



WELLBEING GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL STAFF

**For schools and educational settings in the
London Borough of Hackney - 16th March
2021**

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1. Introduction

We are going through unprecedented times and it is okay to feel anxious and worried. It is more important than ever to keep ourselves well. Below is a selection of guidance, online resources and activities that can support your well-being and others. Let's focus on what we can control, rather than on what we can't.

If you or someone you know is having a difficult time:

Samaritans is dedicated to reducing feelings of isolation and available for telephone conversations and support. **Samaritans are available to call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 116 123 or visit: <https://www.samaritans.org/>**

Please remember it is ok to feel anxious and worried about your loved ones. We remind you to access your school's Employee Assistance Programme, and you can also access Mental Health Support from [Able Futures](#).

We have created a [list](#) of resources, services and phone applications which can help you find the information, guidance or support you or someone close to you needs.

2. Wellbeing guidance for schools

- NEOST have produced [Wellbeing guide for staff working in schools and trusts](#)
- [Healthy Schools London - Teacher Wellbeing](#)
- **Wellbeing for Education Return:** New and updated [Wellbeing for Education Return](#) resources are now available for education staff who do not have access to locally adapted training and support, or to supplement existing local offers. These include a short, recorded webinar - '[Every interaction matters](#)'. It introduces a simple framework for promoting wellbeing, resilience and mental health, building on education staff's existing roles, skills and personal qualities. It is intended for use by education leaders with all staff in staff or INSET sessions, or for education staff to work through individually. This sits alongside the original Wellbeing for Education Return [content](#) covering issues such as bereavement, loss, anxiety, stress and trauma and signposting to free [information and resources](#) for education staff, children and young people, parents and carers.
- Regional PHE have also developed a wellbeing document for school staff which includes specific COVID-19 resources and information in relation self-care and wellbeing. This [document](#) aims to signpost and provide quick links to some of the support and services currently on offer by a range of organisations and statutory services.

[Education Support](#) a UK charity dedicated to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of education staff to find out more about them. They provide a number of **free** resources and services available to schools including:

- [School leaders' pilot wellbeing service](#)
- [Telephone support and counselling](#)

- [Grants for staff who are financially struggling](#)

Education Support have just published their [Teacher Wellbeing Index 2020](#) which takes into account the impact on the coronavirus pandemic on the profession

3. Supporting your mental health during COVID-19

Further mental health support and services are also listed on the [Hackney Council website](#). Many of these are nationally available, although some services are just for Hackney residents. If you are not a Hackney resident, it is, however, likely that your local area will have bereavement support and other mental health services available too.

3.1 Five ways to wellbeing

Here are five steps to well-being in the time of coronavirus based on Hackney's local initiative [5 to Thrive](#):

1) Connect

Connect with the people around you. With family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. The Mental Health Foundation has some great tips on [nurturing relationships during the coronavirus pandemic](#).

Tips for staying connected at work:

Stay connected with your manager: Agree work load and areas of work to have clear areas of focus and to be clear on what is expected from you. Discuss how you are coping with remote working and discuss what support you require.

Stay connected with the team: It is important we all stay connected so we can try to decrease the sense of isolation, ensure every team member feels included and that communication flows to continue to deliver the required support. Have Team video conferences, not just for work stuff!

2) Be active

Government guidance says you can spend more time outdoors subject to social distancing rules. If you decide to, please do this in line with the current Government [guidelines](#) and advice on [spending time outdoors](#).

You can exercise outside as often as you wish - exercise or recreation can be alone, with members of your household, or with one other person from outside your household, while keeping two metres apart at all times.

If you're unable to exercise outdoors or prefer to exercise indoors, the NHS has a [fitness studio](#) with videos including aerobic exercise and yoga.

Set a reminder - sitting all day is not good for you and evidence shows taking regular breaks also makes you more productive! Make sure you set a reminder and move around every 45 minutes. Why

not throw in a quick exercise! You can use some of the soft workouts suggested by the NHS recommended break [workouts](#) or some more challenging ideas for all levels [here](#).

