

“Put on your own oxygen mask first”: The impact of the COVID pandemic on pledge themes made as part of Human Factors training

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Introduction & Problems

In order to provide safe and high-quality care, it is imperative that staff ensure that they look after themselves physiologically and psychologically first.

This has been particularly important during the COVID pandemic. The huge burden of patient care and demands on staff, combined with new ways of working and unpredictability, has perversely meant this self-care has been often overlooked by staff. This leads to burnout & sickness and therefore impacts patient care.

Aims & intervention

The SCReaM Human Factors (HF) and Team Resource Management Programme at the Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust, as part of its remit, delivers multi-disciplinary Human Factors (HF) training. Part of our SCReaM HF training is ensuring that staff are placed at the centre of patient safety, requiring them to implement self-care as a priority.

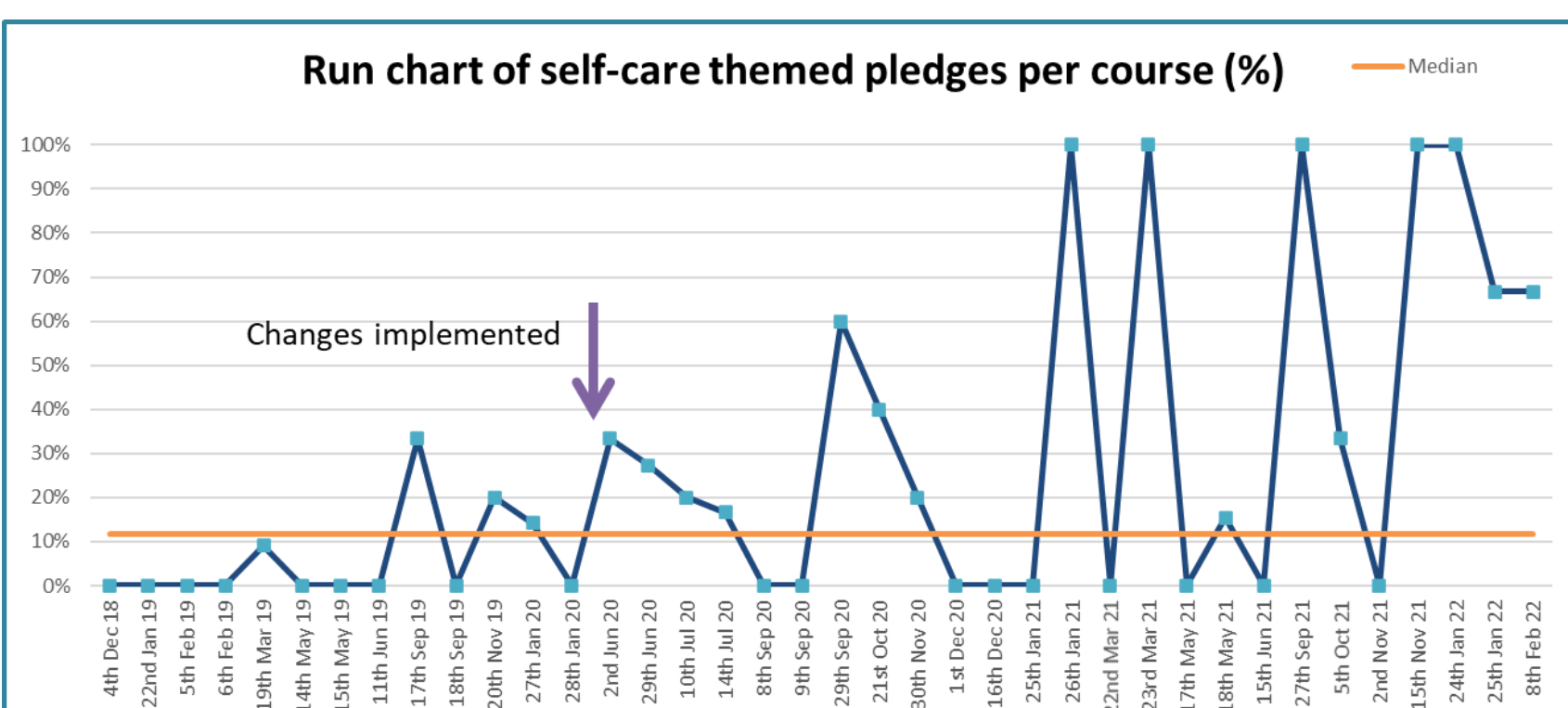
To empower our delegates to translate their learning into practice, they undertake a pledge after their course - something that they have taken away from our HF training that they wish to try out to improve their working lives.

