



WISH
THE NETWORK FOR WOMEN
WORKING IN SOCIAL HOUSING

From Surviving to Thriving...

What have we learned from our experiences of surviving the Covid-19 lockdown and pandemic as social housing professionals?

Our webinar discussion on 2nd June highlighted many of the issues we have and are facing. The notes below summarise some of the ways you suggested we can tackle these - by looking after ourselves and looking out for others.

Many of you reported feelings of fear, panic, anxiety and stress. Whilst these may be receding as we ease out of lockdown, worry about the future continues.

Looking after Yourself – investing in your own health and wellbeing

- Seek support to help with worry and anxiety – this may be a colleague or friend, but the 'deal' is that you find ways to support each other
- Be honest with how you are feeling. Someone else might be feeling the same. It's ok not to be ok. Rather than seeing it as a weakness, accept how you are feeling, embrace it and find tools to help you
- Look for the positives - start a gratitude journal, reflect (and congratulate yourself!) on what you have achieved everyday
- Reflect, trust and be kind to yourself.
- Create short periods of me-time – gardening, going for walks, meditation, yoga, reading or just sitting quietly
- Keep in touch with friends (which many of us have done through Houseparty, Zoom or Skype)
- Structure your day through DEWS (domestic, exercise, work, social) and maintain a sense of achievement each day;
- Swap commute time with a workout, thinking time or walking
- Look forward to and plan activities previously taken for granted – hairdresser, sports massage

Work

- Social – look at ways of connecting with colleagues informally, to create/regain the social element of being in the office
- Create and maintain relationships with colleagues – especially new employees
- Find a peer or colleague to 'buddy up' with (particularly for those working alone)
- Set up a 'Pandemic' Steering Group for staff – or a 'Back to Work' Steering Group
- Plan for the ongoing social distancing requirements
- List some of the things that have worked/not worked during lockdown so that you/your teams can adapt to working practices change of the future
- What have we learned through increased use of technology? Use your experiences of what worked and what the problems were to plan for more online activities and communication in future
- Look out for colleagues who are suffering and stressed and offer support or guidance where you can (many of us are not very good at asking for help!)
- Time and work management – many of you have been working harder and longer over the past 10 weeks, which is unsustainable. Consider what you want your working day to look like as we ease out of lockdown



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- Note and report any new issues or problems etc that have emerged, particularly in relation to the (unmet) needs of tenants and clients
- Create breaks between online meetings to clear your head (deliberately finish meetings 5 minutes early, which everyone appreciates!)

Work/home/life balance

- Embed the best ways of working from home whilst rest of the household are there (including others working from home). Identify what has worked best that you would want to continue in future
- Recognise the additional responsibilities of work, social and household and don't beat yourself up when things go wrong – we are all amazing!
- Acknowledge some of the benefits of working from home - extra time with others in your household, no commute etc
- Managing time and juggling priorities has been challenging – what have you learned about the way you work and manage your workload?
- Creating boundaries between home and work has been even harder under lockdown. What have you learned/experienced that you want to take forward?

Seeking Support and Advice

1. Get advice about Coronavirus and looking after your mental health and wellbeing while staying at home:
<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-staying-at-home-tips/>
2. If you are not feeling OK and just need someone to talk to or you need some emotional support contact **Samaritans** on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org.
3. You can contact the mental health charity **Mind** by calling 0300 123 3393 or visiting mind.org.uk

The mental health charity Mind offers more information on:

- [loneliness](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/about-loneliness/) - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/loneliness/about-loneliness/>
 - [low self-esteem](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/self-esteem/about-self-esteem/) - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/self-esteem/about-self-esteem/>
4. For Alcohol Support Services
<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-support-services/>
 5. **Or Talk to Frank** offers free confidential drugs information and advice 24 hours a day. Helps you find out everything you might want to know about drugs (and some stuff you don't). Helpline: 0300 123 6600

And finally... How to Reinvigorate your Routine

'Very few of us look at our schedules and say, "Wow - that looks like a recipe for joy. Please bring it on". But it doesn't take much effort to more proactively include activities that will make the day more delightful. Here is a different way of seeing your daily routine, one that draws on all the science of this book.

Use this checklist to design a day that will leave you feeling good.'

