



**COVID-19  
Wellbeing Toolkit**

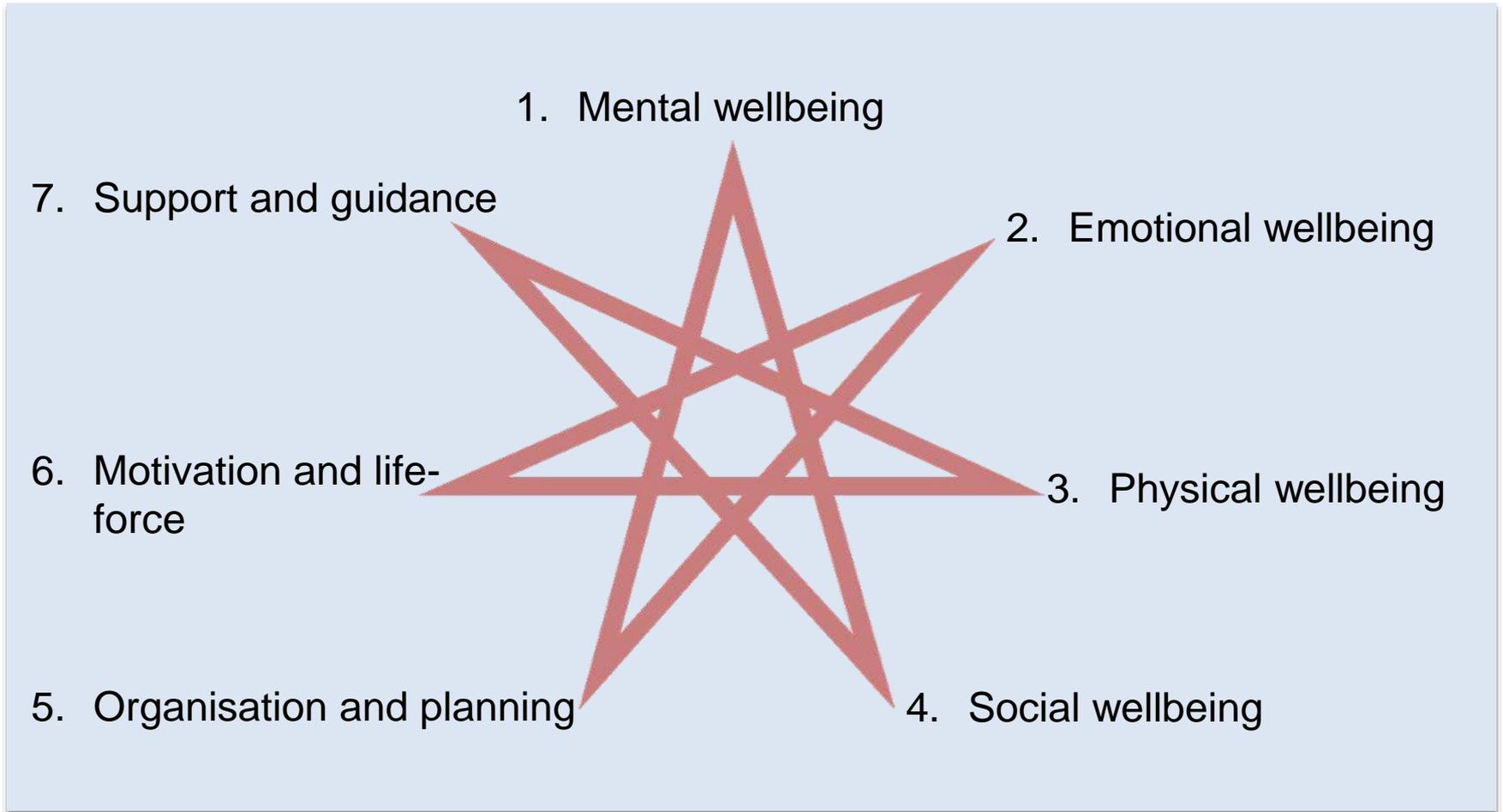
**Burchetts  
Green Village**



*This toolkit has been prepared by one of our local residents, Rachela Leonello, who is a UKCP registered psychotherapist, IAPC&M accredited Master Coach and Head of Wellbeing in a secondary boys school based in London. We hope that you find it helpful and that it gives you some supportive tools to not only survive but thrive during the coming months. It is important to note that this toolkit is intended for informational purposes only and is not intended to be professional medical or psychological advice, diagnosis or treatment. Please be careful to do your own research and secure your own professional advice before trying any tools or following any tips or guidance in this toolkit. Please do not ignore professional medical advice in seeking treatment as a result of anything that you read in this toolkit. Any links to other websites or references to third party research or information does not represent sponsorship, affiliation or endorsement of the same and are provided as helpful links, the accuracy, credibility and usefulness of which should be determined by you after doing your own research.*



