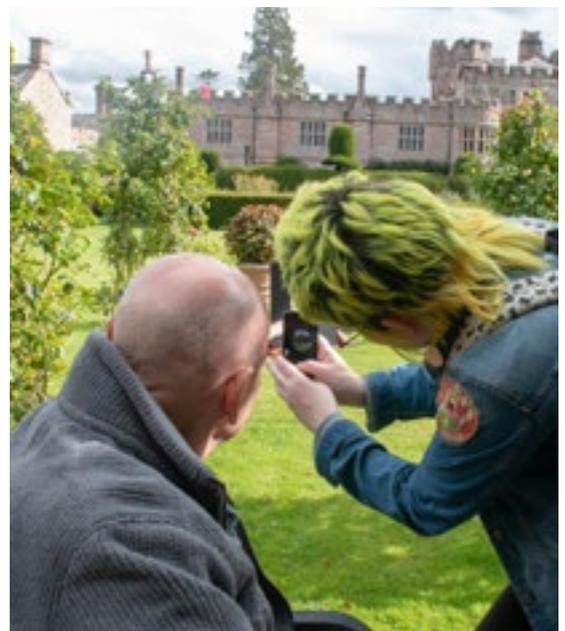


# WELLBEING WEEK NEWSLETTER

May 2021

## WELCOME TO OUR WELLBEING WEEK NEWSLETTER!

The past year has been an incredibly tough one and it's taken its toll on everyone in different ways. We wanted to compile this newsletter full of information, resources, and guidance to help support you. We have included articles on coping with grief, looking after each other, and more, and hope they provide helpful and empowering advice should you need it. We're here for you if you need us.



\*photos taken pre-covid

## EMPLOYEE CORONAVIRUS WELFARE PACK

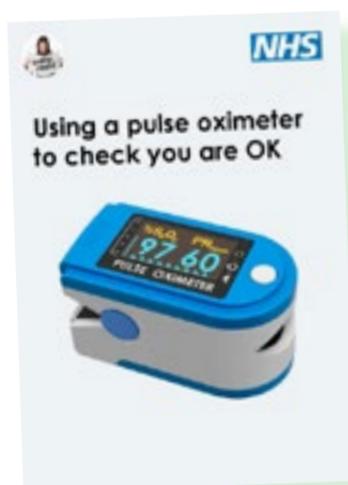


If you are isolating or ill with Covid-19, we want to make sure that you are fully supported. There are so many different ways of how the virus presents, including hardly any symptoms at all. Some people experience low blood oxygen levels without any signs of breathlessness which can be worrying. Because of this, we're offering pulse oximeters to people who are currently off work with Covid-19.

We'll send you a pulse oximeter, which checks your blood oxygen levels, along with information on how to use it. If your oxygen level reads 92% or less, you should seek urgent medical advice. We have also shared an instruction manual in the Staff Area of our website, on the coronavirus tab on the right hand side (password- creative20).

When you're fit to return to work, please return the pulse oximeter either to your manager or post it back to head office with the pre-paid envelope included in the pulse oximeter package.

If you need any more information about the measures Creative Support has taken to support staff during the pandemic, including Covid-19 related policies, procedures, forms, and additional support, you can also find this in the Staff Area under the coronavirus tab.



If you need any further support or would like to discuss anything related to Covid-19 then please contact Michala Bateson or any other member of the HR team on 0161 236 0829.

## COVID Emergency Hardship Grant

Our Hardship Grant fund was initially set up in March 2020 to provide support to our hardworking and dedicated workforce who were facing financial hardship as a result of the impact of Coronavirus. The fund was additionally extended to support staff in 2021 and a total of £30,000 was allocated. We received a total of 323 application's for the non-repayable grants of up to £500.00 with an average grant of £225.00. In addition to the grants we were also able to provide financial support in the form of signposting to our discretionary loan applications and full support to access personalised signposting information with links to other resources and organisations offering support.

You can still access the Employee Help Pack we developed which can be downloaded [here](#).

## STAFF WELFARE PACK



Our staff welfare pack was published last year and is full of helpful information. The pack includes guidance if you are struggling financially or mentally and can be found in the staff area of the website under the coronavirus tab on the right hand side.

