

Impact Report

1 July 2024– 30 June 2025



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Message from our interim CEO, Susannah Basile:



Like many small charities, this past year has brought both challenges and opportunities for growth—particularly for those of us working within the increasingly complex and uncertain healthcare sector.

Despite these headwinds, Doctors in Distress has continued to expand our reach and deepen our impact. Our peer support programmes and advocacy work have grown steadily, and we've taken important steps internally to strengthen our foundation—enhancing our CRM system to improve how we communicate and engage with our community.

A particular highlight this year was launching our work in Northern Ireland, marking a significant milestone in our mission to support healthcare professionals across the UK. Our National Memorial Tree Campaign also continues to gain momentum, helping to break down stigma and honour the lives lost to suicide in the healthcare sector.

As ever, sustainable funding remains our greatest challenge. We are deeply grateful to the individuals and organisations who continue to stand with us. Your generosity allows us to continue caring for those who care for us.

On a personal note, I will be going on maternity leave at the end of August. I have every confidence in the incredible team leading Doctors in Distress and look forward to seeing the charity grow and thrive in the next phase of its journey until I return next year.

Thank you for being part of our mission.

Susannah



Case Study: What Doctors in Distress Means To Me

Working in healthcare is more than just a job. It is a career that becomes part of the very fabric of your existence. The experiences that you see and are exposed to have a lasting consequence on who you are as a human.



Every job has their stresses and so in this sense healthcare is not unique. But healthcare is unique in the nature of the stresses it places on its staff. In no other career is it normalised to see people die, see people suffer in pain, or have to break life changing news to a patient and their family. Healthcare demands these stresses form part of the day-to-day job description, all while expecting a robotic-like resolve to simply “keep calm and carry on.”

When I worked full time as a doctor, I got tired of feeling anxious every day I went to work and hated the post-shift worrying. I ultimately decided that it just wasn’t worth it and I knew that in the long run I would be very prone to burning out. Although I have left full-time clinical NHS work, I still feel incredibly loyal to the NHS and to the staff that work there, including my wife and the majority of my friends. Working in the NHS is such a struggle for staff right now.

As such, organisations such as Doctors in Distress are needed now more than ever to help those healthcare staff in need. As a doctor who has faced the current stresses and pressures of the NHS, I see how healthcare staff often ignore their own physical and mental health in service to others. There is often a denial of the problem, or a feeling that those outside healthcare won’t understand what they go through and the anxieties they face. This is why the help that Doctors in Distress offers is so important, as they bring together staff seeking help to share their experiences and find solace in the realisation that they are not alone. They provide a safe and confidential space for staff to pause, reflect and find support from those that truly understand.

For me personally, it is an honour to be an ambassador for Doctors in Distress. Fundraising and spreading the word of what the charity does has become one of the most important things in my life, as I seek to help the public understand the heavy consequences of the pressures that healthcare staff face. Doctors in Distress serve as a powerful and credible voice in this space, vocalising a crucial call to action for healthcare employers, government and the general public across the UK.

By supporting the mental health of healthcare staff today, we can ensure they are there for us when we might need them tomorrow.

- Ed Hutchison, resident doctor and clinical solutions specialist at a digital health company

Review of the Year

Over the past year, Doctors in Distress has made a meaningful impact and expanded its reach and influence as a charity. Most notably, our National Memorial Tree Campaign has seen remarkable growth, with a 200% increase in the number of trees planted in NHS organisations across the country.

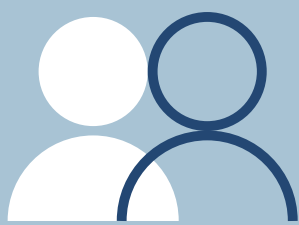
Key achievements:

1st

Launched the UK's first National Suicide Memorial Day for Health and Care Workers, with NHS Practitioner Health

Sign Up

226% increase in sign-ups for groups compared to last year



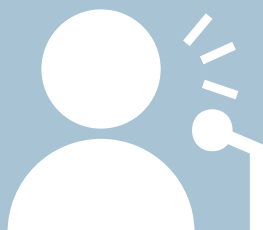
Total numbers supported by groups: 2200



Total trees planted: 20



Total talks given: 32



Conferences: 6 including BMA ARM and Acute and General Medicine



Launched our charity's services in Northern Ireland





Over the Autumn period, we extended our reach and brand awareness due to an effective communications strategy that maximised the awareness days within the mental health and suicide prevention space.