# Wellbeing – 7 key ingredients





# 1. Mental wellbeing





# 1. Mental wellbeing

With a global pandemic, we all need to muster as much **mental strength** as we can! Mental strength is not just about being strong and macho. It is about:

- 1. Adopting rational and helpful thinking:** This is about really asking yourself whether your thoughts are 100% true and helpful. If not then tap yourself to acknowledge this and reframe/replace them on the spot to something that is. Then tap the more helpful and true thought into your heart so it settles in to your heart, mind and your body.
- 2. Sticking to the facts and limiting bad news:** Only read updates from reputable sources and stick to the facts – Government web links are best (see second to last page of this toolkit for the key Government links) - Also try to limit news checks and switch to good news publishers for more uplifting stories and content. See [www.goodnewsnetwork.org](http://www.goodnewsnetwork.org) and [www.positive.news](http://www.positive.news)
- 3. Compartmentalising and doing one thing at a time:** Sometimes doing more than one thing at a time is unhelpful as the mind can become overwhelmed, which in turn impacts your ability to focus. Whether it is relaxation or work, you are better off 'compartmentalising' – this means focusing on one thing and putting everything else into the background. To help you do this with the Covid-19, close your eyes and imagine putting all your thoughts and feelings about it onto a cloud which floats off into the distance or the moon. After you do this notice how it feels in your body to be Corona free. Really expand into this feeling and enjoy a few minutes of respite. If it helps, visualise surrounding yourself with things that comfort and nurture you.



# 1. Mental wellbeing

4. **Keeping your mind fit:** Mental fitness is just as important as physical fitness, and shouldn't be neglected. Building mental dexterity and strengthening exercises into your daily routine can help you reap the benefits of a sharper mind. E.g., games, puzzles and challenges that rely on logic, reasoning and memory; reading, meditation; and learning something new.
5. **Focusing only on what you can control and not on what you can't:** What is the point of worrying about things that you can't control – instead use your energy and thoughts to focus on all that you can change.
6. **Doing things you might not want to do, but that also help you :** This might include cleaning up after yourself at home, sticking to your routine, getting out of bed on time, resisting distractions when you are meant to be working and being more patient, kind and respectful to others even if you are having a bad day. It also means pushing through bad habits and unhelpful urges – to help with this try the **Wave Breath** – breathe in the urge as though it was a wave rising up behind you, then feel the peak of the wave as you hold the breath for a few moments. Then imagine pushing the wave to the shore as you breathe out.



# 1. Mental wellbeing

7. **Learning and growing from your experiences rather than sinking with them** – Life is full of ups and downs, difficulties and challenges – this is completely normal so start to view them as an opportunity to learn rather than a set-back. That way when you meet that difficulty or challenge again you will be smarter, wiser and stronger.
8. **Staying calm under pressure:** It's easy to get stressed at the moment. A bit of stress is good as it is an invitation to step up to a challenge and without it we wouldn't be able to go for it and advance in life. However too much stress can, amongst other things, impact your ability to focus and think straight, which can have a knock on effect on cognitive functioning (planning, learning, memory, judgement, decision-making and rational thought). One of the easiest things you can do to manage stress and stay calm is to regulate your breath. You can do this by inhaling deeply - and then exhaling slowly with your mouth closed – making sure the out-breath is longer than the in-breath. At the end of each in-breath and out-breath hold the breath for a few moments. After you start to feel more relaxed allow yourself to transition slowly to natural breathing. Another good breath technique is the Bubble Breath especially if you are suffering from panic. Simply breathe in deeply, hold the breath for a few moments and on the exhalation, purse your lips and imagine blowing bubbles into a cup through a straw for as long as you can.



