

Voices being heard

We will be providing weekly briefings on different subjects and themes during the C19 Crisis. This week we are focusing on how people can have their voices heard, it might be through contributing to research, sharing experiences, being supported by peers, being creative using different mediums – all keeping us connected to one another.

Please continue to get in touch with your stories, materials and ideas – email: linda.irvinefitzpatrick@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

"A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees." Amelia Earhart

During kindness week

It's been great reading about all **acts of kindness** people have been posting on line and the chats I've had with folks this week about how important being kind to each other and to your self is. It's been amazing to see lots of different partners contributions, some examples include :

The Samartians launched their new self help app. It offers people practical ways to cope and stay safe if they're going through a difficult time. **Samaritans Self-Help** features a mood tracker that allows people to record how they feel. It recommends evidence-based coping techniques based on how you're feeling, as well as activities that others have found useful when experiencing similar feelings.



See Me have been highlighting how stigma and discrimination can make it so much worse for people struggling with their mental health, but a simple act of kindness, like reaching out and asking how can you help, could help someone in their recovery. *"I really believe in being kind to others and to yourself. We are our harshest critics and being kind to ourselves is a huge part of being mentally healthy I think. The voices that tell you so many negative things about yourself really make a huge impact on your recovery and how you live your life daily, so it is important to be gentle and kind on yourself".* Tina

<https://www.seemescotland.org/news-and-blogs/tackling-stigma-this-mental-health-awareness-week/>

What do you need?

Covid 19 and the lockdown

Becky from Advocard writes..

We are aware that many people are facing extra challenges and difficulties just now with the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the lockdown and everything else that is going on.

At a time like this, it is even more important than usual that the views of people in Edinburgh with lived experience of mental health issues are represented and heard when services and support are being planned.

We want to hear from you about:

how you have been affected by the situation

- what you need - for your mental and physical health, and for your wellbeing
- whether or not- there are accessible services and support in place that meet your needs.

We would also like to hear if there is anything happening now that you would like to see continue in the future.

And we would like to hear if you have any ideas for changes that could be made that would improve life for people with mental health issues in Edinburgh just now.

Advocard

www.advocard.org.uk
facebook.com/AdvoCard
twitter.com/advocard1

You can respond to our questions in a variety of ways, including an online questionnaire, by email and by post. For more information go to - <http://www.advocard.org.uk/2020/05/what-do-you-need/> Or you can email becky@advocard.org.uk, or ring 0131 554 5307 and ask for Becky. (Becky is working from home just now, but will call you back.)

Please return your completed questionnaire by **Monday 22nd June.**

As this is an ongoing situation, we hope to provide more opportunities to respond later in the year.

What will we do with what you tell us?

We will be putting together a summary of the responses and put this up on our website - www.advocard.org.uk. (At some point in the future we might create a website specifically for this project.).

We will also pass your views onto service planners and providers whenever we have the opportunity.

The **Scottish Government Equalities and Human Rights Committee** have launched an inquiry into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on equalities and human rights - we will be submitting a response to this inquiry and will include your views in our response.



Adult Learning for people who use mental health

Outlook offers individual guidance, information and educational support. The service enables people who access mental health services to take up a variety of local and City-wide opportunities. Short, free, beginner level courses are available in a range of subjects throughout the year, offering an informal way to try new subjects in small groups.

Newsletter

We are currently producing regular newsletters for Outlook students and the theme of the latest edition is **Creative Writing**. Juliet Wilson is an Outlook tutor who specialises in creative writing and has provided some ideas around this year's theme for Mental Health Awareness Week: Kindness. Many Outlook students can only be contacted by post so these prompts are designed to encourage writing a poem, short story or factual piece at home.

Write about an act of kindness. You may have been kind to someone else, someone may have been kind to you, or you may have observed an act of kindness without being involved. You may even write about a fictional act of kindness.

Sometimes it's easier to write something when it's in front of you to look at. For example, you could write about a: - Piece of nature writing inspired by a window view or garden - Poem about an object in your house like a picture, or gift you received. Who gave it to you, what do you like about it etc...

For a copy of the newsletter or for more information on Outlook, please contact CLD.OP@edinburgh.gov.uk

Looking Forward by Steven Stewart

Who would have thought the restrictions would result in opportunity,
Allow me extra time to call and to chat to those in my community,
Let us use the time to reach out and connect,
Listen deeply, share, pause and reflect,
The time will come again when we'll congregate,
Together using new ideas, refreshed vigour, we will create!

