



# Talking About Mental Health and Wellbeing

A support pack for volunteers during the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19)

## Talking about mental health and wellbeing – A Support Pack for volunteers during the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19)

Some of you may be used to talking about mental health and wellbeing and may not feel concerned by this aspect of the conversations. Some of you may feel a bit more anxious about it. That's ok too.

This quick guide has been put together to provide you some support as you have conversations with others about their mental health and wellbeing.

Thank you for reading this guide. These conversations can be of great value to the most vulnerable in our community.

### Contents of this guide

- Your role, in terms of mental health and wellbeing
- What is mental health and wellbeing
- Mental health in the context of a pandemic
- Tips for having a supportive conversation about mental health and wellbeing
- Key signposting
- Looking after you

### What should be the focus on your conversations, in terms of mental health and wellbeing?

Two things:

- To listen, with empathy and compassion
- To signpost

You don't need to do more than this – we are not expecting you to be counsellors.



## What do we mean by mental health and wellbeing?

- Mental health is just like physical health. We **all** have it... We **all** need to look after it....
- Good mental health – you're able to think, feel, and react in the ways you want
- Less good mental health – you are finding it harder, or impossible, to **cope** with the way you are thinking, feeling or reacting

**Mental health is on a spectrum.... Think about yourself during the pandemic, where have you been?**



## Mental Health and Wellbeing in the context of a pandemic

### What matters to us, and others now?

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a theory of motivation that suggests 'deficit needs' lower down in the hierarchy, largely need to be met before we attend to needs higher up. Physiological needs (water, food and sleep), safety needs (health, property), social needs (connection, friendship), esteem needs (status, recognition), self-actualization (desire to achieve full potential, including creative needs).

Have you noticed this over the pandemic? (e.g. food or toilet roll).

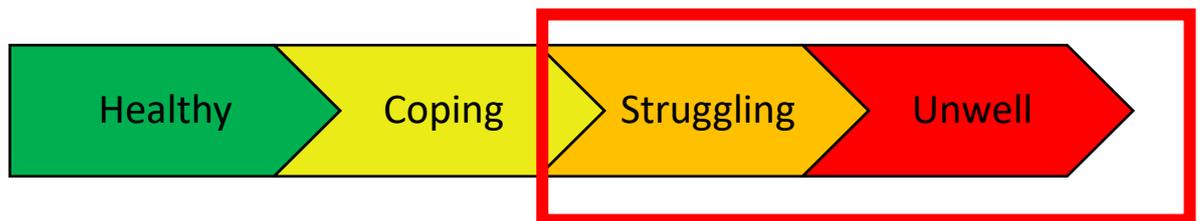


## **It's perfectly normal to have an emotional, and behavioural, reaction to the current situation**

- It's normal to be anxious or overwhelmed right now. It's a human response to what's going on right now. Most of our responses, and the responses people you speak to, are normal responses to a very challenging situation.
- Anxiety in itself is a normal and healthy human response... not a mental health problem necessary. We can't 'get rid' of it completely, even if we wanted to. It is perfectly normal to be worried and anxious now.
- In this context certain behaviours like washing our hands very frequently, and avoiding others are understandable (even advised/required by the government). They are not symptoms of a mental health problem in our current context, they might have been before.

## **Coping strategies have had to change, for most of us...**

- Most of us have had to change the way we socially connect, are active, learn, or support and others. These are often things that boost our wellbeing. The people we speak have also had to find new ways to cope, for now. And at times these ways may not feel enough, they may be struggling/unwell.



## **What might you hear if someone is struggling, and may need some more mental health support?**

- Lack of usual support for mental wellbeing (i.e. usual groups cancelled)
- Self-neglect (i.e. not washing)
- Isolating self (i.e. not answering phone to friends/family)
- Feeling low/hopeless
- Anxiety getting in way of day (i.e. sat staring at TV)
- Feeling stressed (i.e. noticing getting angry)
- Lonely
- Struggling to cope with a bereavement

## Tips for listening well

- **Pay attention** – switch off distractions, make sure you are calling somewhere quiet and private, don't check your phone or email, mute notifications if you can.

Tip. Take a few deep breaths before each call, or stand up for a moment.

- **Listen without judgement** – you may not agree with what they are saying, you may think what they are saying is 'wrong' or 'unrealistic' or 'over-the-top'. Just listen... And acknowledge i.e. 'I hear things have been tough for you'.

Tip. It's ok to leave a short pause.

Tip. Be careful not to say well-meaning things about 'your' feelings when you are listening – 'I know how you feel' 'I've felt that too'. It's often not helpful - as we can never know quite how someone else feels, and what the experience has meant to them.

- **Reflect and empathise** – sometimes it can help people to feel heard, or to keep talking if we reflect back something they've said i.e. 'you've had a lot going on this last week'

Tip. Sympathy isn't always experienced as helpful i.e. sympathy would be 'I feel sorry for you,' 'you poor thing' – whereas, empathy might be 'I can hear that was tough for you'.