Some of the grants mentioned in the welfare pack have now closed, but the following remain open for applications:

- The **Care Worker's Charity (CWC)** is still running their Crisis Grant applications. These grants are available for between £200- £500 and can be used for daily living expenses, essential household/white goods items, car repairs, and more. You can apply for this via their online form [here](#). The CWC are also running a Covid-19 Emergency Fund, which aims to provide emergency funding for employed care workers who must take time off work due to Covid-19. This can either be because of illness, self-isolation, or funeral costs. The grants are for between £250-£500 and can be applied for [here](#).
- **Turn2Us** is a national charity which provides financial support to help people get back on track. They have a search feature on their website [here](#) which you can specifically tailor to you and your circumstances. The feature will then list a number of different charities or funds that are available for you to apply to.
- The **Trussell Trust** supports a nationwide network of food banks and provide both emergency food and support to people. If you're struggling to afford food for yourself and your family then you should contact your local Trussell Trust foodbank which you can find [here](#). Once you've got in contact with your local foodbank, they will be able to signpost you to a referral agency in order for you to gain access to a food voucher to use at the foodbank.



- There is also **The Money Advice Service** which has been set up by the government and offers free and impartial advice. They have a Coronavirus page for any questions specifically related to the pandemic and finances. The site includes plenty of useful tools such as a budget planner and a Universal Credit helped. The service also provides useful advice and information on rent/mortgage payments, debt, and more. They have a web chat service or you can call them on 0800 138 1677.

To see the full list of grants and financial advisers, you can read the employee welfare pack in full [here](#).

The pack also includes lots of mental health and wellbeing advice. There is a list of helpful apps and organisations which are free to use and access.



Our Employee Assistance Programme with Health Assured has a new app called 'My Healthy Advantage', which you can download to your smartphone from your app store. The app is full of information related to mental health and wellbeing which you can tailor it to your own personal needs.

**If you have the older E-Hub app, we recommend trying this new, more user friendly app instead as it has lots more interactive features!**

We will be doing a giveaway for people who download the app during Wellbeing Week (3rd-9th May) - stay tuned!



**KEY FEATURES**

**LIVE CHAT**

Click the speech bubble to contact Health Assured via email, phone, or live chat. You can even request a call back at another time that suits you.

**MOOD TRACKER**

Log how you feel every week to build a bigger picture of your overall emotional health.

**FOUR WEEK PLANS & MINI HEALTH CHECKS**

Begin a four week health journey (such as quitting smoking, coping better with change or stress) or review a key area of your wellbeing (such as alcohol intake, sleep quality or general mental health).

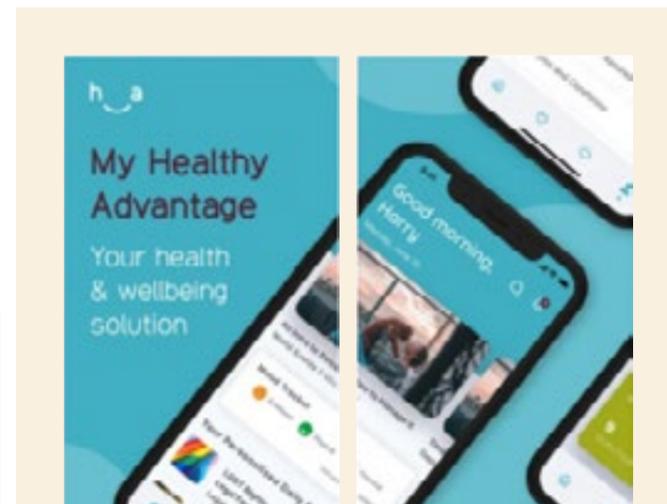
**BRIGHT TV**

Watch videos from celebrities who speak about wellbeing and their own personal struggles.

The 'My Healthy Advantage' app offers industry leading features across 4 key categories – **wellness, wellbeing, engagement and reward & recognition**. These provide support for any issue you may be facing, offering effective management techniques.

You can call the Health Assured Helpline at any time for advice, guidance or support. Health Assured offers each person up to **eight counselling sessions per year, per issue**.

So if you've spoken with them before about an issue, don't let it stop you from getting in touch with them again for another. Please do use this service if you feel you need it.



