

# YOUR WELLBEING GUIDE



[www.rotherham.gov.uk](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk)

# INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed both our home and work life and has impacted on each and every one of us in a different way.

Looking after our physical and mental health has always been important, but during this time it is even more of a priority for us all.

This guide has been developed to support you, your colleagues and your family. It brings together the support that is available within the council and also signposts you to external support which is available for you to access. The information provided is not exhaustive and so other support options are available that you may also wish to use.

Please take time to have a look at, and use, the information provided. You can access the support at a time that suits you and use it to support colleagues, family and friends.



# FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

We are probably all very familiar with ways to look after our physical health. Increasingly we are paying more attention to our mental wellbeing and never more so than now.

COVID-19 has meant that our work and home life has changed. Some people are taking on multiple roles, working from home, delivering front line services, caring for others and home schooling. For other people it has meant a time of solitude and for all of us it has affected the way we connect with family, friends and colleagues.

We may feel anxious about our own health and wellbeing and that of others. We may have financial, relationship and housing worries. Living through this time can cause us all to experience a range of feelings; anxiety, stress, frustration, feeling lonely, sad, bored or worried. It is important that we are honest about how we are feeling and to know that it is okay to feel this way, everyone reacts differently. We need to be kind to ourselves. This is not a sign of weakness.

There are some simple things you can do to help you take care of your mental health and wellbeing during times of uncertainty. Doing so will help you think clearly, and make sure you are able to look after yourself and those you care about.

There are five steps, known as 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' which you can incorporate into your everyday lives to help with your mental health.





## Step 1 – **Be Active**

**It is important to keep active during this time. Being active helps with our physical and mental health. It can improve mood, reduce anxiety and help with sleep.**

There are some great tips on exercise that you can do whilst staying at home. Have a look at the following links for some ideas:

- **Sports England**
- **NHS**
- **NHS One You**

Set yourself a challenge to get up and move about at least every hour. If you need to, you can start slowly and build up gradually to an hour or more.

**Tip:** *If you are working from home try going for a walk or a jog down the street before you start work for the day. This can help you to feel like you have mentally ‘arrived’ at work. Doing the same when you finish your working day can help you to leave your work mindset behind and switch off.*



## Step 2 – **Connect**

**If you’re working from home, adapt your working style to make sure you keep in touch with your colleagues. Make sure you keep communication open with your team, as often and frequently as possible.**

Try picking up the phone or video calling instead of e-mailing people. Why not share a selfie with colleagues and friends to show what you are up to and start a conversation? It can help you feel connected even if you’re working remotely. Find out how on the **MHFA England** website.

Remember, your colleagues probably feel the same as you! Ask how they’re doing and whether there are ways you can support each other. This might be through a digital/virtual coffee break or Friday online get-together. Talking to someone is so important.



## Step 3 – Give

**Working at home or in different ways away from colleagues can make us feel like we should be contactable all the time and it may feel harder to have a work/home balance. However, keeping going all the time will not make us any more productive and we will find that our mental wellbeing and relationships will suffer.**

If you are working at home you will miss out on those breaks to go to the kitchen to make drinks for yourself and colleagues and walking to meetings. So it is really important that at home we make time for breaks

- Take a lunch break and ensure that you stand up and move away from your screen regularly.
- Give yourself time to concentrate on something else so you feel more focused when you return.
- Just 5 to 10 minutes of short breaks each hour can really help your productivity.

*Other ways that you can give time and support to others includes:*

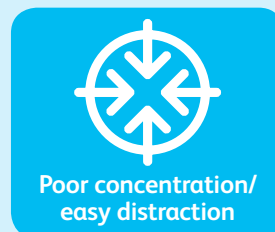
- Making a phone call to a friend or neighbour
- Sharing your talents and abilities with someone else
- Smiling at someone who you pass in the street or supermarket
- Listening to someone when they are speaking
- Showing kindness to a colleague, family member, friend, neighbour or stranger

**Tip: Set an end time to your day and be disciplined to keep to it.**

Give time to yourself. Have a bath, read that book you've promised yourself you will read one day, or maybe start to learn a new skill that you've been wanting to try.

Give yourself a good night's sleep. Many people are reporting that they have experienced changes with their sleep and sleep deprivation can have a number of negative effects:

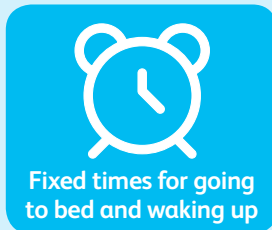
### Signs of sleep deprivation



Try these ideas for helping to get a restful night:

### Sleep hygiene: the right conditions for a good night's sleep

Sleep hygiene is simply a description of the ideal conditions for a good night's sleep. Each person has individual preferences but 'good' sleep hygiene includes:



Visit **The Mental Health Foundation** for more top tips on getting a good night's sleep.

Give your time to other colleagues who might be living alone or providing care for others.

A phone call, message or virtual chat can make all the difference. We all need to support each other.