For World Suicide Prevention Day on 10th September, we partnered with 4MentalHealth to offer 100 free places to their Suicide Awareness Course for health professionals.

All places were filled and following the course, 96% of participants said they learnt the tools on how to talk to someone in emotional distress.

We also published and promoted a blog by one of our Ambassadors, Caroline Roodhouse, who has lived experience of suicide, which received positive engagement.



On 17th September we partnered with NHS Practitioner Health to host the UK's first National Suicide Memorial Day for Health and Care Workers. Through our social media and networks, we encouraged healthcare workers to take a moment out of their day and remember those colleagues who have died by suicide.

Our Patron Professor Dame Clare Gerada unveiled a new memorial plaque dedicated to healthcare workers who have died by suicide at a ceremony at NHS Practitioner Health's headquarters in London.

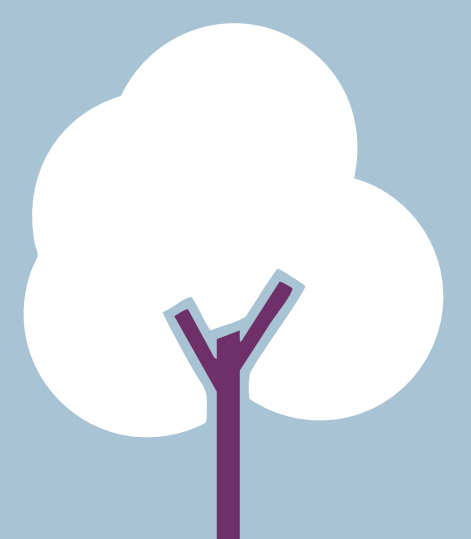
Across the country, various memorial tree ceremonies also took place as part of our National Memorial Tree Campaign, with new plantings in Glenfield Hospital in Leicester, Salford Royal Hospital and The Christie Foundation in Manchester. Regional radio and TV covered the events, reaching more than 4 million people.

Engagement on social media was strong too, with our posts gaining 25,000 views, including some high-profile accounts reposting.



To mark World Mental Health Day on 10th October, the British Medical Association in London and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Gateshead joined our National Memorial Tree Campaign and held memorial tree ceremonies. The BMA spoke about how the tree and plaque represents their commitment to continue advocating for change for those medical students, doctors and healthcare professionals that currently suffer in silence.

We also published a paper by two high profile doctors in the wellbeing space, who devised a theory about the five top priorities for the wellbeing of healthcare staff. This received widespread engagement and was endorsed by our Patron Adam Kay.



Case study: Corporate Partnership



Kate Hardy, Manager, People Consulting – Infrastructure, Government and Healthcare at KPMG:



"It's a privilege to collaborate with Doctors in Distress, an organisation making a real difference. We're proud to support their mission to expand their reach and impact."

Healthcare advisory is a key area of focus for KPMG, particularly in addressing workforce challenges. Through our project work with the NHS, we're helping to raise awareness of healthcare worker mental health and supporting the delivery of Doctors in Distress' vital programmes.

A highlight has been supporting the launch of Doctors in Distress' programmes in Northern Ireland. Hosted at KPMG Belfast, the event brought together leaders from healthcare and government to celebrate the arrival of this crucial support for clinicians in a region where mental health resources are limited.

We're also pleased to have completed research to help Doctors in Distress identify grant opportunities to secure essential funding. We very much look forward to continuing our partnership with Doctors in Distress, supporting their important work in providing much-needed services to healthcare professionals in need."



We are proud of our partnership with KPMG and deeply grateful for their ongoing support. We look forward to building on this collaboration to reach and support even more healthcare workers.



Spotlight on Fundraising

We launched our Every Minute Of Every Day appeal in December to raise £50,000 to keep our Weekly Support Groups running.

These groups are a lifeline for healthcare workers struggling with their mental health—offering a safe, confidential, and supportive space to connect with others who understand the pressures of the job.