3) Take notice

Take a few minutes to look at something beautiful or just observing, for a few minutes the outside world, from your window. If you go for a walk – look up. It's amazing how many things you pass every day without even noticing, especially in London.

If that's not enough, why not virtually visit a [Museum](#), [Garden](#) or [Photography](#) gallery?

4) Keep learning

We always hear how difficult it is to take time to learn new things. Now can be the time to take a few minutes to reflect on how you are doing and how you could develop personally or professionally. There are a number of online resources and you can even complete a Harvard or MIT course! If that's a bit much, you could also look at TedTalks or RSA Animate Videos!

- [Open Learn](#) - you can choose to study a wide range of subjects. Some are based on Open University course materials. Others are written specifically for OpenLearn.
- [Edx](#) - Founded by Harvard and MIT, edX is home to more than 20 million learners, the majority of top-ranked universities in the world and industry-leading companies' courses are made available
- [Coursera](#) - Offers nearly 400 courses ranging from Introduction to Guitar from Berklee College of Music to Constitutional Law from Yale
- [Ted Talks](#) - TED is a non-profit organisation devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less)
- [RSA videos](#) - The RSA Animate series was conceived as an innovative, accessible and unique way of illustrating and sharing the world-changing ideas from the RSA's free public events programme

5) Give

Schools staff are already playing a vital role in the community by keeping schools open for critical workers and vulnerable children.

Giving can just be the small things, like giving someone a compliment or some of your time e.g. you could call somebody you think might be lonely.

According to 5 to thrive, seeing yourself, and your happiness, linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with the people around you.

- To find out more about volunteering in Hackney, please visit Volunteer Centre Hackney.
- The NVCO also provides information on [how you can](#) help during the coronavirus pandemic.
- Further information is also available from [London.Gov](#).

3.2 Mindful practices

There is strong evidence that Mindfulness practices can help improve productivity, self-compassion, quality of sleep and relaxation. Mindfulness can also help people who experience emotional exhaustion, burnout, stress, psychological distress, depression, anxiety, and other problems.

The mindfulness initiative has put together an [excellent summary](#) of resources relating to Mindfulness for health and care staff, including tips, guided practices, apps and 'virtual quiet spaces'.

3.3. Relaxation Apps

| App | Cost | Description and features |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Headspace | Free (10 mindfulness exercises) (iOS & Android) | A user friendly app for mindfulness. Offers 10 free mindfulness exercises with audio and excellent graphics. Advanced exercises require a subscription fee. Sessions fit into everyday life, and the app offers reminders and a personal progress page. Recommend for anyone experiencing mild to moderate stress, anxiety or low mood. Headspace also offers free access to educators, please see their website for further details. |
| Stop, Think, Breath | Free (iOS and Android) | A straight forward App that provides short mindfulness and meditation exercises with good graphics. The user can choose different audios depending on mood, and rate mood before and after. Recommend for anyone experiencing mild to moderate stress, anxiety or low mood. |
| Calm | Free (iOS and Android) | A user friendly App that provides guided audio meditation, relaxation and mindfulness tracks and exercises. App opens with a view of the sea and the sound of waves. Suitable for people experiencing stress or mild anxiety or low mood. |

4. Bereavement support

The coronavirus pandemic is proving to be a very difficult time for many, especially for those who may have suffered a loss.

Bereavement during these unprecedented times is bound to be even more difficult due to the unusual nature of social distancing, the exponential number of deaths and huge changes to usual processes, amongst other factors.

Bereavement can cause many different symptoms and they affect people in different ways. There's no right or wrong way to feel. Some of the most common symptoms include:

- shock and numbness – this is usually the first reaction to loss, and people often talk about “being in a daze”
- overwhelming sadness, with lots of crying
- tiredness or exhaustion
- anger – towards the person you’ve lost or the reason for your loss
- guilt – for example, guilt about feeling angry, about something you said or did not say, or not being able to stop your loved one dying

These feelings may not be there all the time and powerful feelings may appear unexpectedly.

