



MESSAGE TO VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE INVOLVED IN RESPONDING TO THE CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY

For several weeks now volunteers from many organisations have been involved in responding to requests for assistance from the emergency services, NHS and Local authorities and also from their local communities.

For many volunteers, it has meant that normal work and family life has been disrupted and there may have been situations that have been outside individuals comfort zone. In addition, you all will have had to deal with your own personal and family situations.

Your efforts and hard work, with some working for long hours to get help to those vulnerable in our communities, has been appreciated by the statutory agencies and it has been acknowledged how vital volunteers are in this emergency.

With this crisis likely to continue for several months to come it is inevitable that it will have an impact on our emotional and mental health.

In most cases this is a normal reaction and support from your family and work colleagues will help you recover and rebuild your resilience. Keeping to a normal routine, eating regular meals, and maintaining a level of activity and exercise (whilst observing the government's guidance of course!) will assist in this process too.

You should also not over-extend yourself on volunteer duties, take a few days break from volunteering if you need to recharge, talk to colleagues in your own organisations and if necessary, seek support from others. It is no reflection on your dedication and commitment to say "no" when asked to help out if you are feeling unable to do so at that time.

It is also OK to smile and have fun, whilst the work done is of a serious nature, it also helps those in need, and you should feel comfortable for being out whilst others are 'locked up'.

There are some good emotional and mental wellbeing guidance documents that have been prepared that can be accessed through the following web links:

www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/support-and-information/if-youre-having-difficult-time/if-youre-worried-about-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak/

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/

www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing?utm_source=f4fe9d0e-2e25-4f75-acc1-64ceb6d0f3a4&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediat

and also attached is [an information sheet from our local Public Health services](#).

However, where symptoms of distress or anxiety continue or become more severe, we would encourage you to seek help.

SIGNS OF GENERAL STRESS OR ANXIETY	SIGNS OF SEVERE STRESS OR TRAUMA
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling tired all the time• Nausea• General aches and pains• Regular headaches• Poor attention span or memory loss• Confusion• Unable to switch off• Feeling agitated• Poor sleeping pattern• Profuse sweating• Thirst• Rapid heart rate• Irritability• Feeling startled	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chest pains/ panic attacks• Memory loss or problems• Difficult identifying familiar things or people• Loss of person, place or time orientation• Nightmares• Guilt• Feeling of grief• Fear• Depression• Feeling overwhelmed• Flashbacks• Emotional outbursts• Increased alcohol intake• Anger• Insomnia

Volunteer Peer Support Service

BLEVEC – Bedfordshire Local Emergency Volunteers – has set up a peer support service for volunteers from voluntary sector organisations involved in the coronavirus emergency.

If you are worried or anxious, and just want to chat about things and how you are feeling, or want to offload a bit, then you can contact a group of BLEVEC volunteers who have good listening skills and are able to provide emotional support. The volunteers will also be able to signpost you to other support options including trauma assessment.

Just email a request for someone to call you, giving a time period you would be preferred to be called

Contact: robert.labe37@ntlworld.com

Other Sources of Support:

- Your own organisations volunteer support team
- Your GP and possible referral to counselling or therapy
- Samaritans 24/7 emotional support free phone **116 123**
- billygraham.org.uk on the front page there is a box with 'do you need someone to talk to or prayer?'