



Hello

Another week of 'lockdown' has come and gone and we continue with existing measures the Scottish Government has outlined with the addition of some additional exercise outside.

Tragically, one of our colleagues, Stephen Leslie, fell victim to Covid-19 in April and the thoughts of all of us are with Stevie's family, friends and fellow Officers. We intend to pay fuller tribute to Stevie in a later edition of Connect.

This week is [Mental Health Awareness Week](#) and this year's theme is kindness. Earlier this year #bekind trended on Social Media along with the quote 'In a world where you can be anything, be kind'. Given the last few months this message feels more important than ever. Coronavirus impacts on all of us, and it is important that we look after our mental health and wellbeing while considering how we can help others. So, in this week's Connect, we will continue to focus on the health and wellbeing of all SPS staff. This issue will also have some information and advice on how to keep mentally well, while introducing some new features to keep us all informed of latest developments in managing the pandemic. You'll also find in earlier editions of Connect a range of materials to support your mental wellbeing.

We also thought it might also be useful this week to look at some financial advice that can help those of us who may be feeling the strain due to changes in household incomes.

The Scottish Government has launched a new online support for all health, care and support staff called, "**The National Wellbeing Hub**". The Hub is a partnership between national, local and professional bodies with a shared passion for looking after the emotional and psychological wellbeing of our country's health and social services workers. This contains information on various issues for staff and managers. The Hub can be found at: <https://www.promis.scot/>

KEY INFO

24/7 SUPPORT

Through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) you have access to both advice and one-to-one telephone counselling. This could be related to something in the workplace, stresses outside work, or a combination of both.

To speak to someone in absolute confidence call 0800 854 562 at any time, day or night.

TESTING FOR SPS STAFF

As we stated in last week's Connect, SPS staff are entitled, therefore, to access testing for Covid-19. The information on this is adapting and changing to new challenges on a daily basis, but we can assure our staff that tests are available through our NHS partners for those who require them.

Staff can visit [Sharepoint](#) for advice on testing for them and their families and can also find out through their local health service and GP surgery, as well as their local HR teams.

Guidance on coronavirus testing, including who is eligible for a test, how to get tested and the different types of test available can also be found at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-getting-tested/> which has all the latest NHS/Scottish Government information.

SOCIAL MEDIA USE

All of us, in one way or another, engage with social media in all manner of ways. Many of us will obtain most of our daily news from platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn, as we continue to move away from 'mainstream' news outlets.

As the effects of Covid-19 differ internationally, new advice on emerging from lockdown is becoming increasingly difficult to disentangle. Even within the UK, alternative approaches are competing with official advice to offer us a better way out. Many may seem to be attractive propositions, while others are plain nonsense. So, how do we keep a lid on what's real and what's not? There is no easy solution unfortunately, but we at Connect continue to urge our staff to follow NHS and Scottish Government official sites in order to remain up to date and keep ourselves and others safe.

For the latest health advice please visit: [NHS Inform](#)

For Scottish Government information: <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

As the media, of all forms, tries to keep relevant it can often resort to stories that are maybe a little light on actual facts. Let's all try to remain responsible for what we post on our chosen sites, to avoid 'fake news' about the wonderful service we are providing being distorted and taken out of context. A reminder on SPS Social Media policy can be accessed [here](#).

Mental Health Awareness Week (18-24 May 2020)

This week is the Mental Health Awareness week hosted by the [Mental Health Foundation](#). The theme for this is kindness.

Coronavirus impacts on all of us, and it is important that we look after our mental health and wellbeing and consider how we can help others.

The Mental Health Foundation explains that they chose kindness as this year's theme because of its ability to unlock our shared humanity. Kindness strengthens relationships, develops community and deepens solidarity. Our individual and collective mental health depends on kindness, and it is something that everyone should experience and practice.

The Charity for Civil Servants has a [wellbeing hub](#) which offers support and advice in these worrying times, as well as the [Employee Assistance Programme](#) which has 24/7 support.



