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The Yoga4NHS staff wellbeing programme

An evidence-based wellbeing programme accredited by the Royal College of GPs



The **Yoga4NHS** programme is an evidence-based wellness and wellbeing course to equip your staff with a toolkit of mind-body practices to reduce stress/anxiety, increase resilience and mitigate risks of burnout. Figures from NHS digital show that sickness absence rates remain high in the NHS, with one quarter of those off work due to a mental health condition. **Yoga4NHS** aims to address these problems. After 6 weeks of classes and support, your staff will not only have new self-care skills, they will also become a Breath Ambassador, able to cascade the training and the practices they have learned with other staff in your establishment, and/or signpost them to wellbeing resources. The **Yoga4NHS** programme was requested by NHS commissioners following the success of the 10-week **Yoga4Health** social prescribing programme for NHS patients which is offered by over 450 experienced yoga teachers in the UK and internationally. **Yoga4Health** was commissioned by NHS West London CCG in 2016.

Training to deliver **Yoga4Health** is a 60-hour course accredited by the Personalised Care Institute. The programme's efficacy was established in two published academic papers by the University of Westminster. <https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/item/qz6v1/yoga4health-on-social-prescription-a-mixed-methods-evaluation>
<https://bmccomplementmedtherapies.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12906-022-03514-3>

All postures, breathing, mindfulness, and relaxation practices on the **Yoga4NHS** programme are adapted to meet the individual needs of the group, fostering a culture of mutual support and social connection.

Testimonials

The Yoga In Healthcare Alliance has tested **Yoga4NHS** on nearly 200 staff with excellent results



“It was a great experience and far exceeded my expectations. I have felt that my anxiety has reduced following the course alongside the physical symptoms that it causes. It has motivated me to engage with yoga in my own personal time about three times each week and I feel much better for it”

“It more than met my expectations. My husband was diagnosed with a life threatening condition (leukaemia) a week before the course started and I looked forward to each session as helping me to relax. I am particularly please that I am able to repeat the sessions as I did not quite manage to get the breathing right. I particularly liked that we could do the activities as chair-based or on a mat”

“The breathing techniques were useful and easy to use between patient appointments”

Click here to watch a short two-minute video from two NHS staff members who completed Yoga4Health in April 2023 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXYBdvfV10Q>

Structure of the Yoga4NHS programme

The **Yoga4NHS** programme comprises two 6-week courses of one-hour lessons which can be fitted into the working day and delivered in person by a YIHA-trained teacher at an NHS establishment. The programme is also delivered live and online at times convenient to staff. A further option is to complete the course via e-learning. Our expectation is that most NHS establishments will wish to have a mix of all three delivery options.

Level 1 – An evidence-based wellness and wellbeing course to equip staff with a toolkit of mind-body practices to reduce stress/anxiety, increase resilience and reduce burnout. These are challenges facing the NHS and part of the reason for an average 6.7% sickness absence rate (January 2022 figure). Some of those off sick face muscular-skeletal issues, addressed by this protocol via gentle physical practices to promote good posture, lower back care and increased physical activity. Others may find that mindfulness, attention and relaxation practices are helpful to reduce stress and anxiety and boost feelings of wellbeing and mental resilience. Individual class themes, Q&A and end-of-class discussion promote social connection, giving the programme a social prescribing dimension.

Staff completing Level 1 will develop an individualised yoga toolkit but will also spread knowledge and skills among colleagues by becoming “Breath Ambassadors” to share 4 breathing techniques found to be highly effective. Cascade teaching, via the Breath Ambassadors, will bring benefits to the wider NHS staff population at the locations where the programmes are delivered (see Sustainability section below).

Level 2 – For those staff who have completed Level 1. Level 2 is an evidence-based wellness and wellbeing course that builds yoga knowledge, including anatomically-informed safe practice of 6 classical postures. Level 2 continues to increase resilience and teaches how to pass on a wider range of simple practices to colleagues as “Yoga4NHS Ambassadors”. These include: breath and movement; simple posture work; 5 breathing techniques (Level 1 techniques plus Equal Breathing (Coherent Breathing)); Meditation and Mindfulness practices.

Completion of Level 2 will be a pathway for entry onto the Personalised Care Institute (PCI) accredited training to deliver the Yoga4Health 10-week social prescribing protocol, should the health professional wish to go down that route. Cascade teaching via the Yoga4Health Ambassadors will bring wider benefits to the NHS staff at the locations the programme is delivered, as well as offering a personal and professional development opportunity (see Sustainability section below).

The Level 1 and Level 2 Yoga4NHS Staff training courses are accredited by the Royal College of GPs, and count as 6 hours of CPD (continuing professional development) for GPs and for others whose professional body recognises Royal College of GPs training for CPD purposes.