There are a few steps you could take to help deal with your bereavement:

- try talking about your feelings to a friend, family member, health professional or counsellor. Cruse bereavement care have a dedicated page about [coronavirus: dealing with bereavement and grief](#).
- think about how you could fit the activities associated with the five ways to wellbeing in the above section into your life
- try to ensure you are getting enough sleep (more on how to cope with sleep anxiety later)

A few things to try and avoid doing:

- do not try to do everything at once – set small targets that you can easily achieve
- do not focus on the things you cannot change – focus your time and energy into helping yourself feel better

There are a number of useful resources available to make sure, even though support is not available in the usual capacity, you are still able to receive help throughout these challenging times:

- Age.UK has some information on [coping with bereavement](#) and [arranging a funeral – coronavirus advice](#).
- the Childhood Bereavement Network has information on [support for children during the coronavirus outbreak](#).
- [The Good Grief Trust](#) and [At a Loss.org](#) also have dedicated coronavirus bereavement support and advice

The Services for Schools website also has bereavement [guidance](#) and [FAQs](#).

5. Advice if you're struggling to sleep

Research has shown that making sure you get a good night's sleep helps to reduce stress. This is definitely easier said than done at the moment. Many people tend to dream about the most pressing issues from our day, or whatever refuses to leave the mind. The unusual circumstances of the pandemic and lockdown is top of the mind for many, meaning stresses continue into the night and into our dreams.

Our usual routine has significantly shifted, and many are having to work different hours to fit in around responsibilities like childcare and shopping. Where possible, follow these useful tips to try and ensure you are getting the best sleep possible.

1. Maintain a regular bedtime routine which will help you wind down and mentally prepare for bed.
2. Keep regular sleeping hours and try to avoid napping. This programmes the brain and internal body clock to get used to a set routine. Most adults need between 6 and 9 hours of sleep every night. By working out what time you need to wake up, you can set a regular bedtime schedule.
3. Make sure you wind down before getting into bed. There are lots of different ways to wind down:
 1. a warm bath (not hot) will help your body reach a temperature that's ideal for rest
 2. relaxation exercises, such as light [yoga stretches](#), help to relax the muscles. Do not exercise vigorously, as it will have the opposite effect
 3. relaxation CDs work by using a carefully narrated script, gentle hypnotic music and sound effects to relax you
 4. reading a book or listening to the radio relaxes the mind by distracting it
 5. There are a number of apps designed to help with sleep. See [the NHS Apps Library](#)
 6. avoid using smartphones, tablets or other electronic devices for an hour or so before you go to bed as the light from the screen on these devices may have a negative effect on sleep
4. Do not drink caffeine after 2pm, or at least 7 hours before you go to bed.
5. Try to exercise during the day. Evidence shows people who exercise regularly sleep better and with so many people working from home and not going out much at the moment, this is especially important.
6. Drinking too much alcohol interferes with the quality of your sleep. Stick to the guidelines of no more than 14 units a week for both men and women.
7. If you are lying awake unable to sleep, do not force it. Do something relaxing for a bit, and return to bed when you feel more sleepy. If you often lie awake worrying about tomorrow, set aside time before bed to make a list for the next day. This can help put your mind at rest.

[Sleep station](#) has lots of good resources, with advice on how to stop overthinking, how to cope with anxiety and how to sleep if you're a shift worker. They also have an advice page for sleep during lockdown: <https://www.sleepstation.org.uk/articles/sleep-science/free-sleep-guide/>

If poor sleep is affecting your daily life or causing you distress, call NHS 111 or talk to your GP.

- [NHS advice about sleep and tiredness](#)
- [Try the NHS sleep self-assessment](#)
- [NHS self-help guide: sleep](#)

6. Domestic Abuse Services and Support

There has been a reported surge in domestic violence since the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. It is important we ensure all managers and staff have access to the relevant guidance and support.

It's important to reiterate to domestic abuse survivors/victims that the household isolation instruction **doesn't apply to those who need to leave home to escape domestic abuse**. Anyone who needs to leave home to seek help is permitted to do so, whilst adhering to the [social distancing guidelines](#) - such as staying 2 metres away from others and avoiding public transport where possible.

Reporting to the police

People who are experiencing domestic abuse, or who know a friend, neighbour or relative that they believe to be at risk, should call the police as soon as possible.

