Resetting the health of NHS staff

Reset Health offers a fresh approach to tackling the growing problem of obesity and diabetes, and the associated challenges of depression and anxiety. We look at how it's helping NHS trusts – and speak to Christine Williams, who has benefitted from the programme and now acts as a mentor to others.

In 2018, [joint research](#) from the King's Fund, the Nuffield Trust and the Health Foundation painted a bleak picture of the long-term workforce challenges facing the NHS.

In its summary, The Nuffield Trust said: "Across NHS trusts there is a shortage of more than 100,000 staff. Based on current trends, we project that the gap between staff needed and the number available could reach almost 250,000 by 2030."

The problem, they said, was fuelled by poor long-term planning, the fragmentation of responsibility for workforce issues, cuts in funding, immigration restrictions caused by Brexit, and a growing tendency for clinical staff to leave their jobs early. They also wrote about a vicious circle of poor health caused by the shortfall: "Current workforce shortages are taking a significant toll on the health and wellbeing of staff."

It's a problem that has been exacerbated by COVID-19. At the peak of the spike in infection numbers around the beginning of 2022, nearly [36,000 NHS staff were off work](#) for Covid reasons – that's 4% of the workforce – which piled even

more pressure onto those still working.

All of these pressures have had an impact on health workers' mental health. According to research published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry Open*, [mental health problems quadrupled](#) during the first wave of the pandemic, with record levels of stress, anxiety and depression reported.

Given this difficult context, there's a case to make that the NHS could do more to support its staff to stay healthy. A [BMJ article in 2014](#) said: "While three-quarters of NHS trusts say they offer support to help staff to quit smoking, only about a third offer them support in keeping to a healthy weight and diet. Three-quarters of hospitals do not offer healthy food to staff working night shifts."

Too many hospitals made it too easy to fall back on nutritionally poor, sugary food and drink, it said, and didn't place enough emphasis on specific, evidence-based advice on diet and exercise. This combination of high stress and poor diet raises the spectre of one of the biggest drains on NHS resources: diabetes.

Nearly 4 million people in the UK are already living with diabetes, with perhaps another million undiagnosed cases across the country, according to Diabetes UK. A further 13.6 million are at risk of type 2 diabetes. More than 700 people with diabetes die prematurely each week and treating the condition consumes about 10% of the entire NHS budget, or around £10 billion. And that number is on the rise.

Time to reset

Many people living with diabetes or obesity – particularly healthcare professionals – understand the

need to address the issue but it can be challenging to do this in the context of a busy and stressful NHS working environment.

Reset Health combines medical science, clinically led technology and personalised mentoring to help people set realistic goals and then stick to them – helping to keep them out of the diabetes danger zone, and even reversing the condition.

Reset Health uses time-restricted eating, intermittent fasting, psychology and nutritional guidance to literally reset the body's metabolic physiology over a period of 12 weeks. During this period, Reset Health offers 24/7 support from its specialist clinical team and every participant is allocated a mentor who has already been through the process to provide support and guidance based on their real-life experience. Using video, instant messaging and phone calls instead of face-to-face consultations means the programme is much easier to fit into a busy working life. Once this vital change has been made, the Reset Health support system continues for a further nine months to help ensure that diet and lifestyle changes stick.

Reset Health has been working in the NHS since 2020 and the results speak for themselves. Within the initial cohort of 50 participants, average weight loss over 12 weeks was 9kg, HbA1c blood sugar levels fell by 8.5%, and there was an 8.6% reduction in waist measurement. The knock-on effects of these benefits are a reduction in depression and anxiety, with the former falling by an average of 53% and the latter by 33%.

For further information about how Reset Health can support you, visit www.resethealth.clinic or contact grantharrison@resethealth.clinic.

Case study: Resetting Christine's health

Christine Williams is Head of Library Services at Darent Valley Hospital in Dartford, where she's worked for 19 years. It's her job to open up and manage the library space every day and deal with enquiries and literature requests.

Christine's is a largely desk-based role that didn't change much when the pandemic hit in March 2020. The only noticeable difference was that more people started using the library space because they were shielding and couldn't go into clinical areas. But Christine says there was also a change of atmosphere throughout the hospital as staff responded to the threat of COVID-19. 'There was generally more stress in the air', she says.

In common with many others, 53 year-old Christine found herself doing less physical activity when the pandemic struck. Her regular exercise classes and karate sessions stopped, and she started to put on some weight – which wasn't helped by the tokens of goodwill being shared with the NHS by grateful members of the public. She says: "Lots of people were sending treats to the NHS as a thank-you, so there were always chocolates and biscuits around, which meant there was constant temptation."

This combination of less exercise and more eating soon had an unwelcome effect. She says: "I noticed I was putting on weight. None of my clothes fit me properly. And that started to affect my mental health – you just don't feel so good about yourself when you're putting on weight – and I think that made me more inclined to eat unhealthy things, so it was a bit of a vicious circle. I was also starting to feel concerned about diabetes, which there's a history of in my family."

All of this meant that Reset came along at the right time for Christine. She says: "I knew I needed to do something so when the opportunity came up, I signed up. I think it really helped that I was in the right mindset when the opportunity presented itself in January 2021. The programme involves getting your bloods done at the start – and that showed that I was close to being pre-diabetic, so I'm really pleased I acted when I did."

Christine was one of a cohort of 50 people across her trust to join the Reset programme. Once she'd signed up her bloods were taken, and she completed a detailed health questionnaire. There followed an online consultation to discuss goals. Christine's included being able to fit into a size 12 dress, leaving the pre-diabetic danger zone, and changing the way she thought about food. Then a personalised programme was developed, featuring short-term targets and monthly online consultations to discuss progress with a member of the Reset medical team.

Included in Christine's programme was a low-carb diet that incorporated eating two instead of three meals a day and cutting out snacking. She was also encouraged to take up exercise again, starting with a daily steps target and then, a few weeks later, resuming her karate and fitness bootcamp sessions.

Christine was also allocated a mentor for the duration of her programme, to whom she could turn with any questions, and who checked in with her three times a week to make sure motivation levels stayed high. She found this element of the programme so helpful that she became a mentor herself – eventually being chosen as mentor of the year, both for her own journey through the process and for the way she helped colleagues who followed her into the programme.

The results of Reset have been very positive for Christine. She says: “When I started, I was 15 stone 3lb and I’ve lost 3.5 stone. The first 12 weeks are the strictest – no alcohol or anything – but I got into it straight away. I was very strict with myself during that period and lost a stone. But it really did reset the way I think about food. My year is nearly up now, and I’ve got so much out of it. I’d really like to maintain these good habits – and I honestly think I will.

“It’s as much about knowing how to get back on track after the odd lapse as anything else and I think the programme’s really helped me with that. Being a mentor has also been really useful – if I’m mentoring others, I really have to stick with it myself, don’t I?”