**CREATE YOUR HEALTH ASSURED ACCOUNT:**

1. Once you have downloaded the app, you will need to create your own account
2. You will be asked to enter a code, which for all Creative Support staff is: **MHA001768**
3. Next you need to enter your name and your email address
4. Then you will be prompted to choose areas of wellbeing that are relevant to you, such as anxiety, depression, or meditation. This will impact the articles and videos which will show on your home screen, so they are tailored to your interests and needs

To sign into the Health & Wellbeing portal online, visit: <https://healthassuredeap.co.uk/>  
Username: **Creative** Password: **Support**

**COPING WITH LOSS AND GRIEF**



The last year has presented challenges that no-one was prepared for, and has impacted every aspect of our lives. The mental and personal toll of losing a service user, family member, or friend is hard to put into words. Sadly, so many of us have experienced this over the pandemic.

Processing loss while living under restrictions is especially difficult, so it is important to take some time to process your feelings, allowing yourself to grieve is vital for your wellbeing.

If you are someone who has been working with people receiving palliative care, please know it has made all the difference to them in their final days. Creative Support places the highest emphasis on its duty of care to all service users throughout their lives. We recognise that an unexpected death of a service user can be a distressing time for relatives, staff, and other members of someone's circle of support.

Staff involved in a service user's death will be offered support from their line manager. This could be one-on-one or as part of a team. Staff also have access to independent counselling services provided by Health Assured who can be contacted on 0844 891 0336.

To see the full policy guidance on unexpected deaths and palliative care, you can find them through the Creative Support website or click [here](#) and [here](#).



No-one can quantify loss – it's personal to everyone and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. The NHS has a long list of resources, including organisations and charities who you can speak to. They also list the following do's and don'ts to support grieving:

- Don't try to do everything at once – set small targets you can easily achieve.
- Don't focus on the things you cannot change– instead focus your time and energy into helping yourself feel better.
- Try not to tell yourself that you're alone. There are people around you that will support you, along with professional services who are there to listen.
- Try not to use unhealthy coping mechanisms such as alcohol, cigarettes, gambling, or drugs to relieve grief. These can all contribute to poor mental health and the feeling of grief will continue to come back.

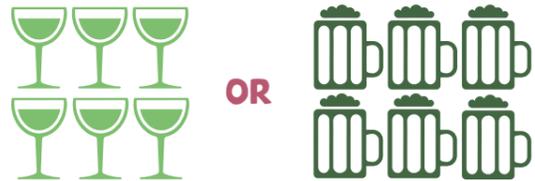


You can find more NHS tips on grieving and coping with bereavement via the NHS website or click [here](#).

## ALCOLHOL AND LOCKDOWN



The UK Chief Medical Officer's low-risk drinking guidelines recommend that you shouldn't regularly drink more than 14 units per week. That is the equivalent of six pints of average strength lager, or six medium glasses of wine.



### ADVICE AND HELP WITH ALCOHOL...

If you have need someone to talk to, there is always someone who can help:

**DRINKLINE** is the national alcohol helpline. You can call 0300 123 1110 for advice.

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** (AA) is a free self-help group. Local groups have turned online during the pandemic. Find more info [here](#).

**WE ARE WITH YOU** is a UK-wide treatment agency, helping communities manage the effects addiction. Use their online chat function [here](#) or call on 0808 8010 750.

**SMART RECOVERY** groups offer tools and techniques to support recovery. You can find out more [here](#).

**HEALTH ASSURED** is our 24/7 employee assistance programme which offers all Creative Support staff telephone and online support. Check out page 4 for more information on how to access their services, including specific guidance on managing drinking.

You may have also found yourself supporting someone who has alcohol addiction issues. If this is the case, carers.org has some great advice which you can find [here](#).

We have all had to develop our own coping mechanisms during lockdown - some may have been positive, and others not so much. Studies show, you're not alone if you have found yourself reaching for a glass of wine or a bottle of beer when you finish work. A large portion of the population in the UK have admitted to drinking **more than they usually would** during the pandemic. Drinking alcohol is not a problem in itself, it is when it becomes something people rely on to get through the day that it becomes an issue.

Drink Aware explain that while having a drink might make you feel relaxed, in the long run, alcohol can contribute to feelings of depression and anxiety, and make stress harder to deal with. Regularly drinking heavily interferes with the chemicals in your brain that are vital for your mental health.

While some people have turned to alcohol during lockdown, others have turned to other substances such as cannabis, or a combination of the two. Using cannabis can lead to some side effects such as troubles with memory, dizziness, paranoia, and social anxiety. These effects can be damaging to you both physically and mentally, and can also lead to further problems with addiction down the line.