## Step 4 – Keep Learning

**Learning throughout life enhances self-esteem, increases confidence, encourages social interaction and generally leads to people having a more active life.**

This time staying at home is a great opportunity to learn something new. Why not take virtual cooking sessions with colleagues, friends or grandparents; dig out that musical instrument that you have stored away and start learning again; or learn a new language.

*Follow the links below for different things you might try:*

**Future Learn** offer a diverse selection of online short courses from leading universities and institutions from around the world.

**Alison.com** offers a range of courses covering a number of topics including:

- Technology
- Health
- Math
- Language
- Humanities
- Marketing
- Science
- Business
- Lifestyle



## Step 5 – Take Notice

**During this time try and have a daily routine especially if you find yourself working at home.**

Aim to wake up around the same time every day. This helps stabilise your internal clock and improve your sleep overall. You'll feel less tired, more refreshed, and find it easier to concentrate throughout the day.

Keep to your established morning routine if you can – get ready, washed, and dressed as if you are going to the office. This will help you get into the mindset that you are at work. You may decide to do some physical activity before you start your day.

Try to set aside a work area separate from your sleeping area, as this will help to prepare you for work mode and make it easier to switch off at the end of the day. You don't need a home office to do this – a small desk set up in a corner of your room, or a laptop at the end of the kitchen table can do the trick.

If you're working with a small space, you could try setting up temporary 'zones' by hanging blankets or screens to visually separate your work area from your bed or living area.

**Tip: Limit the time you spend watching, reading or listening to coverage of the outbreak, including on social media, and think about turning off breaking-news alerts on your phone.**

Appreciate the little things around you, watch the sunrise and sunset. Listen to the birds singing and look at the changes in your garden and surrounding area. Open the window or door whilst you are working to enjoy the fresh air.

## Places to get help

For many people feelings of low mood, stress, worry and anxiety will pass but if you find they are persisting then please do seek help. Health services are still there for people who are worried about their mental health. Talking to your GP is a good place to start.

**Tip: For information on a variety of health issues including mental health visit: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

Please talk to your line manager who will be able to listen to you and see how best to support you.

## Performance and Development Review (PDR)

Due to the current situation the timeframes for annual PDR meeting have been amended. The meeting now needs to be completed with your line manager by the end of September.

Your manager will be focusing on your health and well-being during this meeting in addition to talking about your objectives, performance and career aspirations. This is an ideal time for you to talk through how you are feeling and what support you may need to help you over the coming months. Please use this meeting have an open conversation with your manager about your well-being and any particular challenges that you may be dealing with.

This is also a great time to suggest ways that your team can reconnect, especially if you are all working in different locations or home. Your manager will appreciate your input and suggestions.

## Effective Home Working

Working from home can take some getting used to and can be a challenge especially if you have additional caring responsibilities and/or are home schooling your children.

Make sure you are open with your manager and team about your home situation and if necessary speak to your manager about different options in terms of ways of working.

**Tip: Have a look at the home working guidance for more information and support on working from home.**

## Workplace Wellness

The council has a comprehensive well-being support offer available for you to access. Did you know that you can also use some of this support for your family members too?

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is available to anyone who works for the council. The EAP is a free and **confidential** support service offering you unlimited access to advice, information, and coaching and counselling where appropriate.

You can call the EAP 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This service is here to help you manage all of life's events and challenges.



*Did you know the EAP can offer help and advice for the following topics:*

- Health and Well-Being
- Emotional Support
- Work/career
- Housing
- Relationships
- Children
- Money
- Your Rights
- Management Support
- Retirement
- Crisis
- Illness
- Trauma

You can contact the EAP using the following numbers or via the website:

Employee Helpline: **0800 111 6387**

Line Manager Helpline: **0800 111 6385**

Self-help Website **www.my-eap.com** (Password is ROTHwell)

## Peer Support

Peer support is a really effective way of feeling connected

Peer Support is being introduced into the council and sessions will be initially facilitated by colleagues from Organisational Development and Public Health.

We are all experiencing different situations in our roles and with this can come stress and anxiety. Peer Support aims to provide you with a non-judgmental forum that provides you and your colleagues the opportunity to talk freely about how you are feeling and share ideas on coping mechanisms.

If you feel that Peer Support may be of benefit to you and your colleagues please speak to your line manager in the first instance. All requests for Peer Support need to be submitted by a line manager to OD@rotherham.gov.uk

Peer Support may be of particular benefit to teams who are working in front line services.

## Bereavement

During this time either you or your colleagues may have a bereavement. Due to the pandemic, funeral arrangements have been affected and this along with the loss of a loved one can have long lasting as well as life changing impact.

It's important to realise that grief responses vary, are very personal to an individual and can last for a lifetime. As much as grief is painful, it is a natural reaction to loss and grieving is a healthy process to go through in order to adapt to life without a loved one.

Don't be afraid of approaching the bereaved person and acknowledging their loss or avoid making any references to the deceased person. It won't cause any more distress than is already being experienced and many people like to talk about the person that has died. Some people who have been bereaved may also express distressing emotions – this is normal and will vary from person to person. You can't fix the situation but you can offer support by listening. For more information on bereavement refer to the links later in this guide.