All NHS staff who enrol on the programme are supported by a detailed course manual, home practice sheets, video and MP3 resources, ongoing communication, a regular newsletter, and support from YIHA. They will be supported by their cohort of fellow attendees, forming important social connection, and fostering a community of practice in every healthcare setting where the course is run. Graduates of Level 1 and 2 will be encouraged to keep in touch via a preferred means, such as a WhatsApp group, and YIHA will offer support to the group via quarterly Zoom meetings and dedicated social media feeds. In the Westminster University study of the Yoga4Health programme, a 3-month follow-up of patients found that half were still practicing yoga on average two days a week, and 44% had joined a local yoga class. We hope that staff activation to practice their self-care yoga skills and share them among colleagues will be equally high.

Sustainability

This training model promotes sustainability in progression through the levels and by enabling staff to share the practices they have learnt with colleagues, as Breath Ambassadors or Yoga4NHS Ambassadors. Trainees are also able to access and share videos and PDF-handouts containing 2–5-minute breath, and breath and movement practices, which colleagues may access to support their health and wellbeing.

The **Yoga4NHS** programme therefore has a broader impact on the organisation whereby those initially trained can disseminate their knowledge and skills, ensuring a sustainable impact that has longevity amongst the staff team. YIHA provides ongoing support and resources ensuring that students/graduates have the opportunity to maintain currency in their practice and are able to access continuous professional development in their Yoga4NHS role, seeking advice where needed.

Completion of Level 1 and Level 2 provides a pathway to full PCI-accredited Yoga4Health training, supporting continuing professional development. NHS staff, including clinical psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, physiotherapists, GPs, Consultants, and nurses have completed full Yoga4Health training to deliver the 10-week social prescribing protocol to patients in partnership with the NHS. PCI accreditation also allows Yoga4NHS graduates to access a wide range of professional development resources to support their roles.



Funding Options for Yoga4NHS staff wellbeing programme

The Yoga In Healthcare Alliance offers three levels of service to NHS organisations in order to meet the needs of small, medium, and large establishments which wish to enable their staff to complete the Yoga4NHS programme.

Yoga4NHS BASIC <i>Suitable for small establishments</i>	Yoga4NHS PLUS <i>Suitable for medium-sized establishments</i>	Yoga4NHS PRO <i>Suitable for large establishments</i>
In-person Yoga4NHS 6-week programmes delivered on site by one of our expert tutors at a time of your choosing costing £99 per staff member (minimum 10 staff, maximum 20 staff)	Three in-person Yoga4NHS 6-week programmes delivered on site by one of our expert tutors at a time of your choosing (minimum 10 staff, maximum 20 staff)	Five in-person Yoga4NHS 6-week programmes delivered on site by one of our expert tutors at a time of your choosing (minimum 10 staff, maximum 20 staff)
Yoga4NHS 6-week programmes delivered live and online by one of our expert tutors at a time of your choosing costing £49 per staff member (minimum 20 staff, maximum 40 staff)	Five live and online Yoga4NHS 6-week programme delivered by one of our expert tutors at a time of your choosing (minimum 20 staff, maximum 40 staff)	Ten live and online Yoga4NHS 6-week programme delivered by one of our expert tutors at a time of your choosing (minimum 20 staff, maximum 40 staff)
£20 per staff member for e-learning version of the Yoga4NHS staff wellbeing programme.	100 e-learning places on the digital version of the Yoga4NHS staff wellbeing programme.	250 e-learning places on the digital version of the Yoga4NHS staff wellbeing programme.
Access for all attendees to: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video resources to support breathing, relaxation, and mindfulness practices. • Catch-up recordings of missed classes. • Breath Ambassador guidance, support, and resources. • Course manual, handouts 	Access for all attendees to: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video resources to support breathing, relaxation, and mindfulness practices. • Catch-up recordings of missed classes. • Breath Ambassador guidance, support, and resources. • Course manual, handouts 	Access for all attendees to: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video resources to support breathing, relaxation, and mindfulness practices. • Catch-up recordings of missed classes. • Breath Ambassador guidance, support, and resources. • Course manual, handouts
Supports 30-60 staff.	Supports 200-300 staff annually.	Supports 450-650 staff annually.
COST PER EMPLOYEE £20 to £99 per employee	PACKAGE COST: £7,500.00 £25.00 to £37.50 per employee	PACKAGE COST: £15,000 pa £23.00 to £25.00 per employee
<p>ALL STAFF RECEIVE A COMPLETION CERTIFICATE WHICH CONFERS THE ROLE OF BREATH AMBASSADOR OR YOGA4HEALTH AMBASSADOR, ABLE TO SHARE STRESS-BUSTING WELLBEING PRACTICES WITH COLLEAGUES. ALL STAFF WHO COMPLETE THE PROGRAMME RECEIVE ONGOING SUPPORT FOR THEIR ROLE AS BREATH AMBASSADORS OR YOGA4HEALTH AMBASSADORS TO SUSTAIN AND CASCADE WELLBEING PRACTICES</p>		

For more information, or to commission **Yoga4NHS** for your staff please contact Paul Fox: -

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