

## **Case Study**

### **Healthcare: Sleep Programme for Healthcare Staff**

## **Introduction**

Following on from the encouraging results of the first pilot Sophrology for Sleep programme at Dartford & Gravesham NHS Trust (DGT) held between July and September 2022, a further programme, taking into account feedback and learnings from the pilot was commenced in March 2023 with a larger cohort of staff.

This paper reports on how these services were implemented and the impact these services have had on staff health and wellness.

## **Background and Context**

Within Kent and Medway NHS there is a collective ambition to truly change and transform how we support, develop and protect our people to create a legacy from Covid and for the first time create a system wide culture of health and wellbeing. The NHS People plan has this as a priority and the pandemic has certainly placed it at the front and centre of our minds. It states 44.1% of NHS people reported that they had felt unwell as a result of work related stress during the last 12 months.

Results from a recent survey show that staff at Darent Valley Hospital have identified sleep as a priority area needing further support for wellbeing.

## **Participants Needs**

Additionally, following the pre-programme 1-1 chats with participants, the following needs were identified:

- **Change their relationship with sleep** – often considered ‘the enemy’ or ‘not my friend’
- **Reframe** how they envision **the night** ahead and **reduce sleep anxiety** related to 1) how will I get through the **next day** and 2) what are the **long-term effects** on my general health?
- **Still the over-active ‘whirring’ mind**
- Learn to incorporate micro-breaks into the day to **counter-balance the low energy/mood/focus of a disturbed night’s rest.**

# The Sophrology Programme

## Aims and Objectives

For staff to:

- Gain a basic understanding of how sleep works
- Discover changes to make to their environment and habits to improve their sleep
- Become familiar with a range of mind-body techniques to aid relaxation and restful sleep
- Experiment with ways of incorporating these techniques into daily life
- Lower the severity of their sleeplessness
- Improve how much sleeplessness is impacting on their resilience/mental health
- Improve how much their sleeplessness is impacting on their ability to carry out their role

## Structure of the Sophrology Programme

Sessions were primarily practical experiences of exercises using relaxation, breathing and mental imagery. These were supplemented with explanations and discussions on the topics as indicated.

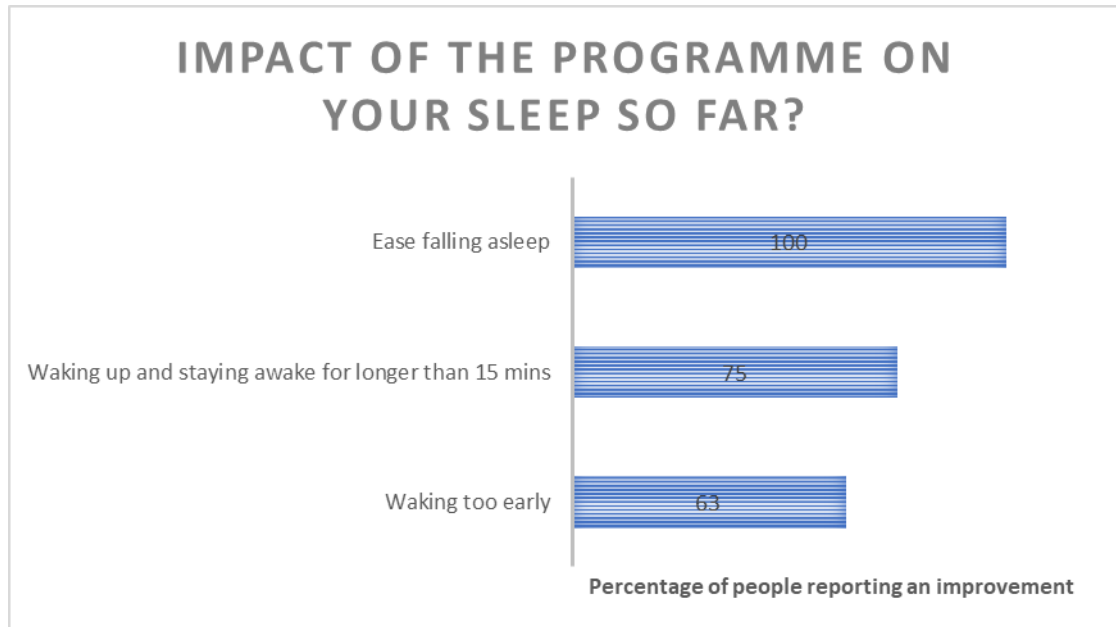
Session Topic	Overview	Timing
Session 1: Preparing for better sleep: tools for during the day	How and why we sleep Rhythms, cycles and patterns Techniques to use during the day Inter-session practice planning	2 hours in-person
Session 2: Preparing for the Night Ahead: tools for going to sleep (Part A)	Check-in on inter-session practice Sleeping environment and routine Eating for better sleep	1 hour in-person
Session 3: Preparing for the Night Ahead: tools for going to sleep (Part B)	Techniques to use for going to sleep Inter-session practice planning	1 hour in-person
Session 4: The Night Itself: tools for during the night (Part A)	Check-in on inter-session planning Ways to improve sleep quality Techniques for better quality sleep	1 hour in-person
Session 5: The Night Itself: tools for during the night (Part B)	all night long Programme recap and evaluation	1 hour in-person

