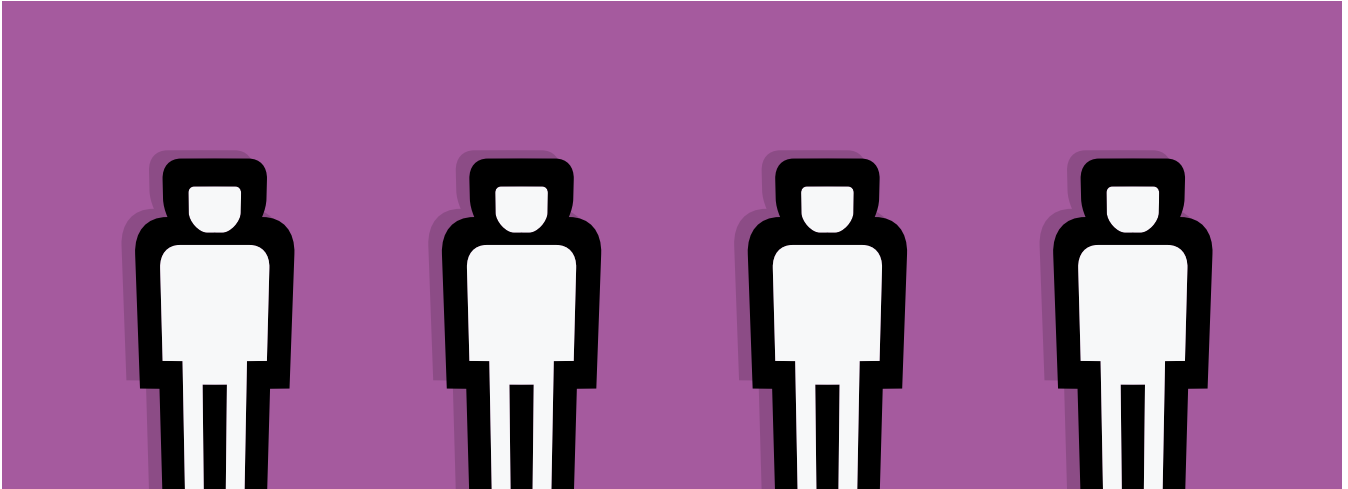


Advice and guidance for TCAT staff



Advice and guidance



In these unprecedented times, most of us will be feeling some form of worry. Our lives suddenly feel uncertain, the world feels different; we feel concerned for ourselves, our loved ones, our friends and our colleagues.

It is inevitable that some of us will be feeling the full weight of our responsibilities as a parent, carer, family member, friend and colleague. With the added pressures of home schooling, health worries, new technology and an overwhelming amount of

information to process, it's no wonder some of us may be feeling the strain.

Whether you are working from home, shielding, self-isolating, unwell or caring for others, it is more important than ever to look after yourselves and each other.

If you are feeling unusually anxious, don't worry, you are not alone! These are unfamiliar circumstances and it is important that you know that there are steps you can take to help you to feel better.



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Routine

You may be attending work or working from home but there is no escaping it, life is different, the pace is different and it will take time to adjust.

Make sure that you maintain a routine. Having a start and end to your working day is essential to maintain your well-being, especially when working from home.

Have a proper lunch break. Stop work, make something nice to eat, and move away from your work area to eat. Try and get outside and get some natural light if you can do so safely.

If you have children at home, this is an additional pressure to juggle. Prioritise what you can and can't achieve during the day, be realistic and give yourself the freedom to make healthy choices. Stay hydrated and try to build some fun in to your day –laughter is the best medicine, find something that makes you laugh and keeps your spirits up each day.

Eventually life will return to normal or maybe the 'new normal' and we need to maintain a healthy mind in the meantime.





Stay connected

It can be tempting to shut down and keep your worries to yourself.

Find people to talk to who make you feel positive, share your worries, it will help to keep things in perspective. Check in on your family, friends and relatives regularly and share how you feel. Live in the moment and try to limit any negativity if it is having an impact on how you feel.

