

CONNECT

STAFF NEWSLETTER



Hello

We have now officially entered into Phase 2 of the Scottish Government's route map out of Lockdown, with a few more restrictions being lifted. One of the main changes will be the continuation of the opening of non-essential retail outlets, although these will be subject to a phasing in over the course of this next stage.



From a wellbeing perspective, the extension of who we can see outwith the household will benefit many of us in allowing outdoor meetings with two separate groups at the same time. The restrictions on using other people's bathrooms has been lifted also, which helps. People who live on their own with children can now form 'extended households', which means they can select one other household where they can now stay overnight, or their children can, with no social distancing. This should bring some relief to many.

From Monday 22nd June, face coverings will be mandatory on public transport, so if using buses, trains and trams remember to have yours with you.

What we won't see until next month at least is the re-opening of bars and restaurants. Some of you may have seen some bars selling take-away drinks, but this will be as close as we get to having a drink at the pub. Even when they do re-open however, it will be a vastly different experience from what we remember. Another thing we are not likely to see is mass gathering events such as football matches and concerts – although maybe the less we speculate on the football the better!

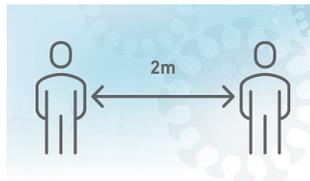
What seems in no doubt though is that the virus is on the retreat, which is great news for us all. We can, collectively, be proud of our efforts, while remembering that many of us have suffered, and still are suffering from its effects. So be vigilant and let's not let our guard down just yet. Full details of the route map can be found [here](#).

This week, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice has been praising the SPS for our efforts to contain Covid-19 as can be seen from our column to the right. He has also been saying so in Holyrood in a statement made last week. Here's a little of what he said,

'In terms of the prison service, SPS has taken rapid and responsive action to ensure that physical distancing and public health protocols have been met, putting in place a robust plan to manage COVID-19 and to prevent its spread. I would hope members across the Chamber would join with me in thanking our hard-working prison officers and staff for the incredible job they have done to prevent a COVID-19 crisis in our prisons.'

Two important documents were published recently with regard to physical distancing and infection control.

- [Revised Physical Distancing Guidelines](#)
- [Infection Control and Physical Distancing Awareness Pack](#)



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.

Cabinet Secretary Hails SPS Staff

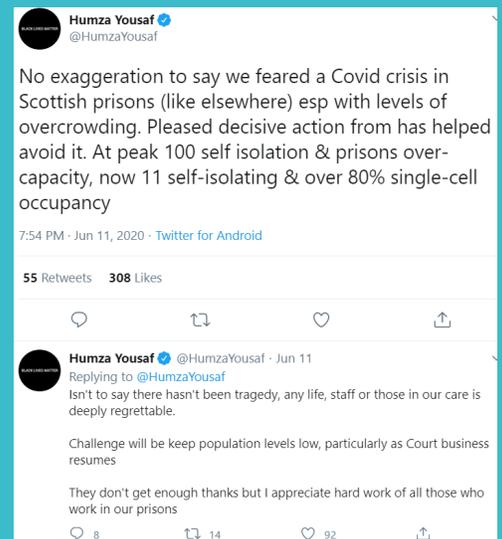
The Covid-19 pandemic has certainly been challenging in so many ways for all of us working for the SPS. In all the hugely deserved praise for key workers, it is understandable that sometimes our efforts have not been recognised as much as some others. OK, we know that there was never going to be a 'Clap for Prison Staff' night, or headlines in the news about how our collective efforts avoided a potential catastrophe – though we largely did! It's only natural that some of us might have thought, 'C'mon, give us some recognition too'.

Of course, there has been lots of praise heaped on our staff from many over the last three months or so, but despite it never reaching the heights that some of our partners and colleagues in other fields achieved, we have none-the-less received some heartfelt recognition from across the media and political spectrum.

Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Humza Yousaf, recently tweeted his support for our work during the Covid outbreak. While paying respects to staff and those in our care who have been tragically affected by the virus, and we've had our share, he rightly pointed to the endeavours of our people that meant us avoiding the worst case scenario – or anything like it!

'They don't get enough thanks but I appreciate hard work of all those who work in our prisons' While it may not be the thing that drives us, a bit of recognition for hard work can go a long way. It can boost our feelings of wellbeing and self-worth, and it can put a smile on our face when we sometimes need it most. We all need a wee boost every now and again, so praise others when you see their good work, and take it kindly when it comes your way.