In March 2020, at the start of the pandemic, we aimed to empower staff to recognise and implement ways to improve their physiological and psychological wellbeing. We did this using the ‘Model for Improvement’ and the previous QI work we had undertaken to develop the SCReaM ‘Pledge To Action’ process for capturing translation of learning into practice after classroom training prior to the pandemic.

Change ideas & measures

To accomplish this staff empowerment, we developed a number of change ideas and undertook PDSA cycles to adapt and improve delivery of our HF training during the pandemic. We transitioned from a classroom to a virtual format, refreshed both our course content and pledge sessions to increase the translation of self-care related learning into practice.

The measure that we used was the number of completed self-care themed pledges made after each course. We looked at the impact of our change ideas following March 2020.

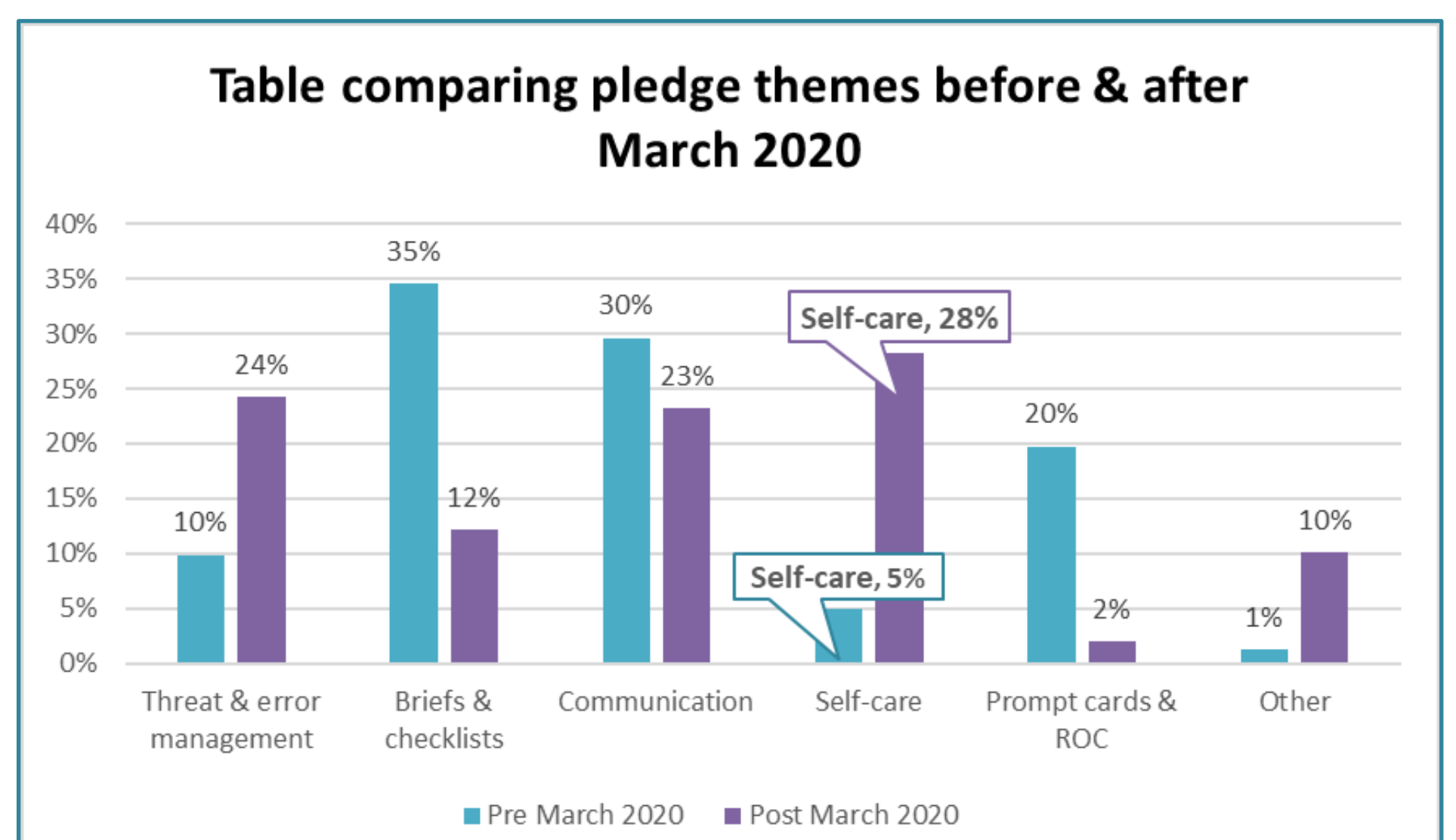


Plan	Do	Study	Act
Continue HF training during the pandemic	Delivery via a virtual platform to enable ongoing training during the pandemic	“Headspace to think” at home with no work interruptions. Several IT issues noted. Difficult to facilitate interactive conversation in virtual environment.	Improve frequency of comfort breaks. Improve IT planning & support. Improve interactive discussion relating learning to daily working lives.
New structure to enhance interactive discussion about life on the frontline and to improve relevance of self-care to working lives	Alter structure and content of programme for increased short comfort breaks. Relevant self-care content to tailor to need during pandemic. Introduce course expectations to enhance the “safe space”	Increased interactive discussion and engagement. Delegates wanting to put learning into practice regarding self-care, but felt disempowered to. Perception of whether a ‘self-care’ pledge was acceptable	Identify ways of improving acceptability use pledges to provide staff with an opportunity to ‘self-care’ e.g. peer examples of self-care pledges during training and change of approach to self-care as a professional duty