If you feel ok and are not worried, remember that the people around you may be struggling. Offer your support and comfort, if

you get a call from someone who is feeling low, talk to them and signpost them to any sources of support if you feel they need it.

Social media is the source of many scary images and stories, if you are feeling overwhelmed with worry, panic or anxiety, try to limit your exposure. It is easy to catastrophise under these circumstances which will inevitably have a negative impact on your mental health. Try to stay positive, take a break from social media and access updates via reliable sources instead.

Breathe and reflect

Breathing techniques are used by people worldwide to help the physical body and mind cope with times of high pressure.

If you are feeling particularly worried or anxious, try some breathing techniques. Look up popular breathing techniques and see what works for you.

Find time each day for quiet reflection, this is just as important as eating, staying hydrated and exercising. Give yourself permission to find some quiet time, even if it is just five minutes per day.

There are some brilliant smart phone apps; try, 'calm', 'Headspace'. If you find others that are helpful, please share with your colleagues!





Exercise

Whether we are working at home or attending work on reduced hours, your movements are likely to be limited by the current social distancing measures.

Try to build in some exercise to your day; if you usually go to the gym or swimming you will need to think differently to fit your exercise in. Try completing an online

exercise video or join the nation with a 9am Joe Wicks workout via his YouTube channel.

Government guidance has recently changed to say that you can go out as often as you want to exercise outdoors. If you can, go out for a walk, jog, run or bike ride. Some sunshine and fresh air each day is proven to have a positive impact on mental health and well-being.

Worried about your own mental health and well-being?

It is important to recognise changes in your thinking patterns and behaviours.

If you feel that you are increasingly struggling with sleep patterns, arguing more with family members, unable to concentrate on reading/TV/work; these could be early

signs that you need to make some positive steps to maintain your mental health and well-being.

Follow the techniques above but importantly, find someone who you can speak to about your worries.



Worried about the mental health and well-being of a colleague?

Maintain regular communication with colleagues both formally and informally.

Check in on each other and recognise changes in their patterns of behaviour. It is very easy to become isolated under the current social distancing arrangements so regular communication with each other is essential.

If a colleague seems unusually withdrawn;

not replying to emails, not answering calls or not engaging with conversations then it may be an indication that they are struggling.

If you are worried about a colleague, reach out to them. Try a telephone call or, if they are unusually quiet, send them a text or an email to arrange a time to call them. Verbal communication is much better than texts or emails to have an open conversation about feelings.

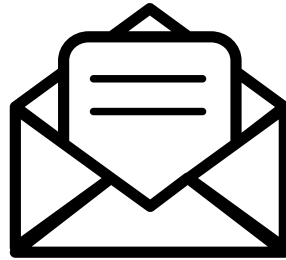


On the call ask them how they are, try to get them to answer the question honestly and tell them that you are concerned. Seek advice and support yourself, especially if they say something concerning during your call.

If you are concerned, please bring this to the

attention of your Headteacher, SLT link or Line Manager so that the situation can be supported - remember the old proverb 'a problem shared is a problem halved'.

Help and Support can be obtained for you and your colleagues from the following organisations:



Name	Telephone Number	Opening times
MIND	0300 123 3393	(Monday – Friday 9am-6pm)
Cruse Bereavement	0800 8081677	(Monday – Friday 9am-5pm)
NSPCC	0808 800 5000	(24 hours)
Action on Elder Abuse	0808 808 8641	(Monday – Friday 9am-5pm)
Education Support	08000 562 561	
National Centre for Domestic Violence	02071868270	
Respect – Men’s Advice Line	0808 801 0327	(Monday – Friday 9am-5/8pm)
Child line	0800 11 11	(24 hours)
Victim Support	0808 1689111	(24 hours)
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	0808 2000 247	(2 hours Free)
Samaritans	08457 90 90 90	(24 Hours free)

Critical illness and bereavement

Unfortunately, given the nature of the COVID 19 pandemic, it is possible that our school communities and colleagues may be affected by critical illness or bereavement.