Maybe you can send us your stories about praise you've received, maybe from unexpected sources, or that the service has, over the last few weeks.



Home Schooling

Many of us have young children who have all missed vital weeks of school, and many of us will have taken up the mantle of educators as well as being parents. Of course, as parents, we have a responsibility to offer our children encouragement and development opportunities that will have lasting impacts on how they grow and contribute as members of our communities. On top of all this, swimming, football, netball, karate and a myriad of extra-curricular sports and pastimes have all ended too.



What are we to do? Despite our many individual attributes we can't be teachers as well as being sports instructors. So what does home schooling entail? First thing to remember is that we are NOT teachers in the formal sense – teachers are trained for years to do what they do. So, try not to feel as though you are somehow not up to the job. You are a parent first and foremost and you are doing the best you can in these difficult times.

The Education Secretary, John Swinney, recently said,

'My message for parents and carers is clear - you are not alone and we are here to help you. We do not expect you to be teachers or set up a classroom, but there are ways you can support your child or children at home which will help their continued wellbeing and learning.'

He was saying this while launching the Parent Club. We have included the link below for you to have a look at if you haven't already done so. It has loads of information on how to help your child's educational development while schools are out as well as other information on a host of other things from diet to learning at home.

As you will be aware, there is still a bit of confusion as to when schools will return 'as normal'. August 11th is the date set by the Scottish Government for all schools to open again. This will entail a 'blended learning' approach, meaning that there will be a blend of school and home education. While there has been lots of guesswork done by many as to when any normality will return, the First Minister has attempted to quell the spread of rumour to say,

'It is absolutely not the case that we are planning for blended learning to last a year, or anything like it. On the contrary we don't want blended learning to last a single minute longer than is necessary. We want young people to be back having face-to-face teaching for 100% of the school week as soon as feasible.'

What is sure is that the school summer holidays are well under-way. Next issue, we will be looking into ways we can keep our kids occupied, while Lockdown eases and the pressure is on to get parents back to work.

Some useful websites:

Click on the icons below for further detail



Altruism

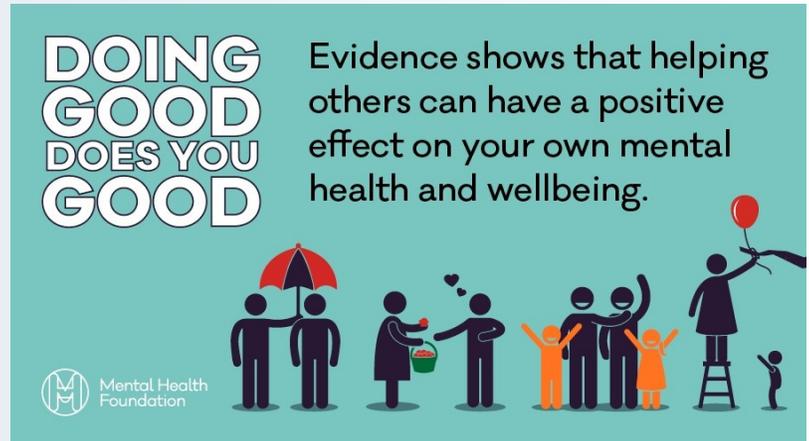
In the last edition of Connect we ran a piece on the importance of being kind to yourself. This week we look at the symbiotic relationship between this and being good to others.

The American philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson once said,

'It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself...'

Altruism is the unselfish concern for other people—doing things simply out of a desire to help, not because you feel obligated to out of duty, loyalty, or religious reasons. Everyday life is filled with small acts of altruism, from holding the door for strangers to giving money to the homeless.

Evidence shows that helping others is actually **beneficial** for your own **mental health** and wellbeing. It can help reduce stress, improve your emotional wellbeing and even **benefit** your **physical health**.



1. Helping others feels good

There is some evidence to suggest that when you help others, it can promote physiological changes in the brain linked with happiness. Helping others can also improve our support networks and encourage us to be more active. This in turn can improve our self-esteem.

2. It creates a sense of belonging and reduces isolation

Volunteering and helping others can also help us feel a sense of belonging, make new friends and connect with our community. Face-to-face activities such as volunteering at a food bank can help reduce loneliness and isolation.

3. It helps keep things in perspective

Many people don't realise the impact that a different perspective can have on their outlook on life. Helping others, especially those who are less fortunate than yourself, can help to put things into perspective and make you feel more positive. There is some evidence that being aware of your own acts of kindness, as well as the things you are grateful for, can increase feelings of happiness, optimism, and satisfaction. Doing good may help you to have a more positive outlook about your own circumstances.