If you have found yourself struggling with drug use during lockdown, please know that you are not alone and there are people there to help. **Frank**, offer honest information about drugs; giving impartial, friendly advice and support to people who are struggling. Call Frank on 0300 1236600 or check out their website [here](#).

## QUIZ!

1. How many units are there in two 330ml beers (5%) & two 25ml shots (40%)?
2. How many units are there in two 250ml glasses of wine?
3. How many units are in a 175ml glass of wine and a 330ml beer (5%)?

(Turn to the next page to check your answers!)

## TROUBLE SLEEPING?



Getting a good night's sleep can be more difficult than it sounds. According to a survey done by Kings College London, almost two-thirds of the UK have reported that lockdown has had a negative impact on their sleep. It has also been reported that some people have actually slept for longer, but haven't felt well rested afterwards.

This lack of good sleep can have a knock on effect on people's ability to cope with the pandemic, and also stay physically and mentally healthy. We all know that not sleeping properly can lead to further stress, work worries, trouble concentrating, and more. To help, we've found some great tips and tricks for a better night's sleep:

### 1. Make a comfortable sleep environment.

A decent pillow, duvet and bedding can make all the difference to help you sleep more comfortably. Some people highly recommended a weighted blanket which is can also settle anxiety, while others find eye masks or good, black-out blinds or curtains comforting. It's best to have some peace and quiet too, as noise can distract your mind from rest - try using ear plugs if you can't control the noise where you live.



**2. Shower before bed.** Showering in the morning can help wake you up, but did you know that a shower at night can also help you get to sleep? A study showed that people who have a warm shower or bath before bedtime can help your body relax and ease you into better, deeper, and longer sleep. If you don't want a full bath or shower, the study also showed that soaking your feet in warm water before bed can also help you sleep better.



**3. Stop your caffeine intake six-eight hours before bed** - it may be surprising to hear that caffeine can take up to eight hours to leave your system. Why not swap to decaffeinated tea or coffee in the evening, or try some lovely warming fruit or herbal teas instead? Chamomile tea is not only delicious, but it has proven anti-anxiety effects too.



**4. Minimise blue light in the evenings.** The 'circadian rhythm' is your body's sleep and awake clock. Light helps get you into the 'awake' stage, while darkness gets you into the 'sleep' stage. Blue light from computers, phones, and TVs can actually trick your brain to thinking it is still in the awake stage. You can download apps on your computer such as **f.lux**, which automatically adds an orange filter when it starts to go dark. If you have an android phone, the 'Twilight' app works the same. If you have an iPhone, you can turn on 'night shift' in your settings.



**5. Manage your workloads.** If you are having difficulties with your workload, and it feels like an impossible mountain of tasks - speak to your manager to discuss options to help you. Breaking down your 'to do list' into smaller chunks can also be helpful here - it makes everything feel more manageable and doable, rather than overwhelming.



**6. Try meditation in the evenings.** Meditation has many proven health benefits, so before going to sleep, try some guided meditation from apps such as Headspace. This will help clear your mind from the stress of the day and from the worry of tomorrow, allowing you ease into a better night's sleep.



Just trying one or two of these suggestions could really positively impact your sleep!

## HEALTHY EATING



It's no surprise that during the stress of lockdown many of us have turned to food for comfort. According to BBC Good Food, 48% of people have said that they've put on weight during lockdown, and while gyms were closed and activities cancelled, it's been difficult to maintain a healthy weight.



Putting on a few extra pounds isn't usually cause for concern and is a normal part of life. However it can start a cycle of further worry about body image, creating added pressure on top of the current pandemic situation. If you're worried about your diet, it can help to simply try eating more nutritious foods, rather than focusing on the number on the scales.

Healthy eating is all about balance - it can often be damaging and unsustainable to deprive yourself of your favourite treats and snacks completely. Just try cutting down instead.

Everyone is different with different appetites, allergies, and tastes, so what may work for someone may not for another. It's about listening to your body and seeing what works for you!

Including foods rich in vitamins, minerals and fibre is another way to keep yourself safe from Covid-19. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has urged people to try to maintain a healthy lifestyle while under lockdown, and that diet plays a crucial role in determining how well people recover from the virus (along with exercising, stopping smoking, and cutting down on drinking).

Here's a list of tips, which will keep you healthier and stronger, inside and out:

**PLAN MEALS IN ADVANCE** - trying to think of what to eat every night can be tiring! Once a week, sit down and have a think about the meals you'd like to eat, this will help you with your weekly shopping list, avoiding wasting ingredients!