In just three months, we exceeded our fundraising target, thanks in large part to a generous grant of £52,350 from the Wesleyan Foundation. In total, we raised £64,500, which will fund the running for our Weekly Support Groups for more than a year.

Thanks to this funding, and in partnership with The Joyful Doctor, we have been able to offer three free online support sessions a week, increasing flexibility and access for those who need it most.

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who contributed to the appeal, especially the Wesleyan Foundation, whose support has made this vital service possible. Together, we're ensuring that more healthcare workers receive the mental health support they deserve - every minute of every day.



Dr Pippa Woolner raised £1200 by doing a fundraising walk.



Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust raised over £2700 for our charity at their Christmas Fair

Our Partners

WESLEYAN

Wesleyan and Doctors in Distress; working together to support doctors' wellbeing

"Wesleyan Foundation, the charitable grant-giving programme of specialist financial services mutual Wesleyan, is a proud to partner with Doctors in Distress."

Since 2021, Wesleyan has invested £180,000 into a range of targeted support programmes that provide vital help for medical professionals facing the relentless demands of modern healthcare.

Mario Mazzocchi, Chief Executive Officer at Wesleyan, explained: "We know that our medical professional customers work under huge pressures to deliver the very best care for their patients."

"Our partnership with Doctors in Distress helps provide meaningful relief for doctors, funding a range of initiatives including the International Medical Graduates programme, support for individuals with long Covid, a GP burnout initiative and, most recently, Weekly Support Groups."

"These groups provide safe, non-judgemental spaces where medical professionals can speak openly, receive emotional support and build resilience."

"Led by trained facilitators, the groups tackle a range of issues, from anxiety and GMC referrals to workplace bullying and mental health concerns."

Thanks to Wesleyan's funding, these support groups have now expanded to three sessions every week, ensuring consistent support throughout the year, even on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Since Doctors in Distress launched its support programmes in 2020, they have helped more than 6000 healthcare professionals with their mental health.

Wesleyan will continue to invest in the wellbeing of our healthcare community and support the people behind the profession – now and for the future."

Caroline Walker, Joyful Doctor

Like many healthcare professionals I often find it easier to look after others than to look after myself. As a doctor I have felt overwhelmed and alone many times in my career, uncertain where to turn, and who to talk to without the fear of being shamed or ruining my career. Due to the kindness of a few random strangers and some professional help I was lucky enough to make it through these tough times, and it fuelled my passion for improving the mental health and wellbeing of all healthcare professionals.

In 2017 I founded The Joyful Doctor, an organisation dedicated to this cause, and I have been an avid supporter of Doctors in Distress' wonderful work since its own foundation in 2019. This opportunity to work in partnership with this amazing charity – to provide several kind and experienced facilitators for their new evening and weekend peer support groups – is a real honour and a privilege.

As Joyful Doctor facilitators we have all experienced tough times in healthcare ourselves and we know how important it is that those who are struggling have somewhere safe they can land. In these groups they will find just that – a friendly and confidential space, to come as they are and talk through the unique challenges they face. I couldn't be prouder of my colleagues who facilitate these groups, and of all those who have the courage to attend and experience the wonderful healing power they bring.



Expanding our horizons: Northern Ireland

In April, we proudly launched our charity's services in Northern Ireland, marking a significant milestone in our mission to support the mental health of healthcare workers across the UK.

The launch event, hosted at KPMG's Belfast office, brought together engaged guests from healthcare organisations across the region. Attendees learned more about the vital work we are doing to create safe, supportive spaces for healthcare workers who are struggling with their mental health.

As part of the launch, we also held a memorial tree planting ceremony at Shore Road GP Surgery in Belfast to honour the lives of healthcare workers who have died by suicide. Shore Road was the first health organisation in Northern Ireland to join our National Memorial Tree Campaign—a growing tribute to those we've lost and a symbol of our ongoing commitment to change.



“

Rose McCullagh, Associate Medical Director in Southern Health and Social Care Trust, Regional GP Appraisal Coordinator in Northern Ireland and a GP in Belfast, said:

"I have come to recognise the compelling need to support our healthcare professionals in Northern Ireland. Each face immense and often unrelenting pressure in their roles. The unique stressors encountered in clinical settings leaves a lasting impact—not only professionally but personally.