Participants received a pack of cards to use as prompts for practising the techniques including links to audio recordings for some of the exercises, notebooks for recording observations, and handouts after each session.

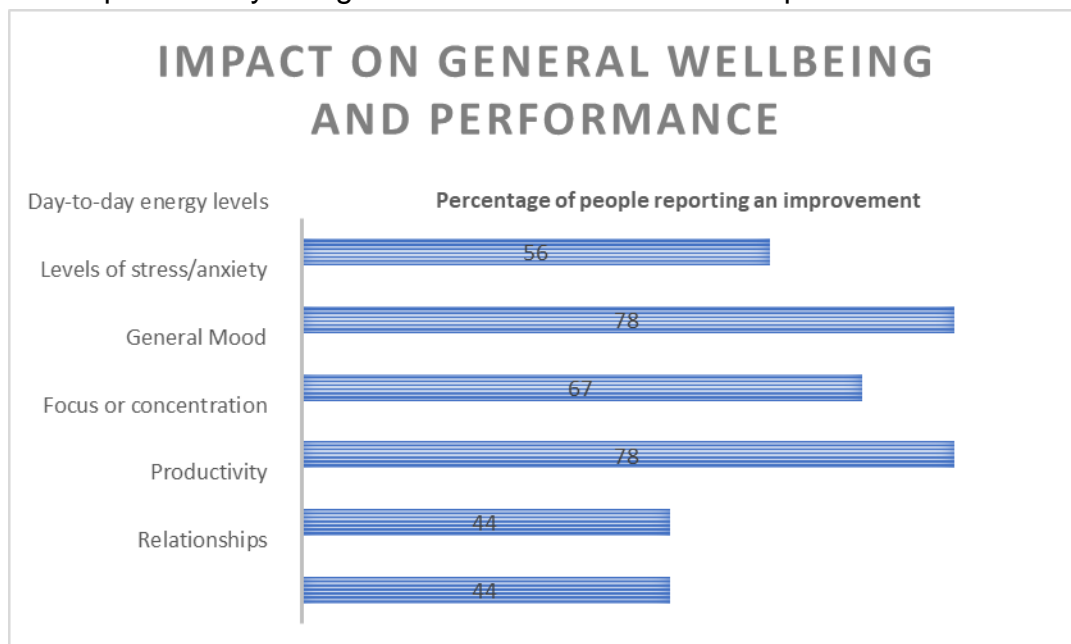
## Evaluation and Impact

A post course evaluation questionnaire was completed by 9 members of staff.

- 100% of staff responded that they had achieved a level of improvement in their sleep with areas of improvement indicated as follows:

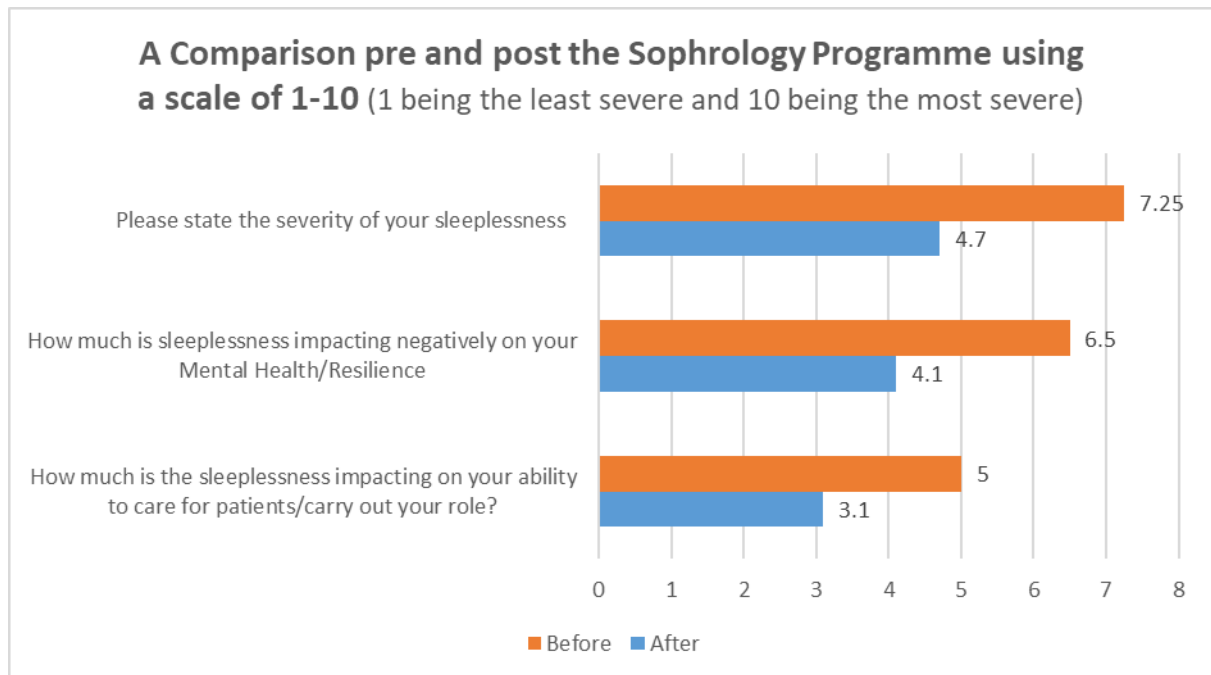


- The 61% of staff felt that overall, the programme had at least some positive impact on their general wellbeing and performance, with general mood and productivity being the most common areas of improvement:



- 100% of staff said that they practiced the techniques between sessions
- 78% of these staff practiced daily

An additional pre and post course questionnaire was used to establish impact. This data suggests meaningful improvements in sleeplessness, carrying through to positively impact quality of patient care.



On a scale of 1-10 (1 being the least severe and 10 being the most severe) there was an average of:

- 3.15 points improvement in the **severity of their sleeplessness**
- 2.4 points improvement regarding **how much their sleeplessness impacted negatively on their mental health**
- 1.9 points improvement in how sleeplessness was impacting on **their ability to care for patients/carry out their role.**

**Staff Feedback: Specific Positive Changes**

'I still wake in the night but now less often and I have techniques to settle myself to sleep again'.

'I was able to completely relax and feel more energised to return to work'.

'Resets the mind, decreases anxiety, lulls into a state of restfulness'.

Definitely relaxation & a feeling of calm'. 'I learnt techniques that enable me to get back to sleep more often'. 'I'm more aware of stress levels, and a couple of the breathing exercises really help to calm me'.

'I feel generally calmer. I didn't realise how little time I allowed myself to relax/switch off'.

## **100% of participants would recommend the programme:**

- 'It gives you a great 'me' break in the middle of a busy work day plus **helps your sleep patterns**'.
- 'It teaches you a lot about **better sleep management** and the importance of personal practice'.
- 'I have team members who struggle with sleep and **will recommend** to them'.
- 'It has encouraged me to **improve my sleep hygiene** and find time for myself'.
- 'It makes you think about your life/day and encourages you to **make time for yourself**'.
- 'Provides areas to focus that you wouldn't usually think about.'
- 'Good variety of exercises – something for everyone'.
- 'Thank you – **this has been one of the most helpful courses** I have been on and will take so much away with me'.
- 'I notice the benefits when I go back to work after the session – **I feel less stressed for the rest of the day**'.

## **Conclusion**

The experience of this second pilot indicates a meaningful benefit overall. Feedback from staff was very positive with 100% expressing some form of improvement in their sleep patterns. It is clear that the more staff continue to practice the exercises taught in the sessions at home, the more beneficial they will become. Staff also found that the exercises helped them recognise and reduce their general stress levels, which of course, contributed to a better sleep pattern. Following this pilot, continuation of the work delivered by the Sophrology Academy has been agreed.

### **With special thanks to**

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