## Suicide

The COVID-19 outbreak means that life is changing for everyone for a while. Your family, friends and colleagues may feel anxious, stressed, worried, sad, bored, lonely or frustrated. It is normal to have these feelings and everyone will react differently. For most people, this situation is temporary and, for most, these difficult feelings will pass.

If you are worried that someone you know may be thinking about suicide it is important to take this seriously. It can feel hard to talk about suicide, it is so important that to ask directly. You might want to reflect some of the things you are hearing and observing which has brought you to this concern. Have an open conversation; don't be afraid to say what you're thinking. "I'm worried you're going to kill yourself" or "Are you thinking about suicide?" "Please will you talk to me about how you're feeling?"

- **Talking** – it is okay to use the word suicide, it can help people know you are taking them seriously and allow a more open conversation.
- **Listening** – is the most important thing you can do. Give them time to say how they are feeling. You do not need to have the answers.
- **Care** – let them know that what they are saying is important and seek help for them.

For more information on what to look out for and how to help please visit: [www.be-the-one.co.uk](http://www.be-the-one.co.uk)  
You might want to complete the FREE suicide prevention training (Zero Suicide Alliance), it only takes about 20-30 minutes to complete: [www.zerosuicidealliance.com](http://www.zerosuicidealliance.com)

## Useful links and resources

The information contained in this section is a range of useful links to information that you can use to help support your health and overall well-being.

In addition to the information contained in this guide please remember that if you are struggling or feel overwhelmed do not think that you are alone.

Everyone will have good days and not so good days – “it’s OK to not be OK” and this is completely normal.

Please speak to your family, friends, colleagues and line manager about how you are feeling. You can also contact HR for additional advice and guidance and please do make use of the EAP – remember it is free and confidential so you don’t need to tell anyone or ask for a referral from your manager to use this.

**Human Resources Department** can provide further guidance on the support available.

**Access to Work Mental Health Support** is a confidential service delivered by Remploy and is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and is available at no charge to any employees with undiagnosed or diagnosed mental health issues affecting their work. The support available includes work-focused mental health support for nine months, the provision of suitable coping strategies, practical advice and a support plan, as well as ideas for workplace adjustments at home, in an office, or other place of work.

**Stress Risk Assessments.** This guide sets out the procedure for carrying out stress risk assessments.

**Flexible Working Intranet Homepage** offers guidance on Flexible working at Rotherham.

**Working From Home Intranet Guidance** provides tips on how you can best to set up a home work space, look after yourself and build a routine that works.

**Microsoft Office 365 Intranet Support** Provides support on using Office 365 tools including, Teams, Outlook and other Office tools.

**Tip: for any of you reading this guide in print, and so unable to click on the below links, enter the phrases into a search engine to access any of the following websites.**

**Every Mind Matters/NHS** offers expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing. Find guidance, advice and tips on how to maintain your mental wellbeing if you need to stay at home as well as simple things you can do to maintain your mental wellbeing and deal with anxiety about coronavirus.

**Mind** provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. We campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding.

**Mental Health At Work** provides tailored resources for staff at all levels, making it easy to browse for support that suits you.

**Rotherham’s Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)** service can provide NHS counselling and psychological support services continue in an online format. For more details, call the team on 01709 447755.

**A free Psychological First Aid online course** has been developed by Public Health England, specifically for frontline, essential workers and volunteers. The course teaches the key principles of giving psychological first aid in emergencies and aims to increase awareness and confidence to provide this support to people affected by COVID-19. The course takes 90 minutes to complete.

**Our Frontline** offers round-the-clock one-to-one support, along with a collection of resources, tips and ideas chosen to support your mental health. Call 116 123 for a phone conversation with the Samaritans – all in confidence, with a trained volunteer, at any time. Part of the Our Frontline resources, 'Shout' is a free text messaging support service. Staff can send a message with 'frontline' to 85258 to start a conversation.

**Mindfulness** is a useful skill and practice which can be applied to many areas of both personal and working life. **Future Learn** has a number of free online mindfulness courses which provides techniques to reduce stress and improve wellbeing and performance.

**Support over video call** is available for free to frontline staff, you can visit **Covid Calm** and **Frontline19** to learn more.

**Bright Horizons** are offering guides and webinars for employees who are currently supporting families. This includes talking to children about the virus, developing work routines outside of school, and maintaining positive relationships.

**Cruse Bereavement Support** has put together resources to share how bereavement and grief may be affected by this pandemic. Their website covers some of the different situations and emotions bereaved people may have to deal with and the site is a source of support for line managers and employees.

**Be the One** website provides support and advice in relation to suicide and is working to reduce the number of lives lost to suicide in Rotherham.

**Change Grow Live** is Rotherham's drug and alcohol recovery service. The service is still taking on new referrals, you can call them on 01709 917649. Learn more about reducing your alcohol intake and signs you may need support on the **NHS Live Well** website.

No one should have to suffer from domestic violence. If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence there is help and support available. Visit the **South Yorkshire Police Domestic Abuse** or **Rotherham Rise** websites for more information.