## 2. Emotional wellbeing





## 2. Emotional wellbeing

Fear, anxiety, sadness, anger and frustration are just a handful of emotions that most of us are experiencing at the moment. It is normal and natural to experience these emotions, especially in the face of a worldwide pandemic. However, unless you catch, welcome and process them, they tend to stick around for longer than you might want them to. As well as causing you unnecessary suffering, it can also impact your ability to focus and think straight.

To help you with catching, processing and dealing with your emotions in a way that is helpful and not harmful (referred to commonly as emotional regulation) try the following tips and tools. *IMPORTANT NOTE: It is important to only work with emotions when you feel strong and safe enough to face them. If you have any concerns or suffer from any mental health issues, please secure the approval of your mental health team/professional before trying any tools or following any tips/guidance in this toolkit.*

- 1. Get to know your emotions and when they are around:** Many of us get so good at resisting emotions, numbing emotions and pushing emotions away that they become difficult to access even when they are around. E.g., the person who says he's not angry even if he/she clearly is. A simple way to access or catch emotions is to put your hand on your heart and ask yourself what you are feeling right now. Another way is notice physical sensations that typically indicate the presence of certain emotions (referred to as **Body Alarms**). E.g. Hot head and clenched jaw if you are angry.



## 2. Emotional wellbeing

- 2. Welcome emotions and let them in:** Emotions are completely normal and natural and often arise to give you a message or remind you that something important is going on (such as a pandemic). Just like the weather, emotions come and go - so if they come knocking and it feels safe, instead of resisting or numbing them away, give them some time and space to deliver their message and allow them to blow over naturally. If you don't, the risk is that the emotions will intensify and stick around for longer they need to.
- 3. Process emotions in a way that is helpful and not harmful:** After catching and opening up to emotions, it is important to ask yourself whether you can do something helpful for yourself as a result of them. This might include taking time out, taking good care of yourself, having a good cry, reaching out for support, telling someone how you feel in a way that is respectful, letting off steam, self soothing (giving yourself a hug, gentle rocking, wrapping up in a blanket or duvet, dusting off your old comforter from when you were young) and keeping a journal where you write down your feelings.



## 2. Emotional wellbeing

- 4. Boost your mood?:** Nobody likes the thought of social distancing or isolating. However, there are many simple things that you can do to boost your mood. These include viewing your circumstances with more positive lens (i.e. isolating yourself at home is a chance to slow down and focus on your wellbeing, spend more time with your family and catch up on all the things at home that you keep on putting off), focusing on someone's character strengths instead of their weaknesses, remembering what is important to you and honouring these things, keeping a gratitude journal where you write down three things you are grateful for and why before going to bed, spending time with good friends and pets, choosing to be hopeful about the future instead of constantly worrying about it and limiting how much 'bad news' you consume – either cutting it out completely or allowing yourself to check it only once or twice per day.
- 5. Medication for mental health:** If you are on any prescribed medication for a mental health reason, please do continue taking it, unless advised otherwise by your doctor. If you are worried about getting your prescription, call the pharmacy where you collect your medication, or your GP. They can arrange getting your prescription delivered or picked up by someone else.



### 3. Physical wellbeing





## 3. Physical wellbeing

- 1. Sleep and rest** - Being more house-bound is a good opportunity to get better quality sleep and rest. Good quality sleep restores and rejuvenates the body and the mind, helps with cognitive functioning, aids and facilitates growth and the healing process and promotes good physical and mental health. To get better quality sleep, make your room sleep-tastic with a comfortable bed and pillows and black out blinds; develop a sleep schedule where you get enough sleep (average for most teenagers is 9 ¼ hrs and adults is about 7-8hrs); get up and sleep at regular times; get sufficient fresh air, sunlight and exercise to regulate your body clock; and adopt a 30-60 minute sleep routine where you have a warm bath or shower, lower the lights, turn off all electronics and read a good book in bed that has nothing to do with work or school. Good quality rest is also important during the months ahead— when you take rest try and be very honest with yourself about whether the activity is indeed restful.
- 2. Nutrition** - When you're at home it can be tempting to just sit on the sofa without moving, eating unbalanced meals and snacking all day as a way to entertain yourself. However it is an important time to get all the nutrients you need. This not only allows your body to grow and develop properly, it also boost your immunity and helps you feel strong physically and mentally. Eating regular and nutritious meals doesn't have to mean giving up your favourite foods. It simply means eating a variety of foods and cutting down on items high in fat and sugar, such as sugary, fizzy drinks, crisps, cakes and chocolate. These foods should be eaten less often and in smaller amounts. Why not use this period of being more house-bound as an opportunity to explore healthy cooking and eating? See the **Eatwell Guide** for a guide on foods you should be eating, plus a guide for portion size::