Relevant information from the Trust's Attendance at Work Policy and Special Leave Policy is provided below.

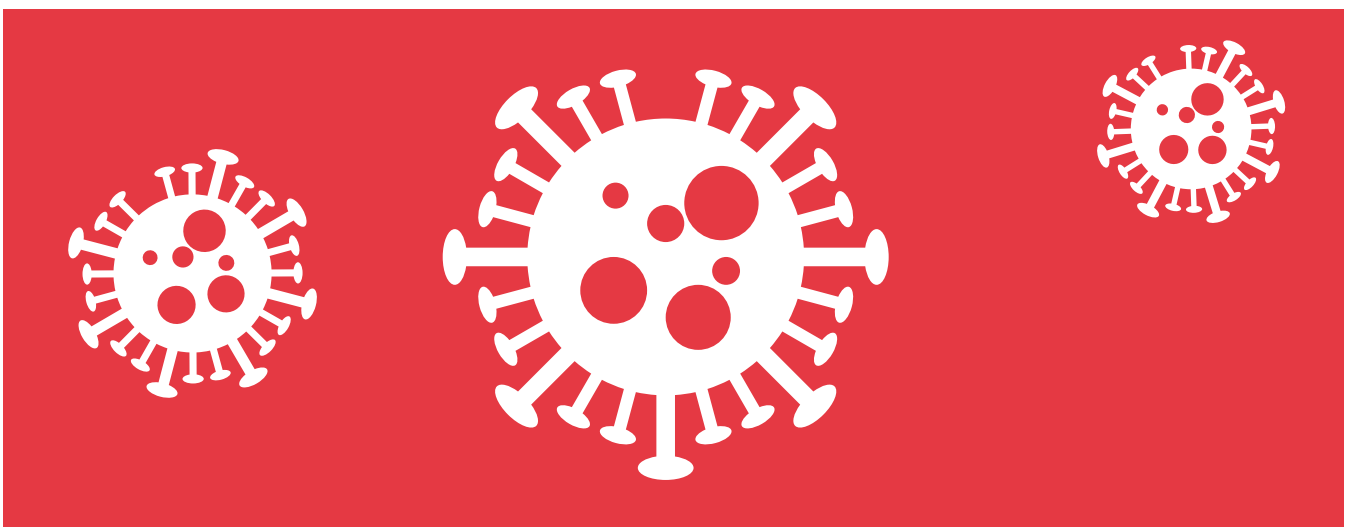
The Consortium Academy Trust recognise that some degree of sickness absence is inevitable and will ensure that it responds and manages this in a caring, supportive and confidential manner. The well-being of our employees is paramount and the Trust are committed to providing appropriate support and encouragement to all employees in academies who are ill, and to take all reasonable steps to assist them to return to work as soon as possible.

Colleagues should report any absence due to illness in the usual manner according to academy reporting procedures.

The Trust has already confirmed that sickness absence related to symptoms of COVID19 or having tested positive will be discounted from a colleague's attendance at work record for the purposes of an attendance level warning. As a supportive measure the Trust will continue to hold case reviews with colleagues.

The Trust also recognises that there will be circumstances where employees will need to take time off work to deal with personal issues at short notice and/or emergency situations where requests for time off cannot be planned and do not fall under other policies.

In line with the Employment Relations Act 2006 all employees (irrespective of length of service and whether they are full time, term time or part time) are entitled to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off during working hours to deal with unforeseen matters involving dependants in order to take necessary action.





Colleagues must initially discuss any request that falls under the Special Leave Policy with their Headteacher or Line Manager with delegated responsibility in the academy and should contact them explaining reasons for the special leave requested and anticipated number of days required, paid or unpaid. Full and concise details must be provided to the Headteacher/Line Manager.

Academies will always consider every request. If you are in doubt about which policy best applies to your personal situation please contact your academy's Operations Manager in the first instance.

