

Staff Connections Ceanglaichean Luchd-obrach

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#staying safe

Ambitious

Sustainable

Connected

Chief Executive's message

Dear all,

I want to say thank you to you all for the work that you are doing. These are very difficult times for everyone and there will not be a single one of us unaffected personally, emotionally, or financially. We all work in close-knit teams and communities and the social distancing measures may make very many of us feel isolated and alone.

There is a reminder of some of the help and support available to you all, and to your family members, through our staff assistance programme Spectrum.Life

We also have the Staff Volunteer programme and the Council Free Helpline number for those who wish to volunteer in their communities or to refer anyone who needs help and advice.

0300 303 1362

We pride ourselves in Highland in being connected and flexible and this is very necessary and very obvious just now. Many of you are now working in adapted roles to help with the Council's response to this global emergency we are facing. We will share some of these inspiring stories with you next week.

Please stay safe

Donna Manson Chief Executive



What you need to know

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is having an impact on everyone's daily lives, as the government and the NHS take necessary steps to manage the outbreak, reduce transmission and treat those who need medical attention.

It may be difficult, but by following guidance on social distancing, or staying at home, you are helping to protect yourself, your family, the NHS and your community.

www.bit.ly/SocialDistancingforEveryone

www.bit.ly/Households-with-possible-coronavirus

During this time, you may be bored, frustrated or lonely. You may also feel low, worried, anxious, or be concerned about your health or that of those close to you. Everyone reacts differently to events and changes in the way that we think, feel and behave vary between different people and over time. It's important that you take care of your mind as well as your body and to get further support if you need it.

Background

This guide provides advice on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

For wider guidance on how to protect yourself and others, and actions to take if you think you may have contracted the virus please see the guidance on this page:

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

This guidance will be updated in line with the changing situation.

What can help your mental health and wellbeing

Consider how to connect with others:

Maintaining relationships with people you trust is important for your mental wellbeing. Think about how you can stay in touch with friends and family via telephone, video calls or social media instead of meeting in person – whether it's people you normally see often or connecting with old friends.

Help and support others:

Think about how you could help those around you – it could make a big difference to them and can make you feel better too. Could you message a friend or family member nearby? Are there community groups that you could join to support others locally? Remember it's important to do this in line with guidance on coronavirus (COVID-19) to keep yourself and everyone safe. And try to be accepting of other people's concerns, worries or behaviours.

Talk about your worries:

It is quite common to feel worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember that this is a difficult time for everyone and sharing how you are feeling and the things you are doing to cope with family and friends can help them too. If you don't feel able to do that, there are people you can speak to via NHS recommended helplines or you could find support groups online to connect with.

www.bit.ly/NHS-Helplines

Look after your physical wellbeing:

Your physical health has a big impact on how you are feeling emotionally and mentally. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise inside where possible and outside once a day, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs.

If you are able to go outside, consider walking or gardening (keeping the recommended 2 metres from others as outlined in the social distancing guidance). If you are staying at home, you can find free easy 10 minute work outs from Public Health England or other exercise videos to try at home on the NHS Fitness Studio. Sport England also has good tips for keeping active at home.

www.bit.ly/SocialDistancingforEveryone

www.bit.ly/10minute-workouts

www.bit.ly/NHS-Fitness-Studio

Look after your sleep:

Feeling anxious or worried can make it harder to get a good night's sleep. Good-quality sleep makes a big difference to how you feel mentally and physically, so it's important to get enough.

Try to maintain regular sleeping patterns and keep good sleep hygiene practices – like avoiding screens before bed, cutting back on caffeine and creating a restful environment. The 'Every Mind Matters' sleep page provides practical advice on how to improve your sleep.

www.bit.ly/NHS-Trouble-Sleeping

Try to manage difficult feelings:

Many people find the news about coronavirus (COVID-19) concerning. However, some people may experience such intense anxiety that it becomes a problem. Try to focus on the things you can control, including where you get information from and actions to make yourself feel better prepared.

It is okay to acknowledge some things that are outside of your control right now but constant repetitive thoughts about the situation which lead you to feel anxious or overwhelmed are not helpful. The Every Mind Matters page on anxiety and NHS mental wellbeing audio guides provide further information on how to manage anxiety.

www.bit.ly/NHS-Feeling-Anxious

www.bit.ly/NHS-Mental-Wellbeing-audio-guides

Manage your media and information intake:

24-hour news and constant social media updates can make you more worried. If it is affecting you, try to limit the time you spend watching, reading, or listening to media coverage of the outbreak. It may help to only check the news at set times or limiting to a couple of checks a day.

Get the facts:

Gather high-quality information that will help you to accurately determine your own or other people's risk of contracting coronavirus (COVID-19) so that you can take reasonable precautions. Find a credible source you can trust such as GOV. UK, or the NHS website, and fact check information that you get from newsfeeds, social media or from other people.

www.highland.gov.uk/coronavirus

www.gov.uk/coronavirus

www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19

Think about how possibly inaccurate information could affect others too. Try not to share information without fact-checking against credible sources.

Think about your new daily routine:

Life is changing for us all for a while. Whether you are staying at home or social distancing, you are likely to see some disruption to your normal routine.

Think about how you can adapt and create positive new routines – try to engage in useful activities (such as cleaning, cooking or exercise) or meaningful activities (such as reading or calling a friend). You might find it helpful to write a plan for your day or your week.

Do things you enjoy:

When you are anxious, lonely or low you may do things that you usually enjoy less often, or not at all. Focussing on your favourite hobby, learning something new or simply taking time to relax indoors should give you some relief from anxious thoughts and feelings and can boost your mood.

If you can't do the things you normally enjoy because you are staying at home, try to think about how you could adapt them, or try something new. There are lots of free tutorials and courses online and people are coming up with innovative online solutions like online pub quizzes and streamed live music concerts.

Set goals:

Setting goals and achieving them gives a sense of control and purpose – think about things you want or need to do that you can still do at home. It could be watching a film, reading a book or learning something online.

Keep your mind active:

Read, write, play games, do crossword puzzles, sudokus, jigsaws or drawing and painting. Find something that works for you.

Take time to relax and focus on the present:

This can help with difficult emotions, worries about the future, and can improve wellbeing. Relaxation techniques can also help some people to deal with feelings of anxiety. For useful resources see Every Mind Matters and NHS' mindfulness page.

www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness

If you can, once a day get outside, or bring nature in:

Spending time in green spaces can benefit both your mental and physical wellbeing. If you can't get outside much you can try to still get these positive effects by spending time with the windows open to let in fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight, or get out into the garden if you can. Remember that social distancing guidelines enable you to go outside to exercise once a day as long as you keep 2 metres apart from others who are not members of your household group.

www.bit.ly/SocialDistancingforEveryone



spectrum

.life 

is
the Council's new Employee
Assistance Programme.

Discover Spectrum.Life,
our new online health and
wellbeing service, by
watching the video here:

www.bit.ly/Discover-Spectrum-Life

and signing up using our
organisation code.

Organisation Code

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