



THE ROLE OF THE FOCAL POINT

Create and develop relationships and connections within organisations in the NHS or social care so that Coaching through COVID can
bring more coachees into the programme, and
stay in touch with, and respond, to the changing needs

CONTEXT

Coaching Through COVID (CTC) provides pro bono coaching to NHS frontline and key workers and to social care workers, in the context of COVID-19 and its aftermath.

Our coaches are highly qualified psychologically and/or systemically informed, and at a later stage of coaching maturity. They offer deep presence and a safe, impartial listening ear. Their primary aim is to be with the coachee so that they can unload and feel better able to deal with the demands of their work and home life. Some coaching challenges relate to distress, trauma and anxiety, others may strike the coach as relatively banal.

The intention is to serve all levels from senior staff (both clinical and non-clinical) to manual workers such as cleaners, porters and catering staff. All are impacted by COVID-19.

See the attached overview and the [Linked In page](#) for further background.

CTC began in late March 2020 with the launch of a prototype at the Royal Free NHS Foundation Trust in north London, and is constantly expanding into other Trusts, mainly in London, but also beyond. As of 10th June 20, 105 people had had one or more coaching sessions, and feedback (see attached file) has been very positive.

KEY LESSONS TO DATE

Accessing Coaching

We discovered that potential coachees are being bombarded with different offers, and as they are in the thick of things, they can't always easily take the step of reaching out for support, particularly if it is unfamiliar. As a result, we need to make it as easy as possible for them, and we've found a key way

to do that is by building relationships with **internal champions** in health and care organisations, who can communicate what we're offering directly to their colleagues: by talking about the programme as trusted and personal contacts, they are the best vehicle for acting as gateways.

Collaborating with Management

We've learned the value of collaborative, light touch working relationships with management (typically via Organisational Development or Learning and Development). At our pilot site this means: 1) Staying in touch with their needs and interests, 2) Creating the opportunity for CTC coaches to plug in to existing referral mechanisms for counselling, therapy and psychiatric services, where needed, 3) Supplying weekly management information (generated by the CTC core team) about the number of coaching sessions delivered etc.

To date, we have established collaborative relationships with the Royal Free, Whittington Healthcare, Guys and St Thomas's, Barts, and Camden and Islington Mental Health Trust – all of them in London.

Working with Internal Champions

In some organisations our management contact is also the champion. In others, like the Royal Free, the champions will be keen and motivated coachees.

We do not want to prescribe how you, as the CTC Focal Point, should work with management or internal champions.

Instead we are offering:

- 1) The attached document to help champions to find their own ways of creating initiatives. Compiled by our first champion, Dr Ciara Donohue, a consultant anaesthetist at the Royal Free, and amplified by our champion at the Whittington, Dr Heidi Edmundson - an Emergency Department consultant, it is full of practical ideas and tips.
- 2) Mentoring support, guidance and advice from our two **mentor champions** at the Royal Free (Dr Ravi Mangwiro and Dr Charlie Kingsley)

THE COACHING THROUGH COVID APPROACH

Our philosophy and approach are guided in the first instance by coming from a place of compassion. We are agile, and encourage all those who are offering their services to take the initiatives that they consider appropriate: our intention is to reach as many people as possible of those who need the service, and ways of doing that are many and various. We are fully committed to being as diverse and inclusive as possible, both in terms of access to our free coaching for keyworkers, and in terms of the coaches we provide. We're seeking to increase access to keyworkers from all backgrounds: BAME, LGBTQ+, people with disability etc.

THE FOCAL POINT

The core of the **focal point's** role is relationship-based – and if you are the kind of person who makes things happen through authentic relationship, the opportunity to be a focal point is exciting and potentially very fulfilling: by connecting with those who are on the ground, you will be at the forefront of creating and nurturing relationships that will enable Coaching through COVID to reach more of the people who could benefit from it.

The purpose of the role is to:

Create and build relationships with both champions and management-level connections in Trusts, other NHS organisations and the care sector so as to develop ways of reaching more of the people who could benefit from Coaching through COVID. Each focal point finds their own ways of discovering and connecting with champions and management through their own networks.

More specifically, the focal point:

- 1) Acts as a liaison between champions and management in Trusts, other NHS organisations and the care sector on the one hand, and the core team, on the other (via the core team liaison point, Lindsay Wittenberg, who aims to be an accessible resource)
- 2) Is a source of updates to and from the core team
- 3) Is a connection point to enable the encouragement of champions' interventions to take and sustain initiatives
- 4) Is a connection point and information node with and for the management contacts, staying in touch with what's happening for them, enabling action accordingly, and working with them as partners to create, discover and maintain channels to reaching more of those who could benefit from the programme
- 5) Stays alert to further opportunities for CTC in current and other organisations
- 6) Delivers management information drawn up by the core team

Our contact with both champions and management tends to be light touch but responsive, accessible and proactive. These relationships are not constrained by any prescribed process, but intended to maintain connection so that we stay in touch with their needs and interests.

Personal contact is key. Broadly, the process is emerging as:

- 1) Existing contacts through our networks connect us with individuals (to date these have been in management, but they could also be potential champions) who are in a position to take Coaching through COVID forward in their specific organisations
- 2) We connect with them, explain more about the programme, explore their coaching need, and explore (typically in a telephone conversation to begin with) how Coaching through COVID can be socialised in their organisation. We find a way forward together from here. If they are in management, encouragement to them to find champions is key (having said that, some management contacts are also champions). We can send documentation to support them (see attached), and a link to the [Linkedin page](#) and the website when it's up and running. Either champions or management pass on the link for participants to sign up (https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=kcEK87S48kWam-VGbLkMLx63JKwl43VErS53TJH_j6xUMlpVRkg1RkZJNTVLNzhBSDBCRFc3V1JCSS4u). This very simple application form goes directly to the core team, matching is done typically within one working day, and the coach is encouraged to make contact with the coachee

within 24 hours. Coaches are also encouraged to make themselves available to work with coachees' schedules, so some coaching is taking place in the evenings and at weekends. Coachees are sent a feedback form after the first session (when they have the option to change coach if they feel there isn't a fit) and after the 6th session. Programmes may continue beyond 6 sessions if coach and coachee agree this.

- 3) We can connect both management and champions to our two mentor champions
- 4) We stay in touch with them!

This process and structure are agile, and are not intended to be rigid or constricting: they will work differently in different Trusts, and with different focal points.

The **core team focal point** is Lindsay Wittenberg (lw@lindsaywittenberg.co.uk). She stays in touch with other focal points, and with champions and management in selected organisations, so that we can be sure we are responding to need and flexing to demands and local situations.

Attached

Overview

A letter suggestion to go from champions to potential participants beyond the Royal Free, which links to further info documents. This would, of course, need to be tweaked for local use

Feedback

Initiatives that champions may take

10th June 2020