New Mental Health Service for Key Workers

"We want to help make sure everyone gets the right support for their mental health, both now and in the future" Mind

"Our Frontline" is a new mental health support service created by a partnership of Mind, Hospice UK, Samaritans and Shout and is supported by the Royal Foundation. It offers round the clock services to key workers including 121 support, by call or text, from trained volunteers; plus resources, toolkits, tips and ideas to look after your mental and emotional wellbeing.

Set up specifically to support frontline staff, the trained volunteers understand that it can be difficult to look after yourself when you are looking after others and that going in to work during coronavirus is particularly challenging. Whatever time you need support, whether at the end of a shift or at the start of the working day the text service or phone line are there to help: text Keyworker to 85258 or call 116 123 for free.



Clear Your Head

The Clear Your Head campaign was launched at the beginning of April by the First Minister as part of the wider Scottish Government support for mental health during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As advised in the First Minister's update, the website highlights practical steps to look after our mental health better, as well as pointing people to places for advice and help. The site may be of use if you are aware of anyone, either within the SPS or personally, who is struggling during these unprecedented times, so please forward the link to others within your areas if they aren't sighted on the campaign already.

www.clearyourhead.scot



FINANCIAL WELLBEING

At SPS, we appreciate that for many of our staff this will be an anxious and upsetting time. While the primary concern is health, the anxiety about the situation is being compounded by worrying about money. Our financial wellbeing is also important. Many are worrying about partners or loved ones losing their jobs, paying their mortgages, budgeting and how sick pay and benefits will work.

While our staff are receiving salaries during the crisis, many will have family members who have lost earnings, are furloughed on lower rates, or may have lost their income altogether. This may mean, for some, that they are the only earner in the family and we understand that this can cause added stress and worry.

There are steps you can take now to prepare yourself to deal with any potential financial challenges, and to hopefully give you some peace of mind during the coming months.



1. A recommended starting point is to undertake an emergency budget. There are a number of budget calculators available which can be easily accessed online. Please see our guidance on budget in this newsletter. [Step Change Scotland](#) can provide advice on this.

2. Check your insurance policies. Check whether you have insurance policies that would cover your mortgage payments or replace some of your income. For example: payment protection insurance, mortgage payment protection insurance, accident, sickness and unemployment insurance.

3. Use your savings. Do you have some savings you can rely on? Don't assume you can't get your money if it's in a fixed term or notice savings account. Some banks and building societies are now saying you'll be able to access them with no penalties. Check with your bank or building society if they're able to help.

4. Talk to your creditors if you think you are going to miss payments. Once you've done your budget if you think you're going to struggle to pay essential bills make sure you talk to the people you owe money to before it becomes a problem.

- Trade Union members will be able to seek advice from their respective Unions also.
- Look up further information on pay on SharePoint.
- The key thing is not to panic – you should avoid sudden decisions and get independent guidance or advice to help you weather the storm.
- The Charity for Civil Servants have a useful ready reckoner tool -

<https://www.foryoubyyou.org.uk/digital-tools/our-financial-capability-online-tools>



PERSONAL LEARNING

Our Union Learning colleagues have asked that the following information be shared.

FREE courses available to you, your family and your friends, even people you don't like...

Use this FREE link for you, your family, your friends and anybody else pass the link around! Why don't you try a course to keep you busy?

Skills network new SPS Microsite, easy to apply, must use this link, most course take a few weeks to complete

Just click here, <https://scottishprisonservice.theskillsnetwork.com/>

You can browse through the available Courses, currently around 30 completely free. Scroll down and click 'View Course' to see info on each Qualification, online demos and Online Application Forms.

All courses are delivered through distance learning, which means individuals can study the course of their choice in a flexible way, when and where it suits them. Each course is FULLY FUNDED, with no fees to the learner or the employer. However, individuals must be aware that if they take a funded place, they are committed to completing the course.

Once the learner is enrolled into their chosen course, they are allocated a tutor and customer service advisor, who will support the learner throughout their studies, These courses normally take between 12-20 weeks to complete, with only a few hours study required per week.



TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE COURSES, YOU NEED TO:

- Must be over the age of 16
- Not be in full-time education
- Have lived in the EU for the last three years
- Currently be a resident in Scotland
- Not accessing any funded level 2 or Level 3 courses

To take advantage of this **free** learning opportunity, please ensure that you use the link above to access or you will be charged.