Supporting Mental Health in Big Local Communities

October 2020: **Workshop Resources and Research**

This brief set of links and resources supports workshops in October 2020 with Big Local areas to explore our understanding of mental health, reflect on the impact of COVID-19 and what that means for Big Local areas in planning for the future.

We found this framework below helpful in thinking through the potential impact of COVID-19 on different age groups.

Mental Health Impact of COVID-19 Across Life Course

Hertfordshire

Key issues to consider	Pre-Term	0-5 Years	School Years	Working Age Adults	Old Age
	• Anxiety about impact of COVID on baby • Financial worries • Anxiety about delivery and access to care • Isolation	• Coping with significant changes to routine • Isolation from friends • Impact of parental stress and coping on child	• School progress and exams • Boredom • Anxiety or depression or other MH problems • Isolation from friends • Impact of parental stress	• Balancing work and home • Being out of work • Carer Stress • Anxiety about measures and family or dependents or children • Financial Worry • Isolation	• Isolation and disruption of routine • Anxiety from dependent on services • Financial worry • Fear about impact of COVID if infected

Staff/Vols	Cumulative load of stress from significant changes. Traumatic incidents. Isolation from work colleagues. Having to manage working from home. Potential bullying from or to others as part of not coping
Loss	Loss of loved ones dying may be particularly severe and grieving disrupted because of inability to do normal grieving rites eg as be physically close to dying person, have usual funeral rites, attend funeral etc
Specific Issues	Impact of delayed diagnoses and treatment (eg chronic conditions, surgery, people living in pain). Suicide and self harm risk for most at risk populations. Members of faith communities may feel disconnected during closure of premises. Domestic abuse may be issues across lifecourse. Drug and Alcohol issues. People reliant on foodbanks or on low incomes or self employed may have additional stress.

1. COVID-19 and Mental Health - relevant research

- Public Health England's COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveillance Report, includes most up-to-date data on a range of topics.
- Centre for Mental Health Briefing – summarising the first assessment by Centre for Mental Health of the likely impacts of the virus on mental health in the UK.

## 2. Tools and resources to address wellbeing during COVID-19

[Tips and tools from Mind](#) to support reflecting on and improving your wellbeing during COVID-19.

Mind have produced [advice addressing mental health post lockdown](#), including feelings of anxiety as restrictions were initially eased.

 [Action for Happiness](#) is a movement of people committed to building a happier and more caring society. Click on the graphic below or title above for further details including details of local Happier Living groups.

3. Impact on children and young people – support and research
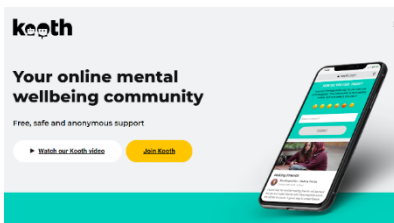
 [Kooth](#) is an online mental wellbeing community for young people. It offers free and anonymous online support.

 [Every Mind Matters (NHS)](#) sets out ways we can support children and young people to give them the best chance to stay mentally healthy, acknowledging the different experiences that children and young people have had during the crisis.

Further research mentioned in the workshop presentation:

- [Young Minds](#) reports look at the impact of coronavirus on the mental health of young people and what they are asking of Government in response.
- [University of Oxford research](#) describing changes in mental health over COVID-19 lockdown, particularly in children aged 4 – 10.
- ['See, Hear, Respond'](#) is a partnership between the Children's Society and other children's charities, including Barnardo's and Action for Children, responding quickly to the needs of young people and their families in the wake of Covid-19.

Other issues on this theme include: the transition back to school (especially for those who have experienced loss or abuse during lockdown), many services still not offering face-to-face support, inadequate resources to provide support for children and young people and themes that are always applicable, including the mental health of young carers and those in the care system.

4. Mental health and financial concerns
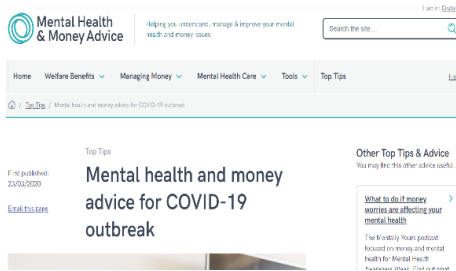
 [Mental health and money advice](#) is a website run by Mental Health UK and Lloyds bank which offers practical advice and support for people experiencing issues with mental health and money during the pandemic, as a result of employments changes, lockdown and recession.

5. Isolation and loneliness

Taken from 'A Connected Society: a strategy for tackling isolation and loneliness' and reproduced with permission from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Artist: Zuhura Plummer.

The Government produced a [national Loneliness Strategy](#) in 2018 addressing the impact of loneliness – the image above comes from that report. Since then Local Authorities and voluntary and community sector organisations have responded to the challenge locally. [Here's a useful example from Leicestershire](#) – a guide to reducing loneliness in communities.

6. Community responses to support positive mental health

'[What works wellbeing](#)' looks at how community places can be supportive of wellbeing. It identifies some of the challenges and opportunities around community wellbeing, including the nature of community wellbeing evidence, the relationship between inequality and community wellbeing, and the role of local systems in promoting community wellbeing.

'Thrive in trying times' is a free online course covering approaches aiming to help individuals, organisations, and communities during challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Local Trust has commissioned in-depth research to look how communities across England respond to COVID-19 and how they recover. Keep in touch with findings here.

Constellations is a new network of people who want to create ways for people to come together around grief and loss in their local community. It aims to test out new ways of connecting, collaborating and commemorating the different losses we experience in our lives within our communities, as well as bringing local people together to support each other around grief and loss. To find out more and to sign up click here.

7. Working online – its impact on mental health and making it engaging

These resources from Mind explore the benefits and challenges to your mental health of being online, and give ideas for looking after yourself online and getting support. They also provide information on staying safe online and getting the balance right between your online and offline life.

This guide focuses on designing and delivering online meetings and events. How can you transfer your community engagement skills to the digital medium? How do you hold an engaging, productive and enjoyable session in a virtual space? And it helps thinking about maintaining contact with your audience – the community.

This training from Future Learning looks at how to use online communication and technology to tackle social isolation.

8. Widening mental health inequalities

Socio-economic disadvantage: Mental ill-health is not equally distributed across our society. This research from the Mental Health Foundation explores how the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to exacerbate poor mental health for those communities who face the greatest disadvantages, including through intensified financial inequality.

The 'Coronavirus: Mental Health in the Pandemic' study (also by Mental Health Foundation) provides insights into the mental health effects of the pandemic since mid-March, with five waves of data collected so far across the UK specifically focussed on mental health and wellbeing. It reveals the divergence between different population groups during the pandemic.

The main themes here are: those who were already facing disadvantage are struggling more, often they lost their jobs early on, or had to go to work in uncertain times, because it was not possible to work at home (whereas some office workers could more easily work from home) and they are feeling the impacts of a recession on the back of any recovery since the 2008/9 recession.

Black and minority ethnic communities: This BBC report summarises findings from a number of national reviews which concluded that the impact (including on mental health) of the pandemic is greater in black and minority ethnic communities. This is related to existing health inequalities, housing conditions, the increased likelihood of public-facing occupations and structural racism.

This year's World Mental Health Day is on 10 October 2020, international campaign efforts will focus on increased investment in mental health.