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>



## 3. Physical wellbeing

- 3. Hydration:** Is incredibly important, given that we are largely made of H<sub>2</sub>O – approximately 83% of our blood, 75% of our brain and 75% of our muscles are water. As babies, we are approximately 90% water. As adults, we are approximately 75% water and in old age, we are 60% water. As a result we need to constantly replenish and hydrate our bodies. Plus there are numerous health benefits to staying hydrated, including feeling less tired. As for how much we should be drinking, 2-3 litres per day is the general recommendation
- 4. Exercise:** Is something that you can easily do at home and in local parks during the coming months. As well as boosting your immunity, exercise has many health benefits such as: releasing endorphins and hormones which help you perform at an optimum level and also improve mood; improving cardiovascular health, which allows you to have greater endurance throughout the day; helping you get a good night's sleep, which improves cognitive functioning, energy levels and mood; and strengthening your ability to function cognitively and releasing neurotransmitters and proteins called neurotrophic factors, which cause nerves to make new connections, and which some experts claim can improve brain functioning and performance.
- 5. Personal hygiene:** Never has personal hygiene been more important than now. It is critical to wash your hands properly – see guidance here: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/> It is also important to know how to prevent catching and spreading Corona Virus. See: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>



- 6. Medication for physical health:** If you are on any prescribed medication for a physical health reason, please do continue taking it, unless advised otherwise by your doctor. If you are worried about getting your prescription, call the pharmacy where you collect your medication, or your GP. They can arrange getting your prescription delivered or picked up by someone else
- 7. Fresh air:** There's more oxygen outside than there is indoors because outside you're recycling the existing oxygen. More oxygen results in an increase in serotonin. This not only makes you feel more awake, calmer, happier and more relaxed, it also helps you prepare for sleep at the end of the day. When walking outside, please be aware of Government guidelines on social distancing, so walking in nature or places that are not densely populated is best. In the event you are confined to home, then try and use balconies and back yards and open windows to get the fresh air that you need.
- 8. Exposure to natural light and Vitamin D:** When you expose yourself to natural light, your skin can absorb vitamin D, which is a critical vitamin that limits bone loss and reduces the risk of heart disease, weight gain, and various cancers. Exposure to natural light can also help your sleep in that it regulate your circadian rhythms – which is like a clock that tells you when its time to be awake and asleep. Lastly, natural sunlight increases the release of serotonin, which is known as the happy hormone. This helps you to have a better mood, as well as feel focused and calm. Without enough natural light, serotonin levels drop, which is associated with seasonal affective disorder.



## 4. Social wellbeing





## 4. Social wellbeing

**Connection** - Connecting to friends, family and loved ones during the coming months either in person or via social media) is a great thing to do to keep up your spirits – but it is also vital to maintaining good wellbeing. Harvard University, researchers found that when you experience stressful circumstances (which would include the Corona Virus crisis), your pituitary gland releases oxytocin, a hormone that encourages you to seek human connection. More oxytocin is also released when you actually form good connections with others, such as receiving a hug from someone. Oxytocin is an anti-inflammatory that allows blood vessels to stay relaxed under stress. When oxytocin molecules react with the heart's receptors for this hormone, heart cells are compelled to regenerate, and thus recover from any stress-induced damage. This research suggests that our natural stress response to events such as the worldwide pandemic has a built-in mechanism for stress resilience — and that mechanism is positive human connection and kindness. If you want to stay connected to friends and family, there are many social media Apps to choose from – just a few of these include WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Skype, Zoom, Viber, Snapchat, LinkedIn and Instagram.



## 4. Social wellbeing

**Kindness** Social wellbeing isn't just about human connection – it's about human connection with kindness. To watch a short video about the science of kindness and how it strengthens human connection and boosts overall wellbeing click here: <https://www.randomactsofkindness.org/kindness-videos/18-the-science-of-kindness>

Below are also some ideas about how you might connect with kindness to friends and family.