4. It helps make the world a happier place – it's contagious!

Acts of kindness have the potential to make the world a happier place. An act of kindness can improve feelings of confidence, being in control, happiness and optimism. It may also encourage others to repeat the good deed that they've experienced themselves – contributing to a more positive community.

5. The more you do for others, the more you do for yourself

The benefits of helping others can last long after the act itself, both for you and them.



Carers' Week June 2020

Carer's Week is an annual celebration of all the hard work done by those who care for relatives or friends who need their support due to illness, disability and frailty, who largely go under the radar and go about their business with dignity and humility. This year, Carers' Week was between 8 – 14 June, so while it occurred during us finalising this edition of Connect we thought it deserved a special mention anyway.

Our partners at Optima Health, who operate our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), have given us some tips on how to look after yourself if you are a carer for someone. As we know, if we are not looking after our own needs it can be difficult to cater for others'.

There is some other valuable advice for carers, who across the UK number 4.5m people, on the Carers' Week website and at Carers Information Scotland and at Carers UK. Click on the links below for further information.



Care for Yourself

Carers Week is an annual awareness campaign which takes place in June. This year, people across the country are continuing to face new challenges as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

Many people are taking on more caring responsibilities for their partners and friends who are disabled, ill or older and who need support.

It is vitally important that we recognise the contribution carers make to their families and local communities, workplaces, and society, and that they get the support they need.

Source:
[Carers Week Scotland](#)

If you care for a loved one, it can be easy to forget about your own needs. So, we've put together some practical tips on how to look after yourself!

Physical Activity
Make time in your routine to undertake physical activity you find to be achievable - just a 10 minute daily brisk walk can have amazing health benefits!

Nutrition
Spend 10 minutes doing a bit of planning each week to take a healthy lunch and snack to your shift. Keep hydrated, eat a varied diet with lots of whole fruits and vegetables!

Join an online forum
Carers UK has an online forum where carers check, share their experiences and ask for advice from other carers.

Take a break / time for yourself
Taking time to undertake activities or hobbies that bring you fulfilment help you stay positive, boost your confidence, and help combat isolation.

Get organised!
Finding a way to feel in control of your responsibilities can help you manage feelings of stress and anxiety.

Be realistic about what you can do
Having a clear idea about what you can do and accepting parts that you cannot change or do alone, helps to reduce stress and can make you feel more able to cope. Remember, changing your perspective is like changing the window through which you view situations. When you change how you view certain situations, you change how you feel about it.

Sleep is crucial!
Varied hours and longer working patterns will impact on your physical and mental health. Getting a good night's sleep is essential to healthy brain function. Sleep helps restore our brain and body to enable us to manage all aspects of our life. Sleep is essential for our capacity to cope, which as a carer we need to do lots of!

<https://www.optimahealth.co.uk>

[HELP](#) Employee Assistance

Charity for Civil Servants

Over the last few editions of connect we have run some articles on personal finances. This week, we spoke to our colleagues at the Charity for Civil Servants, who offer support to civil servants, past and present when experiencing life's challenges. They told us that financial worries are very much high on the list of those contacting the service.

This is what they told us,

We've been keeping a close eye on the applications which have been coming to the charity during Covid 19 and it seems that financial concerns are key. So we have compiled a selection of tips and techniques to help civil servants with what we're going through, right now. From stretching savings to managing money and fortifying a financial future, the new email-only exclusive content is delivered in weekly email instalments just like our previous blogs and covers the following areas:

1. Financial Budgeting and Planning
2. Household Income Reduction
3. Managing Loss and Unexpected Funeral Costs
4. Worry of Debt Collection
5. Losing Your Home and the Cost of Moving

The latest blog can be read here



Even if you don't need help right now, these tools could be useful in the next few months; we're here for you. Can I ask you to share this information with friends, SPS colleagues and teams, because you never know what they're going through. The emails are still short, sweet and useful! Colleagues can sign up for regular blogs if they haven't already here. (those who have signed up will automatically receive the new weekly emails).

As we know, our financial position can have an effect on our wellbeing and mental health. However, if we have physical health conditions that affect our day-to-day living, that can have serious negative consequences on both. So, we thought we would highlight some of the charities that work tirelessly to help those who live with respiratory conditions and cancers that have meant those individuals shielding / physically distancing during lockdown.

From Connect, a big thank you to all! Click on the logos for further information if you are affected:

