



# ST HELENS WELLBEING

Looking after your Mental Health  
and Wellbeing - whilst working  
from home and in the workplace

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# Contents

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Looking after your Mental Health and Wellbeing whilst working from home and in the workplace .....	3
Get into a morning routine .....	3
Setting up your workspace .....	4
Get moving .....	5
Eating for health and energy .....	5
Get connected .....	6
Get support .....	7
Things to avoid .....	8
Self care .....	8
Contacts .....	10
Lifelines .....	10
Websites .....	11
Essential and Front-Line Workers .....	11
Covid-19: guidance for employees, employers and businesses .....	11
Apps .....	11
Further information .....	12

# Looking after your Mental Health and Wellbeing whilst working from home and in the workplace

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Supporting your mental health while working from home. A healthy working culture is built on respect and collaboration. It's a culture where people can be themselves at work. Whether online or in person, bringing your whole self to work is a mind-set that's better for mental wellbeing and better for business. As more organisations move to online working, human connections are more important than ever. Here are some ways to support your mental health, reduce feelings of isolation, and feel connected with colleagues while working remotely:

- Get into a morning route
- Setting up your workspace
- Get moving
- Eating for health and energy
- Get connected
- Get support
- Things to avoid
- Self care
- Contacts for more help

## Get into a morning routine

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- **Wake up time**  
Although you may have some extra time in bed without a commute, 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.
- **Getting ready**  
Get ready, washed, and dressed as if you are going to the office. This will help you get into the mind-set that you are at work.

## Setting up your workspace

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- **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 the living room, or a laptop at the end of the kitchen table can do the trick. The temptation is to choose unsuitable furniture and makeshift working arrangements to carry on your job but try to mimic a desk set up even if it's your dining table.
- **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 living or sleeping area. Clear your work surface of clutter and set up your equipment to avoid physical strain – do a self-check using the guidance at [nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/how-to-sit-correctly](https://nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/how-to-sit-correctly). If you don't have a chair with back support, you could add a firm pillow or use a rolled up towel for extra support.
- **Keep blood and oxygen moving around your body to avoid tension building up.** Take your laptop to a higher surface like a kitchen worktop and stand for a while. Place your laptop, so it is stable, on a couple of large books or on a box on the kitchen worksurface at a height so your open lap top keyboard is level with your hands when your elbows are bent at about 90 degrees.
- **Don't sofa slouch.** If you only have your sofa to work from, mimic a good set up. Build a supportive back using cushions. Put a cushion under the laptop to protect yourself against heat and raise it up.
- **Listen to your body.** If you feel tense or experience pins and needles, it's usually your body telling you to change posture (or stop slouching). Find ways to support your body so muscles relax.
- **Protect your shoulders & wrists.** When using a keyboard and mouse keep them close to you so that you don't have to extend your arms forward when typing (shoulder and neck tension can quickly follow). Keep wrists flat and straight, reducing pressure build up. For more detailed information leaflets and exercises that you may find useful visit, <https://www.posturite.co.uk/help-advice/useful-resources/advice-sheets>
- **For further advice** in setting up a temporary workstation, Check out this YouTube video <https://youtu.be/Af7q5j14muc>

## Get moving

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- **General**

Including some movement into your work from home routine will help maintain your physical and mental health. You'll feel more awake and alert, and your concentration and sleep will improve. It also can also release endorphins that make you feel better. No matter what exercise you choose, try to take regular screen breaks and stretch throughout the day.

- **Outdoors**

If you're not self-isolating, try going for a walk 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 shift can help you to leave your work mind-set behind and switch off. Sunshine also helps our bodies create vitamin D to help keep bones, teeth and muscles healthy.

- **If you're indoors**

Look online for an activity that suits you, such as a home yoga videos or a fitness class. Some gyms are now live streaming their classes, so you could even join a fitness community in your local area. Workouts are also available at <https://www.sportengland.org/stayinworkout>

## Eating for health and energy

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- **General**

A healthy, balanced breakfast will help keep you going until lunchtime. Try to take a clearly defined lunch break and move away from your workspace. Whilst are unable to go about our daily lives, many of us are less active than usual and therefore we won't need to eat as much energy dense foods. Try to eat three meals a day and don't forget to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, green vegetables are a good source of iron. Try not to drink too many caffeinated drinks and top up with water to keep hydrated (2 litres recommended).

