



Looking after our Mental Health and Wellbeing during Covid-19

26th March 2020

Looking after our Mental Health and Wellbeing

- We all know about the public health challenge we are facing in Coronavirus. But just as important we need to think about our mental health. *We all have mental health*
- We know that most people who have been infected have a mild illness and recover, but if you feel anxious or stressed about COVID-19, you are not alone. Looking after our mental health is just as important as our physical health. NHS Inform has good information on what you need to do to keep yourself well.
- We need to ensure that the importance of looking after our mental health is just as widely understood as protecting our physical health. It is all part of the same goal – to keep ourselves healthy.
- The current situation regarding the Coronavirus outbreak and the advice to self-isolate or socially distance, may or may not have an impact on some people's mental health and wellbeing.
- This is an unprecedented scenario, and it is okay to feel stressed or anxious at this time. This is entirely normal, and it is highly likely that many of your co-workers, family and friends will be feeling the same way.
- This is something we are all going through together. That means over the coming months, it is going to be crucial that we are all able to talk openly and honestly about our mental health. That also means being able to access the right help and support if you need it.
- It is perfectly normal to feel worried during exceptional and frightening times such as this. However, if you are starting to feel overwhelmed, it's important to acknowledge your feelings and speak to someone you trust, whether that's a friend, a family member, your GP or a helpline such as **NHS24 (111) or Breathing Space (0800 83 85 87)**.
- We are committed to providing clear, comprehensive and accessible support for your mental health. That goes from simply feeling able to start a conversation about how you feel, to specialist services being available if you need them.

Practical Advice

- If you are worried that you may have contracted COVID-19, you can check your symptoms at NHS Inform. We will also be rolling out specific mental health advice on platforms such as NHS 24 <https://www.nhs24.scot/> and NHS Inform <https://www.nhsinform.scot>
- In the meantime, you can take some simple steps to protect your mental health and to look after your loved ones:
 - If you are feeling stressed or anxious, consider how you feel when you have constant exposure to media coverage and graphic news stories. Although it is important to stay informed, consider taking a break if you feel things are getting on top of you.
 - NHS guidance encourages individuals who are displaying symptoms, and their families, to self-isolate. It is important that you try and stay as connected to your friends/family and co-workers as much as possible by telephone, video calling, email or other digital communication methods
 - Social media can be an excellent way to keep in touch with your loved ones. However, as with news coverage, you should be mindful of your use of social media. Use it to promote positive interactions and put your device away if it starts to negatively affect your mood. Many smartphones allow you to set time limits for certain apps such as Facebook or Instagram.
 - It is important to maintain, where possible, your normal daily routine. This means going to bed at the same time every night and waking at the same time each morning, maintaining a healthy diet and staying physically active.
 - Getting a good night's sleep is crucial for feeling emotionally healthy the next day. We all feel better after a good night's sleep. Think about creating a consistent routine to ensure you get the amount of sleep you need, but also about ensuring your bedroom is quiet, dark, and a relaxing environment to sleep in.
 - If you know someone who is self-isolating, contact them by telephone to offer a chat and to ask if they need anything brought to them. If you know a person who lives alone and who has no access to a telephone, you can help by safely reaching out to ensure they have what they need to survive this difficult time.

Next Steps

- The advice above will be helpful if you are anxious, worried or attempting to come to terms with having to self-isolate or socially distance. However, we recognise there are lots of other types of mental health support that you may need.
- It's likely that some people may understandably experience emotional distress, or feelings of hopelessness. It is also possible that some people might feel depressed, or that it's all getting too much. There will be lots of us who are having difficulties with housing, employment, money, or the wellbeing of our loved ones.
- We recognise that other types of dedicated support will be needed during these challenging times. We are thinking very carefully about this and will be rolling out this information over the coming weeks and months.
- We know that the current situation will be particularly worrying for specific groups of people, for example, those who have existing mental health concerns. There are many more resources, but here are some good examples including some where advice has been tailored to particular groups.
 - The Mental Health Foundation provide generic advice including information on e.g. staying connected with family and friends; being active; tips on stress management and on keeping a daily routine <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>
 - For children and young people, YoungScot have published an online resource containing advice, and also links to other help and support: <https://young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirus>
 - For those suffering with an eating disorder, support and advice can be found here: <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/coronavirus>
 - For those with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), tips on how to keep well can be found here: <https://www.ocduk.org/ocd-and-coronavirus-top-tips/>
 - People with autism or carers of people with autism can contact Scottish Autism who provide advice via email and a call-back service <https://www.scottishautism.org/>

Other Useful Websites

- NHS Forth Valley – If you are feeling ill
<https://nhsforthvalley.com/health-services/know-who-to-turn-to-when-you-are-ill/mental-well-being/>
- NHS Forth Valley Self Help Guides
<https://www.selfhelpguides.nrw.nhs.uk/forthvalley/>
- Breathing Space
0800 83 85 87 <https://breathingspace.scot/>
- Samaritans
116 123
<https://www.samaritans.org/scotland/how-we-can-help/support-and-information/if-youre-having-difficult-time/if-youre-worried-about-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>
- Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH)
<https://www.samh.org.uk/>
- Stress management
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing#stress>
<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/stress/breathing-and-relaxationexercises-for-stress>
- Managing Anxiety during coronavirus
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zdjyy9q>
<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/coronanxiety-support-resources/>
- Hands on Scotland - help and practical advice for supporting children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing
<http://handsonscotland.co.uk/>
- NHS Forth Valley Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Self Help Guide <https://nhsforthvalley.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/CAMHS-Self-Help-Resources.pdf>

- 5 Ways to Wellbeing
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>
- Headspace – Meditation, Sleep and Movement during Coronavirus
<http://www.headspace.com/covid-19>
- Supporting Mental Health in teenagers
<https://stem4.org.uk/>
- R U OK? NHS Scotland series of leaflets for children - Click the links below and scroll down to 'Resource Detail' and click 'open pdf'

RU Worried?

<https://www.hpac.nhs.uk/HPAC//ClickCounter?action=d&resourceId=22799&url='uploads/hpforthvalley/pdf/L2890251.pdf'>

R U Sad?

<https://www.hpac.nhs.uk/HPAC//ClickCounter?action=d&resourceId=22799&url='uploads/hpforthvalley/pdf/L2890251.pdf'>

R U Friends?

<https://www.hpac.nhs.uk/HPAC//ClickCounter?action=d&resourceId=22799&url='uploads/hpforthvalley/pdf/L2890251.pdf'>

When Someone Dies

<https://www.hpac.nhs.uk/HPAC//ClickCounter?action=d&resourceId=22776&url='uploads/hpforthvalley/pdf/L2890021.pdf'>

R U OK Series Parent's Guide

<http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/158-rusupportguide.pdf>

Audio Files of NHS Health Scotland's R U Ok Leaflet series

<https://soundcloud.com/nhs-health-scotland/sets/r-u-ok-series>

BSL Clips

<http://www.deafaction.org/nhs-health-scotland-launches-r-u-ok-series-in-bsl-for-young-people/>

- Mental Health Support
www.getselfhelp.co.uk
- NHS Fife Moodcafe
<http://www.moodcafe.co.uk/mental-health-info/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing.aspx>