**KEEP IT VARIED** - variety is the spice of life, or so they say! Try to include ingredients from various food groups on your plate, from veggies, to carbs, to protein and beyond. This combination of food groups will provide you with energy, vitamins and fibre, keeping your body in tip top condition!

**TRY HEALTHIER SNACKS** - Fruit and veg are an obvious choice, but if you'd prefer something like a crisp, why not try rice cakes or hummus chips? You'll still get the savoury crunch and feeling like eating crisps, but less of the unwanted saturated fats!



### RECIPE IDEA!

If you have a sweet tooth, bananas sliced and dipped into yoghurt, then frozen are a delicious and healthy treat that you can add nuts, cocoa powder, and other things to so you can really make it your own! We like a little drizzle of honey on ours!

**DRINK PLENTY OF WATER** - we're all guilty of occasionally living purely off tea and coffee while we're working. The NHS's Eatwell guide advises to drink 6-8 glasses of water a day - if you're not keen on water alone, why not try fizzy water, or add a slice of lemon, lime or cucumber! Sometimes your brain confuses hunger with thirst, so if you stay hydrated you may find yourself less hungry!

## SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH ANXIETY



Lockdown has been incredibly hard for everyone, especially children and young people. Their usual routines have changed massively, and it's been difficult to explain why. We've also been unable to give timeframes of when things will return to normal. Naturally, being away from school for much of the past year has made children worry, miss their friends, and crave their regular activities. Adjusting to these changes has been challenging, and for many children it's triggered stress and anxiety.

If you are a parent or guardian for someone who has been having a tough time throughout the past year, please know you are not alone and it is not your fault. A report from the Children's Commissioner found that the pandemic has worsened the condition of 80% of young people with a history of mental health needs. In the commissioner's survey, they found that the number of children reporting persistent stress on most days was around 24-29%.

Here are some ideas on how to help your child, or the young person you support:

**COMMUNICATION IS KEY.** Talk to your child about how their day has gone and ask them how they are feeling. Opening up this dialogue and showing that you are there to support and listen, will help them to feel less alone and more aware that their feelings are valid. Talking about some of your own worries or troubles will also help to normalize opening up and encourage them to empathise.



**PLAN NICE THINGS.** It can be difficult to find entertainment with most things closed. Try and think of some fun alternatives that you could do at home, or outside. You could try a movie night and lay down blankets, duvets, and pillows in front of the TV, or try baking some delicious treats together - Bake Off winner Nadiya Hussain's 'Bake Me A Story' book is great for both adults and kids.



**KEEP A ROUTINE.** Try and keep regular bedtimes, mealtimes, and activity times throughout the week will help them to get into the flow and feel safe knowing what they will be doing on any given day.



**TRY RELAXATION ACTIVITIES.** Meditation and yoga for children has proved to help them relax and process their days. There are lots of resources available online, and free videos on YouTube to help you guide their meditation or yoga poses, and it's something you can both do together. Another activity could be journaling, or encouraging them to keep a diary which they write in at least a few times a week. This will help them to think about their days, let out their stress and worries, in a safe private space.



Please remember also to look after yourself too. The last year has been unprecedented and added a lot of pressure to parents and guardians. You have been juggling your everyday work alongside looking after your children, and it's okay to say that it has been tough and seek help if needed. Taking care of yourself will not only support you mentally and physically, but show the children in your care that looking after yourself is a great thing to do.

## HELPING OTHERS



Now more than ever, it's important we are working together as part of a community to take care of each other. Covid-19 restrictions can make picking up on the signs that someone is struggling much harder, as people are wearing face masks or we are communicating virtually over Zoom. If you do notice a colleague isn't being themselves, then there are ways you can help. Below are some ideas on how you can do this:

### RECOGNITION & APPRECIATION

If your colleague has been working incredibly hard, or has achieved something, then nominate them for an award! We have Achieve Q Awards running throughout the year, and hold frequent 'one-off' awards for recognition in other ways too, such as our Employee Appreciation Day in March. Feeling appreciated does wonders for self-worth and morale.

### FLEXIBILITY

Lockdown measures are still having a massive impact and unforeseen changes can be hard to juggle with working arrangements. Appreciating that everyone is trying their best to adapt to this new way of life and being as flexible as you can will be great support. If you notice someone struggling, try speaking to them or raising it with their manager to try and plan some help that works to support everyone.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Humans take in 7% of communication through the spoken word, 38% through voice, and 55% through body language.