- **Clarify** – sometimes it helps to make sure you are both clear on what's really been said. People will often correct you when you do this if you've misunderstood i.e. thank you for sharing that with me. You've told me you would like some more support with looking after your mental health at this point, is that correct?
- **Summarise** – Really useful for wrapping up conversations, and agreeing on outcomes. i.e. So, I've done X, Y and Z. Have you got any questions for me about what happens next?

## Where do we signpost people if they need more support?

- **For wellbeing information or mental health self-help resources**

Signpost to either the emotional wellbeing pages on the Derbyshire County Council website [www.derbyshire.gov.uk/emotionalwellness](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/emotionalwellness)

Or the Joined Up Care Derbyshire Coronavirus webpages, both frequently updated, including accessible videos and online self-help guides

<https://joinedupcarederbyshire.co.uk/public-info-covid-19/your-wellbeing-during-pandemic>

If they've not got access to the internet they could call the Mental Health support line (below) for brief self-help information and advice on mental health.

- **For further mental health support**

Their GP or usual mental health care team. There for them as usual. Likely to be offering telephone appointments.

For additional mental health support during Covid-19 - Derbyshire Mental Support Line which is staffed by trained mental health professionals. [Derbyshire Mental Health Support line](#) on **0300 790 0596** (seven days a week, 9am to midnight – low cost number). Support for adults and children. You can also ring as a volunteer if you are unsure about anything.

- **For bereavement support**

NHS Bereavement support line **0800 2600 400** to speak with a trained nurse. There is also [Cruse](#) tel **0808 808 1677**. If in South Derbyshire, [TreeTops Hospice](#) are offering support to people affected by a terminal illness or affected by bereavement call **0115 949 6944**.

- **If someone is in crisis, or you think they may be**

Signpost them to the [Derbyshire Mental Health Support line](#) on **0300 790 0596** (seven days a week, 9am to midnight – low cost number). They can support people who are in a crisis.

If you are speaking to someone who is unwilling to call the Mental Health Support line number for any reason, encourage them to make an [urgent](#) appointment to speak to their GP.

**Please note** - *In medical emergency and life-threatening situations* (where a person has taken an overdose or needs urgent medical attention) suggest they dial 999 or attend their nearest hospital emergency department.

## Other support options it may be useful to know about

- Samaritans 24-hour support service phone: **116 123** (free phone) or [contact Samaritans online](#).
- Samaritans self-help support app [Samaritans self-help app](#)
- [Staying Safe](#) website for support, information and making a safety plan

## Additional reading/watching on talking about mental health

### Mental Health Awareness for Volunteers (10 minutes)

This introductory session aims to raise awareness of mental health issues and is designed to give a broad overview.

The Zero Suicide Alliance (20 minutes) Supported by the Department of Health, the Zero Suicide Alliance aims to improve support for people contemplating suicide by raising awareness of suicide and promoting free suicide prevention training which is accessible to all. This includes [a free e-learning training session](#) which takes around 20 minutes to do online. This training aims to enable people to identify when someone is presenting with suicidal thoughts/behaviour, to be able to speak out in a supportive manner and to signpost them to services or support.

### SHUSH listening tips – Samaritans (45 seconds)

Simply listening can help someone work through how they're feeling. Samaritans SHUSH tips outline how to be a good listener

### When you're not quite sure what to say - Samaritans (30 seconds)

Silence can help someone to think through their thoughts. But when you feel the silence has gone on too long and you're not sure what to say, a Samaritans listening volunteer, gives some simple advice.

- **Support for you, as volunteers**

It's ok not to be ok. And it's ok to ask for support to look after your emotional and mental wellbeing at this time. However, when we are the ones supporting others it can be easy to overlook our needs. At this time, more than ever, looking after ourselves as well is essential. *Remember – you matter too.* For details of support available for volunteers at this time, see the [poster](#) below.



**Thank you for everything you are doing at this time.**



# It's okay not to be okay

## To All our volunteers... Thank you for all you are doing

### There is support there for you too, if you need it.

Stay connected to your volunteer coordinator, friends and family. It's okay to let others know how you are doing.

### I'd like information on looking after my mental health at this time

- For information on looking after your mental health and wellbeing at this time visit: [www.derbyshire.gov.uk/emotionalwellness](http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/emotionalwellness)
- For wellbeing tips and information support visit: [www.joindupcarederbyshire.co.uk/staff-support](http://www.joindupcarederbyshire.co.uk/staff-support)

### I'd like to try a mental health self-help app or get text support

- For a range of free NHS recommended self-help apps visit the NHS Apps Library, and search Mental Health. [www.nhs.uk/apps-library/](http://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/)
- For 24/7 text support from crisis volunteers, text Shout to **85258**

### I'd like to speak to someone about how I am feeling

- You may already have support and someone to talk to within your organisation, if so, keep doing what works for you.
- For additional support with your mental health and wellbeing at this time, call the Derbyshire Mental Health Support line on **0300 790 0596** (seven days a week, 9am to midnight – low cost number).
- Derbyshire Recovery and Peer Support Service have set up an emotional care helpline. Phone **01773 734 989** (open Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm).
- You can also contact the Samaritans at any time, on any day. Call **116 123** for free or go to their website for other ways to get in touch.