

## **Appendix to Staff Wellbeing Policy**

### **Guidance on protecting and maintaining good mental health during Covid 19**

Pitcheroak School subscribes to an Employment Assistance Programme which is there to support staff and their immediate household; the helpline offers confidential counselling and advice on a variety of personal, family and workplace issues. The contact details are as follows:

Telephone 24/7 0800 328 1437 [www.employeeassistance.org.uk](http://www.employeeassistance.org.uk)

The coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak means life has changed for us all. It may cause you to feel anxious, stressed, worried, sad, bored, lonely or frustrated.

It's important to remember it is OK to feel this way and that everyone reacts differently – for most of us, these difficult feelings will pass.

There are some simple things you can do to help you take care of your mental health and wellbeing during times of uncertainty. Doing so will help you think clearly, and make sure you are able to look after yourself and those you care about.

Here are 10 ways you can help improve your mental health and wellbeing if you are worried or anxious about the coronavirus outbreak. For specific tips and advice while staying at home, read our advice on [maintaining your mental wellbeing while staying at home](#)

#### **1. Stay connected with people**

Maintaining healthy relationships with people we trust is important for our mental wellbeing. Now that the government guidelines allow more social activity outside, this may feel easier. Just make sure you [follow the latest government guidance](#) and stay at least 2 metres apart from others.

Think about how you can continue to stay in touch with friends and family, especially if you or they need to stay at home. You could try phone calls, video calls or social media – whether it's with people you normally saw often or reconnecting with old friends.

#### **2. Talk about your worries**

It's normal to feel a bit worried, scared or helpless about the current situation. Remember: it's OK to share your concerns with others you trust – and doing so may help them too.

If you cannot speak to someone you know or if doing so has not helped, there are plenty of helplines you can try instead.

- [NHS-recommended helplines](#)

#### **3. Support and help others**

Helping someone else can benefit you as well as them, so try to be a little more understanding of other people's concerns, worries or behaviours at this time.

Try to think of things you can do to help those around you. Is there a friend or family member nearby you could message? Are there any community groups you could join to support others locally?

Remember, it's important to do this in line with official coronavirus guidance to keep everyone safe.

- [Helping others](#)

#### **4. Feel prepared**

As the outbreak continues, it can help to work through the implications of government guidelines so you feel more prepared and less concerned.

If you are continuing to stay at home, then it can help to think through a typical week: how will it continue to be affected and what will you need to do to solve any problems?

- [GOV.UK: Coronavirus support](#)

#### **5. Look after your body**

Our physical health has a big impact on how we feel. At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour that end up making you feel worse.

Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and exercise regularly. Avoid smoking or drugs, and try not to drink too much alcohol.

Going for a walk, run or bike ride can really help lift your mood and clear your mind – just remember to stay at least 2 metres apart from others. Or you could try one of our easy 10-minute home workouts.

- [Try a home workout](#)

#### **6. Stick to the facts**

Find a credible source you can trust – such as [GOV.UK](#) or the [NHS website](#) – and fact-check information you get from newsfeeds, social media or other people.

You could also use the GOV.UK Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp. This automated chatbot covers the most common questions about coronavirus. [Message the coronavirus chatbot](#) to get started.

Think about how possibly inaccurate information could affect others too. Try not to share information without fact-checking against credible sources.

You might also want to consider limiting the time you spend watching, reading or listening to coverage of the outbreak, including on social media, and think about turning off breaking-news alerts on your phone.

You could set yourself a specific time to read updates or limit yourself to a couple of checks a day.

- [NHS information on coronavirus](#)

#### **7. Stay on top of difficult feelings**

Concern about the coronavirus outbreak is perfectly normal. However, some people may experience intense anxiety that can affect their daily life.

Try to focus on the things you can control, such as your behaviour, who you speak to, and where and how often you get information.

It's fine to acknowledge that some things are outside of your control, but if constant thoughts about coronavirus are making you feel anxious or overwhelmed, try some [ideas to help manage your anxiety](#) or listening to an audio guide.

- [NHS audio guides](#)

## **8. Do things you enjoy**

If we're feeling worried, anxious or low, we might stop doing things we usually enjoy. Focusing on your favourite hobby, relaxing or connecting with others can help with anxious thoughts and feelings.

If you cannot do the things you normally enjoy because you're continuing to stay at home, 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 inventive new ways to do things, like hosting online pub quizzes and music concerts.

- [Watch: Keep learning](#)

## **9. Focus on the present**

Focusing on the present, rather than worrying about the future, can help with difficult emotions and improve our wellbeing.

[Relaxation techniques](#) can also help some people deal with feelings of anxiety, or you could try our mindful breathing video.

- [Watch: Mindful breathing](#)

## **10. Look after your sleep**

Good-quality sleep makes a big difference to how we feel mentally and physically, so it's important to get enough.

Try to maintain regular sleeping patterns and keep up good sleep hygiene practices – like avoiding screens before bed, cutting back on caffeine and creating a restful environment. See our sleep page for more advice.

- [How to sleep better](#)