If someone is in immediate danger, they should dial **999**. The police are continuing to prioritise urgent cases of domestic abuse. Silent calls can be made to the police if it's unsafe to speak aloud by dialling **999** and pressing **55** when prompted to do so.

If someone does not fear for their immediate safety, but still wishes to report domestic abuse, they can call 101 or visiting bit.ly/report-domestic-abuse

Domestic Abuse Intervention Service (DAIS)

Hackney Council's Domestic Abuse Intervention Service are still operating during the Coronavirus crisis and can provide help and support for domestic abuse survivors/victims and perpetrators. DAIS can be contacted on:

Telephone: **020 8356 4458** (Monday-Friday, 9-5pm)

Email: dais@hackney.gov.uk

Additional support

The following helplines can provide confidential support to domestic abuse victims/survivors.

- [National Domestic Abuse Helpline](#) can be called 24-hours for free on **0808 2000 247** or
- National Stalking Helpline - a freephone - can be reached on 0808 802 0330.

If someone is concerned about the safety of children, they can contact Council's Children and Families Service (CFS) on 020 8356 5500 Monday-Friday 9 am -5 pm or on their out of hours number: **020 8356 2710**

7. Alcohol

Isolation and loneliness can have a huge impact on a person's physical and mental health. In the middle of struggling with worry, a drink can seem like the answer to alleviate feelings of anxiety or boredom, or even to help you sleep.

Keeping track of our drinking is more important than ever. Take the [Hackney Alcohol Test](#) to find out if you are drinking more than you should, and get tips on how to reduce the risks.

You can also download the [Alcohol Change app](#) – Try Dry. You can use it to track your intake with charts and graphs, plus see your units, calories and money saved when you cut down. You can also earn badges for days off or reducing your units.

If you think you might need more support for your alcohol consumption information on support available can be found here:

Your GP can provide confidential advice and refer you for extra support. If you're not registered with a GP, you can [find one on NHS UK](#).

Hackney Recovery Service offers high quality alcohol support and treatment free to all Hackney residents. If you need advice and information about a drug or alcohol issue that's affecting you, a family member, a friend or someone you care for, it can provide the help and support you need. Visit [Hackney Recovery Service](#) or call free on 0300 303 2611, or out of hours on 0808 168 8669, for advice on treatment or enquiries about alcohol.

Young Hackney's Substance Misuse Service provides information, advice, support and counselling to young people aged 6 up to their 25th birthday who are at risk or have developed problems associated with alcohol misuse. Call their confidential advice and referral line Monday – Friday 9am – 9pm: 020 8356 7377. You can also email the team in confidence on yhsms@hackney.gov.uk.

Other help and support

- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#): the Alcoholics Anonymous helpline is open 24/7 on 0800 9177 650. You can also email them at help@aamail.org or [live chat with someone](#). [Find your local group / meeting](#)
- [Al-Anon](#): support and understanding for the families and friends of dependant drinkers. You can call their confidential helpline on 020 7403 0888
- Drinkline: a free, confidential helpline for people who are concerned about their drinking, or somebody else's. Call 0300 123 1110 (weekdays 9am-8pm, weekends 11am-4pm)
- [SMART Recovery](#): online and in person meetings. Join an [online meeting](#)

8. Financial advice

Whilst focus is on people's physical health during the COVID-19 pandemic, the fallout and dramatic changes will take a toll on people's financial wellbeing as well as their mental health. For many, the strains of financial pressures put a huge burden on their mental health, with many experiencing stress, anxiety or low mood.

Mental Health and money advice provide vital information and links to help provide support during the COVID-19 outbreak, to help you understand your financial situation better, and how this can be managed with your incomings and outgoings.

If your household's income has reduced during the COVID-19 outbreak, the first step you should take is to [complete a budget form](#). This will allow you to put down all of your incomings and outgoings to understand better how any reduction in household income will affect you.

By filling in a budget form, you will understand how you can save money. Once completed, the form will explain what steps you should take next.

Mental Health and Money Advice have also put together some useful information about [how to budget your money during the COVID-19 outbreak](#).

