



KENSINGTON PALACE

COVID-19 has had a profound effect on all of our lives, but for those of you attending this conference the challenges have been twofold.

Your lives as students have been drastically affected by the pandemic, with the opportunities to learn, train and socialise alongside your peers moving online. You have also faced the unique challenge of taking up placements on the frontline during the greatest public health emergency to face our nation in decades. The impact of the invaluable support that you have provided to your colleagues and the public must not be underestimated. But for so many of you, this will have been a tough year and a very steep learning curve.

You have chosen careers that will bring you great personal reward, but I know through my conversations with emergency responders around the country, and my own experiences, that there will be periods where your mental health will be severely tested. And that sadly a stigma prevails around mental health in your sector – preventing those who feel they should be ‘care givers’ from seeking help for themselves.

The Blue Light Champion initiatives exist to help to tackle this stigma and change the conversation around mental health. It is vital that all necessary steps are taken to safeguard your wellbeing and mental health throughout your careers, and your Champions are doing fantastic work on this front – having vital conversations, signposting to information and resources, and delivering training to empower emergency responders to support their colleagues whilst reflecting upon their own mental health.

I am hugely grateful for your efforts and hope that through continued, cross-sector collaboration, such as the work being carried out at today’s conference, we can continue to bring about positive change to protect the wellbeing of our emergency responders.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lilly'.