Give delegates ‘permission’ to make the focus of their pledge self-care	Delegates given peer examples of self-care related pledges. Used a professional duty approach	Some delegates found it more acceptable to undertake self-care based pledges in feedback. Missed opportunities in mentor groups noted by faculty	Use mentor groups to capture opportunities and further enhance acceptability
Changes to pledge mentor session	Smaller breakout groups for pledges with mentors	Increased self-care pledges made on course. Smaller groups enabled delegates to sound out self-care ideas and receive support in planning and actioning	Expand awareness of acceptability of self-care and challenging perception that self-care is a professional duty rather than “nice to have”

Results

Number of completed pledges before March 2020: **81**
Number of completed pledges after March 2020: **99**

We saw more than a five-fold increase (5% to 28%) in pledges related to self-care after March 2020, following implementation of our change ideas.



Lessons learnt

- Change idea testing has allowed us to set up robust facilitative style HF training virtually, enabling continuation of HF training opportunities during the pandemic.
- Tailored mentor sessions increase the number and quality of self-care pledges that are within a staff member’s circle of control.
- Giving staff the permission, that they believe to be required, is a priority to change their perception of self-care from “nice to have” to a “professional duty”.
- Providing past examples of self-care themed pledges gave staff the acceptability that they need to “put on their own oxygen mask first”.

Next steps

- Embedding the virtual model of training in the future alongside our classroom training to make HF training more accessible to a wider audience.
- We aim to empower staff to implement changes related to self-care. By celebrating the positive impact of the changes that people have noticed through their self-care pledges, this helps to translate HF learning from ‘knowing’ into ‘doing’ and also to raising the awareness of self-care within the Trust.
- We have reflected on pledge process and are developing further change ideas to look at barriers to completing pledges, particularly those related to self-care.