- **Vitamin D**

Vitamin D helps our bodies keep bones, teeth and muscles healthy. If you are not able to go outside, try to eat more vitamin D rich foods including oily fish (such as

salmon, sardines, herring and mackerel) red meat, liver, egg yolks and fortified foods (such as most fat spreads and some breakfast cereals).

- **Energy foods**

Starch (e.g. bread, cereals, pasta rice) are a good source of energy, where possible, go for wholegrain or wholemeal varieties, as these are also higher in fibre and will keep you fuller for longer. Cut down on sugary foods and drinks as although it gives a rush of energy it wears off quickly and can leave you feeling hungry again.

## Get connected

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- You'll need to go out of your way to keep communication open with your team. Here are some suggestions that we are trying:
  - Video calls instead of emailing
  - Short check-in and check-out calls between managers and their teams, at the start and end of the workday
  - Optional Q&A sessions for colleagues to dial in and chat through any concerns or queries they have about working from home
- Creating and sharing a My Whole Selfie is a fun way to show your authentic self to your colleagues. It can help you feel connected even if you're working remotely. Find out how at [mhfaengland.org/my-whole-self/selfie-how-to](https://mhfaengland.org/my-whole-self/selfie-how-to)
- If you usually schedule time in the workday for an activity or exercising with your colleagues, continue to make time for this over webcam or phone.
- Here are some ideas that members of the MHFA England team enjoy:
  - Turning our morning coffee break into a virtual coffee break
  - Sharing photo updates of our lunchtime run
  - Video calling for our afternoon craft session
- Say hello, if you're working on the same document as another team member in the cloud, stop and say hello to each other.
- Share your space. If you'd like to share your working space, why not give your colleagues a webcam tour? Or show off your pets at the end of a team catch up.

## Get support

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- **General**

During times of stress it helps us to stay connected. Keep in touch with friends and family where you can. Use instant messenger to communicate with your colleagues if you are feeling out of the loop or need to talk to someone.

- **Covid-19 specific**

For information about mental health and coronavirus visit:

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak)

[www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing-](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing-)

[Support specifically for NHS staff \(and their families\) – see all 6 links within https://people.nhs.uk/help/](https://people.nhs.uk/help/)

- **Covid-19 and Self Isolation**

[https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/application/files/1115/8618/7460/Wellbeing\\_pack\\_for\\_self\\_isolation.pdf](https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/application/files/1115/8618/7460/Wellbeing_pack_for_self_isolation.pdf)

- **Talk to your Mental Health First Aider**

If your workplace has a trained Mental Health First Aider, make a note of their contact details, and don't hesitate to get in touch with them if you need to. They can use their skills to support anyone struggling with their mental health by signposting them to the appropriate support, both in and outside of the workplace. Talk to your Human Resources Team or contact your Employee Assistance Programme.

Your Workplace Mental Health First Aiders may be contactable on:

- Skype For Business
- Microsoft Teams
- WhatsApp
- Telephone call

## Things to avoid

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- **Overdoing it on sugar, caffeine or alcohol** — they're a quick fix which can increase stress in the long term and can lead to poor quality sleep.
- **Overworking and checking your emails out of hours** — we all need time to unwind.
- **Spending too much of your free time in front of a screen** — phone included. Don't feel pressured to always be 'doing' something.
- **Chasing perfection** — it can create unrealistic expectations. Accept that mistakes will happen.
- **Bottling up your feelings** and assuming they will go away — this can make things worse in the long run.

## Self care

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**In addition to those things mentioned above. Look after yourself and set aside time to prioritise self care – find some simple self care tips below.**

- **Setting aside time to have fun or indulge yourself** — positive emotions can help build a buffer against stress.
- **Learning a new skill** — whether painting, playing guitar or a new language.
- **Sharing how you're feeling** — it's OK to ask for help and support.
- **Switching off from distractions** — make time for yourself as a regular part of your routine. Schedule a reminder if you need to.
- **Kettle time with a work buddy** — make a brew and zoom a colleague just for a chat touch base
- **Have a break regular** — use the Pomodoro Technique to break your work down to 25 minute intervals. During your break, stretch your legs look out the window and walk round the garden. Set up automatic reminders on your phone. Avoid eye fatigue by changing focus. The 20/20/20 rule is beneficial. Every 20 minutes look 20 feet into the distance for 20 seconds to prevent eye strain.
- **Move away** — If you take a call close your computer and sit on another chair.
- **Timetable** – follow a timetable and have a healthy routine