Extract from: Webb, Caroline (2017), How to have a Good Day: Think Bigger, Feel Better and Transform your Working Life, Pan Macmillan, pp.319-321.

Use the suggestions below to see how you can make some small differences to your day!

BEFORE WORK	Set your intentions	Think about the day ahead – maybe in the shower, maybe on the way to work. Ask yourself: “ <i>What matters most today? What does that mean for my attitude, attention and actions? What specific goals should I set for the day?</i> ”
	Visualise the ideal	Take a moment to imagine the most important thing you are doing today. Picture yourself doing it and being at your best. Notice what you’re doing and saying.
	Plan a peak	Decide what you’re most looking forward to today, however small. Small becomes bigger when you think about it.
AS YOU GET STARTED	Batch your tasks	Plan a block of uninterrupted thinking time to work on your most complex task. Create another slot (or two) for reading and responding to all your messages. Batch other similar tasks together – you’ll get them done more quickly.
	Prime yourself	Decide what mental attributes you most need in your thinking today and create whatever cues may help prompt that – an image, a song, a change in your workspace setup.
DURING THE DAY	Set the tone	Decide what behaviour you want from the other people and how you can project that time yourself. They will mirror it back to you, whether either of you realises it or not.
	Express random appreciation	Do a random act of kindness. Compliment someone for something, ideally unprompted. Be unexpectedly helpful or generous in some way. Notice the effect on both of you.
	Protect your thinking time	In a block of focused thinking time, divert/switch off your devices and notifications. If needed, set expectations for colleagues e.g. through an automatic email response promising a reply later in the day.
	Assume good person, bad circumstances	If you encounter bad behaviour, try assuming you’re dealing with a decent person whose sense of self-worth or social standing has been threatened. To quickly reduce tension, say something appreciative.
	Borrow a good mood	Give yourself a boost using facial feedback: smile. Even a fake smile will start the ball rolling.
	Label any frustrations	When you feel irritated or upset, write down what the facts are (free from interpretation) and how they make you feel. If you have time – and it can be later – read what you’ve written and decide what your ‘best self’ (or wisest friend) would say or do.
	Keep your eyes on the prize	At less wonderful moments of the day, ask yourself, “ <i>What really matters today?</i> ” Write it on a sticky note or whiteboard – whatever helps you keep it front and centre in your mind.
	Refresh and reboot	Take a break every 90 minutes, even if it’s just getting up and stretching your legs. It’s especially important if you’re involved in some tough, complex work where allowing some subconscious processing might help you reach insight.
LUNCH	Connect with someone	Make space to have at least one short interaction with someone you like. It doesn’t have to be much. If you can’t make it happen in person, take a moment to get in touch with a friend or have a warmer-than-usual exchange with a stranger.
	Do some exercise	Exercise doesn’t have to be flashy to boost our mood and focus. Take a brisk walk. Do some jumping jacks. It all helps
FOR EACH TASK	Maximise you vision	Ask yourself: “ <i>What the most interesting thing about this task?</i> ” “ <i>What’s the bigger reason for getting this done?</i> ” “ <i>If I could apply my personal strengths in the way I do this work, how would I go about it?</i> ” “ <i>When has this been done well before (by me or others) and what can I learn from that?</i> ”
	Start on a strong footing	Start with a positive question (e.g. “ <i>What’s going well so far?</i> ” or “ <i>What’s the ideal outcome?</i> ”). Do this before you get into the challenging stuff.
	Get unstuck	If something has been on your to-do list for a while, be honest about what’s getting in the way – ask a few “whys” until you get to the real blockage. To resolve it, what would you have to do? And what would be the very smallest first step? Replace your to-do list with <i>that</i> .
AT THE END OF THE DAY	End on a high note	Think about the 3 best things that happened today. Write them in a small bedside notebook, tell your partner as you’re unwinding from the day or use them as a meditative reflection when you’re lying in bed. They might be tiny things – that’s ok.
	Sleep the good sleep	Avoid looking at any lit screens right before bedtime; it will make it harder to sleep. That means not bringing your phone into the bedroom. If you don’t have an alarm clock and have to use the phone to wake up, put the phone by the door facedown. (And tomorrow, buy a real alarm clock).