A mask therefore takes away all the facial expressions that convey up to 55% of what we're trying to tell someone!

### CHECKING IN

Asking someone how they're doing, both work-wise and personally, can make all the difference. It helps remind people that you're there for them and help them feel like there is someone there to talk to if they need to. Some teams have scheduled regular weekly catch ups (alongside team meetings) which has proved beneficial in terms of socialising, building team relations, and forming a support network.

### KEEPING AN OPEN LINE OF COMMUNICATION

If someone is aware that there is support available, and that there are people there to listen, they will be more likely to open up to you and get support for any issues or struggles they're facing.

## FEEL BETTER TIPS



If you're having a tough time and need some guidance, use these tips to help you get out of a bad headspace:

### MANAGE YOUR STRESS LEVELS

Stress is something that everyone feels at some point, and it can be both a good and a bad thing at different times. If you feel overwhelmed and stressed, try new time management techniques such as breaking down tasks into small bullet points to make them feel more manageable. While it may seem counterintuitive when you're busy, please make sure you take your breaks and get outside when you can. Refreshing the brain and taking some time in the fresh air will improve your mood and give you a clearer mind.

### EXERCISE REGULARLY

Home workouts are a great to get some exercise in. YouTube has millions of fitness videos for you to choose from, and you can find options that at different levels so there is choice for everyone. If you want to start meditation and yoga, we recommend the channel 'Yoga with Adriene' who has a 30 day induction course.

### TRY BREATHING TECHNIQUES

If you're feeling anxious, using a calming breathing technique can help refocus you and feel calmer. The NHS recommends doing this regularly as part of a routine. You can do this however you feel comfortable but keep your arms a little bit aside from your body with your palms up, and your feet flat on the ground hip width apart. Let your breath flow as deep into your belly as comfortable, and breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Breathe in gently and regularly. Count from one to five as you breathe in and one to five as you breathe out. Keep doing this for five minutes.

### MAKE TIME TO DO THE THINGS YOU ENJOY

Simple activities with a friend like watching films with them over zoom, or going for a walk, are great ways of keeping in touch with people. Also, try to make time to focus on yourself: taking a long bath, cooking yourself a delicious meal, or doing a bit of gardening are all great ways to spend more quality time with yourself. You should also try not to overindulge on things that seem enjoyable at the time but which might make you feel worse in the long run, such as drinking too much or eating lots of junk food (easy to say, harder to do!)

You can find more help and advice on the NHS website [here](#).



# COVID-19 ROADMAP



## FURTHER SUPPORT

The Government revealed its 'roadmap out of lockdown', which eases some lockdown restrictions at each step, as long as vaccinations are still going smoothly, infection rates stay down, and there is no rise in COVID-19 hospitalisations.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:



The **first step** was on the 8th March and allowed children to go back to school. The **second step** was from the 12th April and this is when non-essential retail such as hairdressers and libraries reopened. Outdoor attractions such as zoos will also open then. The **third step** is from the 17th May and is when indoor hospitality will reopen like cinemas. Most outdoor restrictions will be lifted then too, and more people will be allowed to attend weddings and funerals. Other life events such as Bar Mitzvahs and christenings will also be allowed to go ahead in step three. **Step four** is from the 21st June and it is hoped that by this point all social contact limits will be removed, and large scale events will be allowed to open up again.

The news about the vaccination rollout and meeting targets along the 'roadmap out of lockdown' has given people some much needed hope. We are proud that so many of our staff have had their first and second doses, and have encouraged the people they support to do so too.

If you are experiencing issues that are affecting your mental health at work, Able Futures can help. Able Futures could give you nine months of advice and guidance from a mental health professional, who can help you learn coping mechanisms, build self-care routines, access therapy, or work with your employer to make adjustments to help your mental health at work.

Nine months of personalised support from a mental health professional



Build a mental health support plan and get guidance and signposting that could help you feel better



There is no cost to use this service, no waiting list and it's completely confidential



### CONTACT ABLE FUTURES:

Freephone: 0800 321 3137  
Visit: [www.able-futures.co.uk](http://www.able-futures.co.uk)

Refer yourself to Able Futures on their website. You will need to provide your date of birth and National Insurance number to access this service.

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