- Smile when you can
- Hold the door open for family members at home
- Give an honest compliment
- Thank someone who you appreciate
- Be a good listener
- Offer your help to someone – especially those that might be self-isolating or who are feeling sad, down or lonely
- Ask someone how their day is going
- Make a family member a coffee, tea or nice drink
- Let a family member go past you or use the bathroom first if they are in a rush
- Make home-made cards and send them in the post
- Remember someone's birthday
- Make a regular video or audio chat date with friends so that they feel cared for and supported



# 5. Organisation and planning





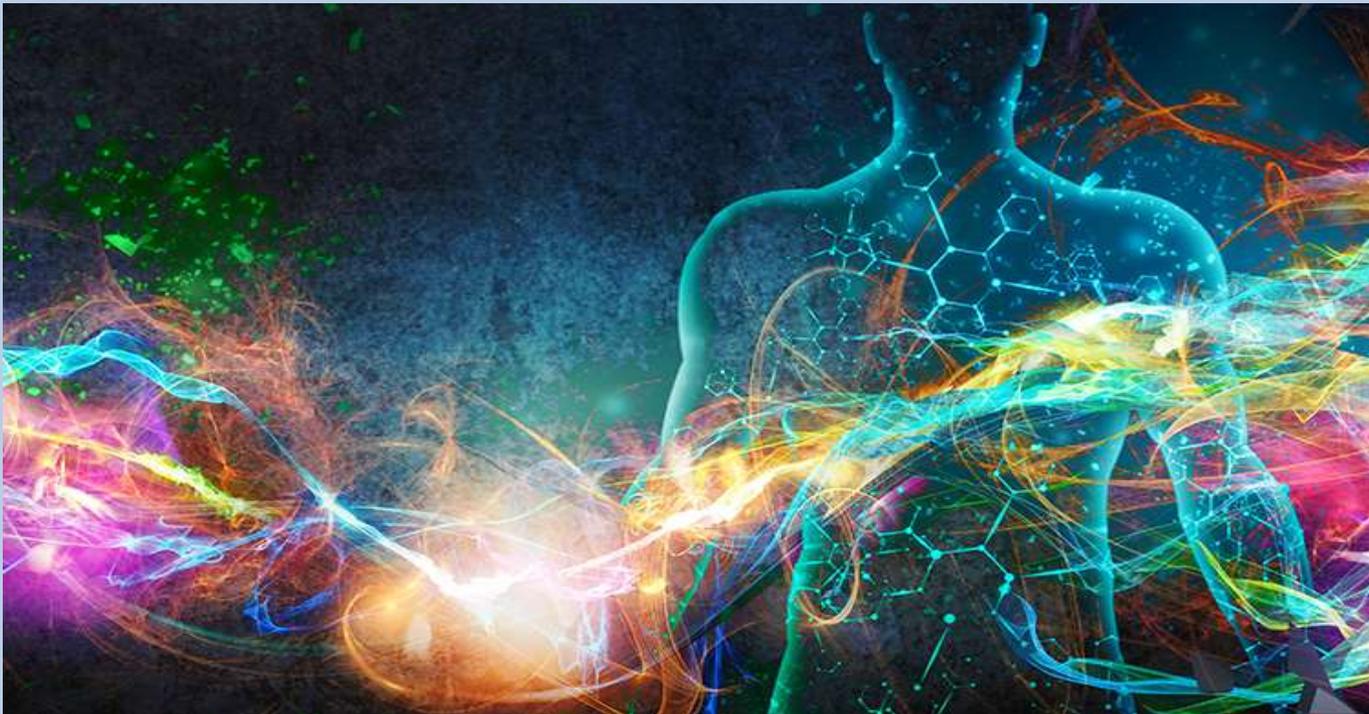
## 5. Organisation and planning

One of the best ways to thrive during the coming months is to be organised and develop a routine. This will not only make you feel less anxious about the coming months – it will also help you make the most out of this time.