Thanks Steven for sharing your poem with us

Alcoholics Anonymous goes online

Alcoholics Anonymous members are coping with the Covid-19 pandemic by taking their meetings online. The Fellowship of around 40,000 members in Great Britain & Continental European Region have had to adapt to be able to continue their recovery.

The AA Fellowship normally holds 5,000 face to face meetings a week across AA GB but with the Government social distancing policy things have had to change. The majority of groups have turned to Zoom, Skype and other online platforms to hold their weekly meetings.

Tom Fox, a non-alcoholic trustee elect on the AA GB General Service Board, said: "The Fellowship of AA has been resourceful and two weeks into the lockdown online meetings have become a lifeline for many recovering alcoholics. *"They are able to share their experience, strength and hope with each other and use the 12 Steps and the tools of recovery to help them through very uncertain times."*

IN Edinburgh and Midlothian there are currently **45 online AA meetings** - these can be accessed via the local website:

<https://aa-edinburgh.org.uk/online-meetings/>

Where any meeting is shown as **Closed** only AA members and newcomers with a desire to stop drinking can join. Where a meeting is shown as **Open** anyone with a genuine interest in AA and how it works can join. These would typically be health professionals, those supporting problem drinkers in the community and family members affected by someone's drinking.

Alcoholics Anonymous runs a national telephone helpline as well as an online 'chat now' service for the suffering alcoholic to receive help and an email response service.

Since the outbreak calls to the help line have gone up by 22 per cent and calls to the 'chat now' service have risen by 31 per cent. The email response service has seen a rise of 32 per cent boosted by a 300 per cent increase in requests for meeting information by members as meetings go online.

For help contact:

www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk or call the 24 hour helpline on 0800 9177 650.

Scottish Mental Health Festival Continues.....

Check out the overview of week 3 programme here:

<https://www.mhfestival.com/news/610-smhaf-2020-week-three>

Electrolyte by Wildcard Theatre,

An exhilarating piece of gig theatre which won the Mental Health Fringe Award in 2018.

This is a remarkable story for a show about a woman enduring a psychotic episode during which she abandons all the people who love her. Electrolyte's strength, though, is that it is fundamentally a show about friendship – it is Jessie's loyal, understanding friends who help her through one of the most difficult times in her life. Also, the songs are terrific.

Electrolyte is showing until 12pm on Monday 25 May. It is free to watch online here but you can support the festival by booking a pay what you can ticket here

Watch 2 new award winning films

Troubles, winner of the **Short Drama** award, is an evocative story of redemption between two old friends set against the backdrop of tensions in Northern Ireland. Director Jonathan Harden said that the team "set out to tell a truthful story about male mental health".

Grace, New Zealand drama directed by James Page, follows its teenage protagonist as she questions whether she will ever the help she needs for her anxiety attacks.

Screening until 12pm next Monday

<https://www.mhfestival.com/2020/599-international-film-awards>

Community Programme Highlights

Join in with **Saturday Art Club** at GoMA, which this week is inspired by David Hockney's Photography is Dead; Long Live Painting. Find beauty in the everyday by creating your own still life

You can also join the Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution's **online workshop** that will explore the theme of perspectives.

There is also new work in our **SMHAF at Home** gallery by **Dougie Soutar** and **Random Switch**

A message from Assistant Chief Constable Gary Ritchie – 22nd May 2020

Police Scotland continue to urge victims and witnesses of hate crime to report it during the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand the impact this type of incident can have on individuals, their families, friends and the wider community.

Police Scotland is fully committed to keeping people safe and protecting all our communities and I acknowledge communities and individuals may feel vulnerable as a result of COVID-19.

A hate crime can include name calling, harassment, graffiti or a physical attack motivated by prejudice or ill-will towards a social group. Social groups covered by hate crime legislation are disability, race, religion, sexual orientation and transgender identity. What you may view as a minor incident can have a major impact and we want to assure you that any form of hate crime will not be tolerated and will be fully investigated.

Should you experience or witness such an incident, please report it to us by calling 101, or 999 in an emergency, or by using our [online hate crime reporting form](#) on the Police Scotland website.

If you do not feel comfortable reporting the matter directly to Police, there is a network of Third Party Reporting (TPR) Centres available to provide support remotely during the current situation. Although, at the moment, you cannot attend a TPR centre in person, many organisations are now offering an option to report an incident over the telephone or via e-mail. Please visit the TPR page of the Police Scotland website for more information on [Third Party Reporting](#) and for a list of active centres.