9. Support with feelings of loneliness and isolation

As Coronavirus (COVID-19) spreads across the UK, maintaining social connections for many is becoming increasingly harder and more isolating. For many people who are considered vulnerable, there will be a tough, but necessary period of continued social isolation. Many of us will miss seeing family and friends and taking part in our usual hobbies, interests and activities. During the Coronavirus outbreak it's especially important we can stay in touch with people who are alone.

The Campaign to End Loneliness has published lots of [advice and tips](#) about dealing with isolation and tackling loneliness during the current outbreak

The [Carers Family](#) is a charity who aims to reduce loneliness, isolation and disconnection by bringing older and younger people in Boroughs together. They're working through the pandemic to help minimise loneliness in London.

Some people who are feeling lonely may benefit from a more formal social arrangement such as befriending, where you are matched with a befriender who can either contact you via phone or in person. Charities such as [Age UK](#), [Independent Age](#) and [Sense](#) offer these services. The [Befriending Network](#) has a directory of services in the UK.

10. Supporting your children

The government has put together some advice and guidance for parents and carers on supporting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing [here](#).

UNICEF has shared some [top tips to help teenagers](#) during these challenging times
[Mind's Elefriends](#) is a supportive online community that provides a safe place to share experiences and listen to others.

London's digital wellbeing service, [Good Thinking](#), has the answer to some of the questions parents and carers might have about how to support children and young people at this time.

[Kooth](#) is a free online counselling and emotional well-being support service for young people aged 11-19 years in City and Hackney. Kooth has no referrals or waiting lists and young people can access it anonymously. It's open 365 days a year from noon to 10pm weekdays and from 6 to 10pm on Saturday and Sundays.

11. LGBT support during COVID-19

- The [LGBT Foundation's](#) helpline is open for those who are feeling alone, isolated or concerned. You can confidentially talk to trained volunteers about how you're feeling
- Mindline Trans+ <http://mindlinetrans.org.uk/> is an emotional and mental health support helpline for anyone identifying as transgender, non-binary, or genderfluid, providing a safe place to talk about your feelings confidentially.
- [AKT](#) (The Albert Kennedy Trust) supports young LGBTQ+ people aged 16-25 in the UK who are experiencing homelessness or living in a hostile or abusive environment. There is an [online advice hub](#) and lots of [helpful information](#) related to challenges that young LGBTQ+ young Londoners may be experiencing at this time.
- Stonewall has a whole [directory](#) of a summary for LGBTQ+ as well as disabled people's wellbeing relating COVID-19 to support, advice, and where to access specialist care on their website. This includes helplines, peer support, digital and online support

11. List of free online resources, services and phone applications

Free Wellbeing and Mental Health resources

Mind - The mental health charity, have created an extremely useful page of help and guidance, including tips on how to maintain good mental wellbeing if you or someone close to you needs to self-isolate: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

Times of uncertainty can be particularly stressful for young people; **Young Minds** have created a blog to provide support and advice for young people and their carer's:

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/what-to-do-if-you-re-anxious-about-coronavirus/>

Carers UK - It can be a particularly stressful time if you are a Carer. Carers UK provides support and advice for carers on coronavirus

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/health/looking-after-your-health/coronavirus-covid-19>

Mental Health Direct - Mental Health Direct provide support and advice anytime of the day or night. The service can arrange for you to speak with a mental health professional and advise you about what service to contact to get the support you need. You can call 0300 555 1000; 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

London Health Partnership - The [Healthy London Partnership](#) provide freely available mental health and wellbeing information - **Good Thinking** which is a London-wide digital mental wellbeing service funded by London Councils and NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups supported by Public Health England.

It offers online web and app based tools and resources to help people feel less isolated:

<https://www.good-thinking.uk/>

Anxietyuk.org.uk

There website offer easy access to a range of information, resources and support for helping you understand how to deal with anxiety during these difficult times while Coronavirus (COVID-19) is impacting on lives. They offer telephone support and have online support groups.

NHS Mental Health Help | Mental Health & Wellbeing

Online support and advice from the NHS to help with mental health.

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/your-mind-plan-quiz/>