I wholeheartedly welcome the launch of Doctors in Distress in Northern Ireland. I will continue to strongly advocate for improved access to tailored specialist support services to support practitioner wellbeing, which works to improve workforce retention, benefitting all aspects of patient care.

This initiative marks a vital step forward in prioritising the immediate and necessary need to acknowledge the importance of mental health and wellbeing of those who dedicate their lives to caring for others."



Beat Burnout Group



We know from our work with Solutions Evaluations through a survey and a focus group that healthcare workers can struggle attending groups at set time because of the pressures they face at work. We therefore wanted to add something to our programme offering that was able to be completed in an individual's own time but still helped them to connect with like-minded individuals.

Our Ambassador, Dr Claire Ashley, has developed the Beat Burnout course, which offers a compassionate, evidence-based approach to recovering from burnout, with the aim of enabling and empowering participants to rebuild a fulfilling career and life. The course is suitable for anyone who has suffered with burnout in the past, currently going through burnout or for leaders who want to support a burnt-out team. The group is mainly conducted remotely but with the chance to meet with other course members at the beginning and the end of the 6 month period.

Course sign-ups have been immensely successful, with one programme, run in partnership with the MDU—which saw 792 doctors sign up for the opening webinar.

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“I am thrilled to collaborate with Doctors in Distress on delivering this unique burnout recovery course, which bridges a critical gap between medical care and psychological support. This comprehensive programme offers something truly distinctive: a 38-module asynchronous course designed specifically for time-strapped clinicians, allowing them to access evidence-based recovery strategies at their own pace through bite-sized videos typically lasting 3-5 minutes each. What makes this offering particularly powerful is that it addresses burnout holistically, incorporating career development and workplace changes that traditional medical and therapeutic support often cannot provide.

The course has been accessed by 281 healthcare professionals, empowering them with practical tools to identify burnout risks, implement recovery strategies, and rebuild fulfilling careers.

Having experienced burnout myself as an NHS doctor, I'm passionate about breaking the stigma around mental health in healthcare and equipping colleagues with the knowledge and strategies they need to not just survive, but thrive. Working with Doctors in Distress, an organisation doing vital work to support healthcare workers where traditional services cannot, has been incredibly rewarding. I'm proud to contribute to their mission of protecting the wellbeing of those who dedicate their lives to caring for others.”



Fundraiser Case Study: Eamonn Kerins

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"Four years ago, my wife, a GP, had to stop working because of severe depression. She eventually managed to return to work, but in the end, she had to leave her GP partnership.

I'm pleased to say she is back again working as a GP but we've learned that mental illness is something you manage rather than leave behind. Doctors in Distress was there at vital points along my wife's journey. They offered understanding, support, and a safe space when she needed it most. I truly believe their work makes a difference.

That's why I decided to take on a challenge I'd never attempted before: the Bolton 70.3 Ironman. It's a half-Ironman event, which includes a 1.2-mile lake swim, a 56-mile bike ride, and a half marathon. I trained hard, pushed through every mile, and completed it in June.

Through the event, I raised nearly £1,000 for Doctors in Distress. It felt amazing to be able to give something back to the charity that helped my wife during some of her darkest days."



Case Study: What Doctors in Distress Means To Me

I am a former doctor and now a coach who works with doctors and other vocational professionals. I help people find clarity and confidence to move forwards in their lives.

I became an ambassador of Doctors in Distress as I was inspired by the mission set by its founder, Amandip Sidhu, after the tragic loss of his physician brother to suicide. I felt moved that finally doctors' wellbeing was being considered more seriously.



Reducing the stigma of mental health challenges in the medical profession.

During medical school, I struggled with anxiety and depression. Mental health issues were barely spoken about and often dismissed among peers. We were usually advised to avoid recording mental health illness for fear of it placing a “mark” against our career. This stigma persists today, where psychological challenges are often seen as weakness.

I have watched with deep appreciation as Doctors in Distress actively tackles this stigma. Through campaigns and media presence it is actively promoting the discussion and acceptance of the mental health challenges faced by doctors.

Growing community and encouraging togetherness.