Whenever the loss of a friend or loved one happens, it can be an extremely difficult, emotional and challenging time. This is likely

to be even more so for those experiencing bereavement and grief during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bereaved people may struggle with the shock, not just of the bereavement (from COVID-19 related illness or other circumstances) but that the social distancing measures mean that they cannot say goodbye in the way that they would have wanted. This could be particularly hard for those isolating alone and it may be harder to connect with usual support networks.

You may wish to follow the advice below, to help you cope with the difficulties of bereavement, none of which are easy at times of great sadness.



- Take time out to get sufficient sleep (your normal amount), rest and relax, and eat regularly and healthily
- Take care at home or when driving or riding - accidents are more common after a traumatic or stressful event
- Talk to people you trust. You don't have to tell everyone everything but telling nobody anything is often unhelpful
- Tell people what you need
- Make time to go to a place where you feel safe and calmly go over what happened in your mind. Don't force yourself to do this if the feelings are too strong at the moment
- Try to reduce outside demands on you and don't take on extra responsibilities for the time being



- Bottle up these feelings. Think whether it would be helpful to talk about them with somebody you trust. The memories may not disappear straight away
- Get embarrassed by your feelings and thoughts, or those of others. They are normal reactions to a very stressful event
- Avoid people you trust

There are a number of services and organisations that can support you, your colleagues and your families during bereavement, please follow the links below:

Find bereavement services from your council

<https://www.gov.uk/find-bereavement-services-from-council>

NHS information and support on bereavement

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/coping-with-bereavement/>

Government step-by-step guidance after a bereavement

<https://www.gov.uk/when-someone-dies>

Or alternatively these organisations can provide support and counselling services, and support to help you to deal with grief and bereavement:

Name	Support	Telephone number
Cruse Bereavement Care https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing--bereavement-and-grief	<i>Includes resources on how bereavement and grief may be affected by this pandemic and how to support children through the outbreak.</i>	0808 808 1677
At a Loss https://www.ataloss.org/	<i>Provides signposting and services across the UK, as well as online counselling services.</i>	
The Compassionate Friends https://www.tcf.org.uk/	<i>Offers support to families after the death of a child of any age and from any cause.</i>	0345 123 2304
Childhood Bereavement Network http://childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/	<i>Provides information and links to national and local support organisations.</i>	

LGBTQ+ specific support is available from:

Name	Support
Switchboard https://switchboard.lgbt/	<i>A listening service for LGBTQ+ people on the phone, by email and through instant messaging.</i>
London Friend https://londonfriend.org.uk/	<i>Offers mental health support, including online peer support forums, video counselling, and mental health crisis prevention plans.</i>
LGBT Foundation http://lgbt.foundation/	<i>Offers counselling and befriending, as well as a helpline.</i>
MindOut https://www.mindout.org.uk/	<i>Advocacy and online support services for improving the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+ communities.</i>

BAME specific support is available from:

Name	Support	Telephone number
BAME counsellor options	<i>May be available from whichever support service you choose.</i>	<i>Numbers shared above</i>
The BAATN (Black, African and Asian Therapy Network) https://www.baatn.org.uk/	<i>Represents a large community of counsellors and psychotherapists of Black, African, Asian and Caribbean Heritage in the UK.</i>	Please be aware this service incurs a fee: 020 3600 0712

You can contact your GP or NHS111 about possible symptoms of anxiety, depression, or post traumatic disorder.

Additional support for these issues is available through NHS Choices.

You can also call the Samaritans on 08457 90 90 90.

Be kind to each other and reach out for support where it's needed.

Help and support for those working in education



Education support network have a free telephone service for education staff.

<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/helping-you/telephone-support-counselling>

External support

Mental health and well-being resources to help parents and education staff

<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/1960/coronavirus-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources.pdf>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/lookingafteryour-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak>



THE CONSORTIUM
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Registered Office Address for The Consortium Academy Trust: Harland Way, Cottingham, HU16 5PX Tel: 01482 469838.

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