



# Compassionate and informative telephone calls during COVID 19

As Coronavirus (COVID-19) spreads across the UK, it will be harder for people to maintain their social connections with others. For those without regular contact from friends and family, this may be a particularly worrying and lonely time. The limited connection we do have becomes vitally important and can make a huge difference to the individual.

Even in times of crisis such as this it's important to spend a little time and consideration to attend the emotional need of social connection. You may not be able to totally remove feelings of loneliness but a caring contact will make a big difference.

This document highlights important issues to consider when in conversation with older people at this time; it is not designed as a script but a resource pack which we hope will provide effective support for others.



**When contacting others, it is important that the contact is adapted to the individual. Good and active listening can help with this:**

**1. Preparation**

Empty your head of your problems before starting

Listen with undivided attention and without distraction

**2. Introduce**

Hello my name is ... I am a volunteer and I'm calling you because you contacted the Council via the helpline.

Speak slowly

Open with a question – are you OK to talk now? How are you feeling today?

**3. The conversation**

Listen carefully



Help create a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere



**Open questions such as:**

how long have you lived in the area?

Do you have access to the internet?

How are you feeling today?

What are your interests and hobbies now or in the past?

Tolerate pauses and silences



Keep questions broad, open and friendly



Do you know anyone else who lives nearby?

What do you like about living here?

**4. Looking after our health at this time is important**

Topic	Suggested questions	Ideas for additional support
Physical activity	Are you keeping active What activities do/did you like to do? Have you managed to work? What was your favourite walk? Did you watch or play any sport?	I CAN calendar Make movement your mission You Tube later life training Active Leeds Public Health England
Food	Are you eating well? What do you need? Do you like to cook? What was your favourite meal?	Local welfare support team (0113 3760330) Aim to achieve 3 meals, 2 snack and 6-8 glasses of fluid
Mental wellbeing	What are you doing to keep feeling well? What positive things have you done/thought about?	Mindwell Mindmate

**5. Ending the call**

Don't rush – "before I say goodbye do you have any questions?"

Next steps – what action next

Don't share your personal contact details

**6. Afterwards**

Follow up actions as agreed

Don't share details of the call

Do speak to the volunteer co-ordinator with any concerns

## Importance of building trust

It is important to build up trust in any relationship but especially if you are contacting someone you don't know; they may be suspicious of phone call, so it's vitally important to introduce yourself and explain why you are making contact.

## Loneliness

It may be important to identify behaviour or responses that indicate social isolation when this isn't verbally expressed. Loneliness is a very individual emotion, so often there is no 'set' way to act, some key behaviour might be-

- Verbal outpouring and keenness to keep talking
- Crying, depression.

You may not be able to totally remove feelings of loneliness but a caring approach and contact will make a big difference. Charities across Leeds are developing innovative methods of connecting older people, some of which can be found:

**Time to Shine** a city-wide programme aimed at reducing loneliness and isolation

[www.timetoshineleeds.org](http://www.timetoshineleeds.org) Tel. 0113 244 1697

**Leeds Older People's Forum** - find out more about older people's organisations across Leeds

<https://www.opforum.org.uk/> Tel. 0113 244 1697

**Age UK Leeds**

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/leeds/> Tel. 0113 3893000

**100% Digital** - Find out about new and innovative ways to connect people online. The 100% digital team can also help with equipment loans including loans of Tablets.

