

# Desperate ICU doctors appeal for basics as Covid shatters wellbeing

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Desperate ICU staff driven to breaking point by Covid have been forced to appeal for wellbeing items to help them cope amid the pandemic.

Staff at hospitals in the West Midlands say they are suffering from mental health problems and exhaustion and often drive home in tears as their workload soars.

But when their plight was highlighted through Hampers for Heroes, a community interest company based in Solihull, it prompted a huge groundswell of public support, with over £5,000 raised in just a week and mountains of items donated.

A delivery of 15 hairdryers and hundreds of toiletry items has already been made, and more is on its way.

The initial request for help was made to Hampers for Heroes by an ICU doctor. The doctor said that a wellbeing group was being set up to help struggling colleagues and asked the organisation if it could help.

The request was shared on social media by Victoria Hanson, who founded Hampers for Heroes at the start of the first lockdown, and the response was huge.

Now she is appealing for more donations to keep support efforts going through the website at:

<https://hampersforheroes.net/donate/>

She said: "Many staff are suffering from burnout and mental health issues and they need more help and support.

"We had to help when we heard about this and we've been overwhelmed by the support shown so far. We need that support to continue so that we can continue to help these emergency workers in such difficult times."

Victoria said she wanted to further help staff by offering counselling, meditation and therapy services and the extra funding that had come in meant that would soon be in place.

A doctor's appeal that prompted the surge of support stated: "Pre-Covid we had the largest ICU in Europe and have now doubled our capacity and tripled our staffing. As I'm sure you are aware, we are now swamped with Covid patients and our staff are really struggling. Almost a year into the pandemic and we are back on emergency rotas with very low morale.

"I'm part of the ICU wellbeing team who are trying to do little things like make sure there are enough break rooms for all the staff, stock coffee rooms with nice things to eat and drink and provide toiletries in the changing rooms.

"We had quite a lot of donations from big companies in the first wave but almost one year in these have dwindled off. The main things we are struggling with is keeping the coffee rooms stocked and products for a well-being pack for all staff. We currently have over 1,000 ICU staff so this is a bit of a mission."

The doctor, who wished to remain anonymous, also contacted Victoria to reveal the extent of the struggle staff were facing.

"I cannot fully describe to you what it is like at the moment. Our staff work 12.5-hour shifts in head-to-toe PPE, often missing their breaks as there is simply too much to do and not enough hands," the worker said.

"Normally each patient would be looked after by one specialist ITU nurse. Currently each ITU nurse is looking after three or four patients, and supporting a team of non-specialist staff made up of both nurses and doctors who are helping them with nursing care.

"They are exhausted. This has been going on since March and there hasn't really been any reprieve. We have already lost a lot of staff to burnout, and yet it is still not over. As medical professionals we are not very good at looking after ourselves and tend to just soldier on.

"I can personally attest that there have been points in the last year where my mental health really suffered. I normally love my job and what I do, so to run out of the hospital and drive home in floods of tears is unusual for me, and sadly it was not just me like this. We need help now, not in six months' time."

Victoria said a delivery had already been made to the wellbeing team, including 15 hairdryers and hundreds of toiletry items for their washrooms. Another delivery has also been made to a Covid Assessment Unit.

It comes as health secretary Matt Hancock spoke of the "intense pressure" the NHS was under. He said the work done by medics to deal with the crisis was "relentless" and added it was the "duty of all of us" to support them.

Hampers for Heroes was set up in the first lockdown and stemmed from Victoria spotting an appeal for hand cream for nurses on Facebook.

She was joined by a team of volunteers who now help collect donations, pack and deliver hampers across the Midlands. They have delivered thousands of hampers and reached over 30,000 key workers, including teachers and carers as well as NHS staff.

Victoria said since the organisation was set up, the combined value of the fundraising total, including physical donations and volunteer time, had now reached in excess of £250,000.

To donate visit [hampersforheroes.net/donate/](https://hampersforheroes.net/donate/)

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For further information about Hampers for Heroes, visit [hampersforheroes.net](https://hampersforheroes.net)

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