I left my medical career in 2009 quietly and easily, under a cloak of shame and disappointment.

As a medical student and doctor, I believed I was the only one struggling with the pressures of working in the healthcare system. It took me years to realise that I was far from alone in my struggles.

When I discovered Doctors in Distress, I felt seen. The charity's work helps many healthcare professionals feel supported and less alone, which is essential to thriving in work and life.

Doctors in Distress not only brings together healthcare professionals benefiting from its services. I also continue to benefit from the community of like-minded people of ambassadors and the team at the charity.

Providing free, confidential support

If Doctors in Distress had existed when I was a doctor, my path would have looked very different.

The free, confidential online spaces fill a gap in the medical profession, where fierce independence is often prized over vulnerability. The spaces are more welcoming and safer as they are not linked with the employer.

Had I been able to access these services, I've no doubt I would have either stayed in medicine longer, or had the support I needed to find a route better suited to me.

Actively honouring healthcare workers who have died by suicide, and preventing future suicide.

A peer of mine tragically took her own life at the hospital I was starting to work in. I naively expected an increase in psychological support for doctors, yet her death was barely acknowledged.

As a doctor, many colleagues treated fellow medics with disdain if they required adjustments for individual needs. In hindsight I can see how toxic that treatment was, and it was exacerbated by the widespread stress healthcare workers experience with lack of resources in the NHS.

I am grateful that Doctors in Distress is not only talking about suicide in healthcare work, but honouring those who have lost their lives through it's memorial tree campaign. Acknowledging the alarmingly high rates of suicide in the medical profession is a vital step towards finding solutions to prevent it.

In summary, Doctors in Distress has transformed my view of my own medical career and strengthened my dedication to protecting the wellbeing of healthcare workers.



Emily represented Doctors in Distress at the Institute of Naval Medicine's memorial tree ceremony in June 2025.



Future plans

Dr Jonathan Osborn and Dr Chaand Nagpaul, Co-chairs of Doctors in Distress.

As Doctors in Distress marks its sixth year of operation, we remain deeply committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of healthcare professionals. The core of our work continues to be peer support and community – providing safe, supportive spaces where healthcare workers can speak openly, connect, and find solidarity.

Over the past year, we have continued to listen, learn, and adapt. We know that to remain effective, we must continually assess the impact of our programmes and ensure they are meeting the real needs of those we serve. Evaluation and continuous improvement are embedded into our approach.

Looking to the future, our ambition is to create lasting systemic change. We aim to influence how the healthcare system supports its workforce, ensuring that no healthcare worker is harmed by the system they serve.

To help achieve this, we will:

- ✓ Expand our research to better evidence the challenges faced by health and care professionals.
- ✓ Strengthen our advocacy work, using data and lived experience to inform policy and practice.
- ✓ Continue leading initiatives such as the National Memorial Tree Campaign and National Memorial Suicide Day for Health and Care Workers, which raise awareness, honour lives lost, and call for urgent change.

We are proud of the community we have built and the impact we have had – and we know there is much more to do.

As we welcome our new interim CEO, Mary Jane Roberts to cover Susannah's maternity leave from August 2025, we remain confident that the high standards she has set will be upheld in her absence. We look forward to the charity continuing to thrive and remain committed to fostering a healthier, more supportive workplace environment for healthcare professionals. We eagerly anticipate Susannah's return and the continued momentum she brings to our mission.

If you are interested in contributing to our next chapter – through collaboration, research, or advocacy – we would love to hear from you. Email us at contact@doctors-in-distress.org.uk. Together, we can help build a healthcare system that truly cares for its healthcare professionals.



Our Team



Susannah Basile



Naomi Gornall



Carolyn Peers



Fatou Taal

Trustees

- Dr Chaand Nagpaul
- Dr Jonathan Osborn
- Darren Cockburn
- Amandip Sidhu
- Dr Ananta Dave
- Professor Subodh Dave
- Stephen Cohen
- Leon Atkins
- Dr Nishma Shah
- Frances Griffiths
- Mr Ali Esmæili

Patrons

- Professor Dame Clare Gerada
- Adam Kay

Donate here



For more information:

www.doctors-in-distress.org.uk

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