<https://digitalinclusionleeds.com/>

**Leeds Directory** - information on vetted local services, tradespeople and local activities

<https://www.leedsdirectory.org/> Tel. 0113 378 4610

## Health information and resources

As the situation is changing rapidly it's important to keep up to date information on Leeds City Council services can be found; [www.leeds.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/coronavirus)

Topic Area	Conversation starters or questions to ask	Ideas, Signposting and additional support
<p><b>Physical Activity</b></p> <p>Physical activity is great for our physical and mental health</p>	<p>Are you keeping active?</p> <p>What activity do/did you like to do?</p> <p>Did you used to play or watch sport? What was your favourite?</p> <p>Who do you support?</p>	<p><b>I CAN Calendar</b> - free to download, print out and share or you can order a copy and get it posted anywhere <a href="https://www.laterlifetraining.co.uk/product/i-can-active-calendar-2020/">https://www.laterlifetraining.co.uk/product/i-can-active-calendar-2020/</a></p> <p><b>Make movement your mission</b> - a new facebook group set up which will deliver 3 x 10 minutes movement sessions every day starting Monday 23rd March for 4 weeks.</p> <p>The daily sessions will run at 8am, 12 noon and 4pm every day as live sessions on facebook.</p> <p><b>You tube Later Life Training</b> - the Make movement your mission team will also be uploading all videos from the facebook page onto their You Tube channel, <a href="https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqen30veJkDw_izbDFMyb6w">https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqen30veJkDw_izbDFMyb6w</a></p> <p><b>Active Leeds</b> -</p> <p>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. And more locally, Active Leeds have lots of online resources and support <a href="https://active.leeds.gov.uk/healthy-at-home/be-active/older-adults">https://active.leeds.gov.uk/healthy-at-home/be-active/older-adults</a></p>

<p><b>Food</b></p> <p>Aiming to achieve 3 meals, 2 snacks and 6-8 glasses of fluid (tea and coffee count)</p>	<p>Are you eating well?</p> <p>Welfare check – do you have access to food? Do you need additional support?</p> <p>If no concerns;</p> <p>What have you had?</p> <p>Do you like to cook?</p> <p>Could you share your favourite recipes?</p> <p>Whats your favourite meal?</p>	<p><b>Welfare – support (finances shopping)</b></p> <p>For more information and guidance please contact the Local Welfare Support Team on 0113 376 0330.</p> <p>British dietetic association malnutrition factsheet <a href="https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/malnutrition.html">https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/malnutrition.html</a></p>
<p><b>Mental Health and Wellbeing</b></p>	<p>What are you doing to keep feeling well?</p> <p>What positive things have you done/thought about? (5 ways to wellbeing –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Connect</li> <li>2. Keep learning</li> <li>3. Be active</li> <li>4. Give</li> <li>5. Take notice</li> </ol>	<p><a href="https://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/">https://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/</a> - mental health support and info.</p> <p>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 <a href="#">NHS recommended helplines</a> or you could find support groups online to connect with.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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. <a href="#">The Every Mind Matters sleep page</a> provides practical advice on how to improve your sleep.</p> <p><b>Try to manage difficult feelings:</b></p> <p>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.</p>

<p><b>Mental Health and Wellbeing cont.</b></p>		<p>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. <a href="#">The Every Mind Matters page</a> on anxiety and <a href="#">NHS mental wellbeing audio guides</a> provide further information on how to manage anxiety.</p> <p><b>Manage your media and information intake:</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Get the facts:</b> 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 <a href="#">GOV.UK</a>, or the <a href="#">NHS website</a>, and fact check information that you get from newsfeeds, social media or from other people.</p> <p>Think about how possibly inaccurate information could affect others too. Try not to share information without fact-checking against credible sources.</p> <p><b>Think about your new daily routine:</b> 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
		<p><b>Do things you enjoy:</b> 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.</p> <p>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.</p>

<p><b>Mental Health and Wellbeing cont.</b></p>		<p><b>Set goals:</b> 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.</p> <p><b>Keep your mind active:</b> Read, write, play games, do crossword puzzles, sudokus, jigsaws or drawing and painting. Find something that works for you.</p> <p><b>Take time to relax and focus on the present:</b> 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 <a href="#">Every Mind Matters</a> and <a href="#">NHS' mindfulness page</a>.</p> <p><b>If you can, once a day get outside, or bring nature in:</b> 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</p>
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*Design by Sven Shaw Design and Illustration*