- 1. Being organised:** Will help you save precious time so that you can focus on all the things that are more important than looking for keys or a missing charger! It will also help you buy, secure and/or obtain all the things you need for any periods when you may be isolated at home. This includes any resources, books, stationary, equipment, technology and Apps that you need to stay on top of your work or school and to stay in touch with friends. It also includes fun activities and games that will keep you motivated and boost your life-force at home.
- 2. Following a routine:** will help you develop a body and mind clock when you know exactly when you will be eating, having fun, getting downtime, exercising, catching up with friends/family and sleeping. What can be exhausting for all of us is a constant change in our routine and can lead to overwhelm and fatigue. With a good routine, you will get used to compartmentalizing and doing whatever is on your schedule at certain times of the day – the more you follow this routine the less energy and time you will waste working out all the things that you want and need to do - and the less resistance there will be to doing those things (such as working!). This is because the routine becomes habit and allows you to go more with the flow. For example, if you get into the routine of eating breakfast at 7.30am your body will naturally start to want breakfast at this time. Likewise if you train yourself to work or study from 10-1pm, it will naturally become easier mentally and physically to work effectively during this period. It goes without saying that if you are in a group of friends and want to make sure you get good chunks of social and fun time together online or on the phone, then it is a great idea to pool together and adopt a similar routine. Lastly a good routine is one where you are factoring in all the things that are important to you: eating, sleeping, downtime, work, fun, passions and interest, social time and family time.



## 6. Motivation and life-force





## 6. Motivation and life-force

- 1. Set goals:** Help motivate yourself by setting daily goals. You can also motivate yourself by focusing on all your dreams and goals for the period of time after Covid-19. This might include seeing friends, travelling on holiday, going to a festival and playing sport. Why not create a Vision Board where you cut out pictures and words that you remind you of this time and glue them on to a piece of paper and then stick it up in your room?
- 2. Don't forget humour and fun:** To boost your life-force during the coming months, one of the most important things is to keep up your sense of humour and fun. What you consider funny and fun is completely personal, but if you are stuck for ideas why not try starting an online club (e.g., book club), playing games online and offline with friends and family, organising a regular group video date/chat, checking out funny videos and jokes online and trying out a new things that you might think will be fun, but don't know for sure. See these links for some good ideas about fun things you can do during the coming months:
  - Learn some new cooking skills: <https://www.thekitchn.com/collection/series-the-kitchn-s-cooking-school>
  - Get moving: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYIRfn6rYQ>
  - Do some mess free jigsaws: <https://thejigsawpuzzles.com/>
  - Get creative: <https://www.neonbooks.org.uk/big-list-writing-competitions/>
  - Play online with friends: <https://www.zynga.com/games/words-with-friends-2/>



## 6. Motivation and life-force

- 3. Spend time on passions and interests:** So many of us dream about more time so we can dedicate it to passions and interests. Well guess what – now is that time! Think about all the things you really love doing and if you haven't done them for a while dust them off and find ways to get into them again. If you don't have any passions and interests think back to what you loved doing when you were younger and try and think of an equivalent passions and interest that would suit your age-group.
- 4. Build 'micro-lifts' into your day:** one of the main problems with self-isolation is that we start to miss all the little things that we plan throughout our day to give us a lift without even necessarily realising. These are called 'micro-lifts' and include picking up your favourite sandwich, juice or coffee, walking a certain way to work or school or meeting your friends at the end of the week. If isolating at home, many of these micro-lifts won't be possible, so it is important to replace them with micro-lifts that are. These might include going for a walk, making a delicious meal, taking time to relax or catching up with a friend on video chat.



## 7. Support and guidance





# 7. Support and guidance

## Government support and guidance

NHS guidance:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Social distancing and protecting older and vulnerable people

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

Travel guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Stay at home guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

Guidance about coronavirus (COVID-19) for health professionals and other organisations:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>



# 7. Support and guidance

## Local support and guidance

If you would join the BG Covi-19 WhatsApp support group, email your mobile to Pat Fletcher. For general support and guidance, you can contact one of the following residents – please note that contacts details for these people have been distributed throughout the village:

- Pat and Steve Harrington
- Jo and Pete Willcox
- Stephen and Kathy Wright
- Neill and Rachela Stephen



## 7. Support and guidance

**“This is the time for facts, not fear. This is the time for science, not rumours. This is the time for solidarity, not stigma. We are all in this together.”**

Dr Tedros Adhanom  
Director-General of the World Health Organization