- **Pack up** – When finished put your office back in the bag
- **Me time** – Make time for you
- **Listen to the birds** when putting washing on the line
- **Headphones in** and listen to a podcast. From food and sport to mental wellbeing and resilience, a podcast can increase productivity and provide escapism. You can also download meditation apps such as Headspace, Calm and Insight Timer which provide thousands of meditations, all that differ in the length of time (from a one-minute breather to hours of mindfulness to help you sleep).
- **Download the 'Action For Happiness'** calendar now to see 30 daily suggested actions to look after ourselves and each other during the Covid-19 crisis  
<https://www.actionforhappiness.org/coping-calendar>

### Build resilience with these 10 tips:

- **Self-compassion** – It's okay to have the thoughts and feelings you are having.
- **Empathy and emotional intelligence** – Support others to have their thoughts and feelings.
- **Humour** – Find something that works for you and make sure you have a good laugh.
- **Focus** – On what has stayed the same even when it feels like everything has changed.
- **Connect and Communication** – Humans are social creatures, therefore make the time to connect.
- **Mindlessness** – Find opportunities to 'zone out' and become absorbed in something.
- **Adaptability** – Out openness to change and creating options and choices.
- **Learn** – Reflect on the new skills, behaviours, mind-sets, beliefs, and capabilities that you've gained.
- **Volunteering** – Do something for someone else, an act of kindness has a positive effect on us (whilst following government guidelines regarding social distancing)
- **Food & Activity** – Where possible, eat a little healthier and do some form of exercise daily.

# Contacts

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## Lifelines

◆ **North West Boroughs Healthcare 24/7 Crisis Line** - free to call from mobile and landlines (the service is available for all ages incl. Children and Young People.

- **0800 051 1508** for people living in Halton, Knowsley, St Helens and Warrington
- **0800 051 3253** for people living in Wigan

**Get an emergency GP appointment**  
(or call NHS 111, if the GP surgery is closed)

**Call the St. Helens Assessment Team : 01744 621 688**  
(for ages 18 & over) Available 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week

**Call the CAMHS Assessment & Response Team : 01925 579 405**  
(for ages 18 & under) Available 9am to 9pm, seven days a week

### **Call SAMARITANS: 116 123**

A free-to-call service available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year if you want to talk to someone in confidence. You can also email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) and contact Samaritans on behalf of someone you are worried about and Samaritans can reach out to them.

### **Call HOPELINEUK: 0800 068 4141**

For Children and young people (under the age of 35) or anyone concerned about a young person.

### **Call CALM: 0800 58 58 58**

Campaign Against Living Miserably is leading a movement against suicide, the single biggest killer of men under 45 in the UK and the cause of 18 deaths every day. Open 5pm – midnight, 365 days a year.

### **Able Futures: 0800 321 3137**

8am – 10pm Monday to Friday

Able Futures can offer one to one support, advice and guidance for up to 9 months to anyone that is in work and struggling with poor mental health or wellbeing. There are no waiting lists and you will have access to a dedicated mental health professional within 30 days of self-referring via telephone, video calls and e-mails. Email: [hello@ablefutures.co.uk](mailto:hello@ablefutures.co.uk)

## Websites

### OK TO ASK

[www.oktoaskcampaign.co.uk/covid-19/](http://www.oktoaskcampaign.co.uk/covid-19/)

### Your Mind Plan

Complete the Mind Plan Quiz and get expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing

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

### St Helens Wellbeing Service

<https://www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk/>

### CHAMPS 'Kind to Your Mind'

Campaign for people living and working in Cheshire and Merseyside, 24/7 support helpline

<https://kindtoyourmind.org/>

### Essential and Front-Line Workers

<https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/ourfrontline/>

### Covid-19: guidance for employees, employers and businesses

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>

## Apps

- Stay Alive App - <https://www.prevent-suicide.org.uk/find-help-now/stay-alive-app/>
- Try these Mindfulness Apps (see '[Self Care](#)' section above)
  - Stop, Breathe & Think - <https://www.stopbreathethink.com/>
  - Smiling Mind - <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>
  - Insight Timer - <https://insighttimer.com/insighttimer>

## Further information

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For further information, please visit the #mywholeself national campaign here:  
<https://mhfaengland.org/my-whole-self/>

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