



SLÀINTE AGUS CÙRAM SÒISEALACHD EILEANAN SIAR

Health and Social Care Western Isles



Colleagues

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Happy new year! It has been an incredibly tough start for many of you working in the health and social care system. Levels of staff absence due to illness are high; levels of demand for healthcare are spiking; and yet we persevere. Thank you to all who have been at the coalface over the winter months...

One of the reasons we are so busy is the prevalence of flu. In response to this situation, additional flu vaccination clinics for health and social care staff have been arranged - and you will have been notified of dates and times by your manager. All staff who have not yet had their flu vaccination are strongly encouraged to attend one of the drop-in clinics. The flu vaccination is the best defence against flu and the predominant circulating strain - Influenza AH3N2 - is contained within the vaccine.

The reasons for the surge in demand for healthcare services across the UK is of course complex – partly, it's because of short term winter pressures; partly it's because of longer term trends. The following piece by the BBC offers a nice way in to understanding these issues. It's perhaps more focused on the English context, but there is much that is also true for us north of the border.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-42572110>

We're now in full swing budget discussions as the position for 2018/19 becomes clear. In some respects, we're involved in the same merry dance that we always are: at this stage, several million pounds of efficiencies will have to be found in order to build a balanced budget. It gets more difficult every year because the savings of the last few years have all been banked and we need to look afresh at new options. The IJB will meet in mid-February, after which we'll use the locality planning groups to engage community opinion about the choices we're advancing.

You should try to have a read of this article. I'm quite sure that there are strong arguments against its central thesis - that the causes of depression and anxiety are mostly situational rather than hard wired to a specific mental disposition - but I found it a really interesting read. The article discusses at length the importance of good psychological health in the workplace. I liked this observation: 'It turns out if you have no control over your work, you are far more likely to become stressed – and, crucially, depressed. Humans have an innate need to feel that what we are doing, day-to-day, is meaningful. When you are controlled, you can't create meaning out of your work'.

I think this is particularly true in health and social care. Most of us derive meaning and value from the type of work we do. After all, we are all involved, one way or another, in looking after people who need our support. But we ought not to rely solely on that truism; we still have an obligation to ensure people are capable of exercising professional autonomy and judgement in order to derive a meaningful experience in the workplace.

https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/jan/07/is-everything-you-think-you-know-about-depression-wrong-johann-hari-lost-connections?CMP=share_btn_tw

This also allowed me to reflect on some of the tests of change we've run over the last year in support of our work on integration. I was thinking about one colleague in particular who put herself out on a limb to bring teams together, to try new ways of working, to work across two organisations, to improve the service offer to the people we serve. This represented an experimental approach to management within our localities, and to inter-professional relations. It was hard and difficult work and I will thank her personally when I next see her.

These tests of change are hugely important to the work we do on integration; and even if we do not ultimately mainstream what it is we're testing, the work is invaluable to ensure that we are well positioned to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by integration.

That's all for this week

Ron

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