

Covid-19 response

Befriending: Briefing for volunteers

Thank you for offering to help with supporting others during the Covid-19 pandemic. We are very grateful for your support and help. The information below will help you to keep yourself and others safe while you are volunteering. It will also give you some suggestions for topics and starters for conversation with the people you are supporting.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your volunteer coordinator. You should also check with your co-ordinator when you are allocated someone to call whether the person has any hearing loss, English as a second language, learning difficulties or cognitive impairment so you can tailor your call appropriately.

Aim of the calls	<p>Staying at home is important to stop the spread of coronavirus. However, some people are at risk of becoming isolated because they will not be able to follow their normal routine.</p> <p>Befriending calls will support people at risk of becoming isolated by helping them feel connected to other people. They are also a good opportunity for identifying any practical needs that a person may have, for example needing support with food shopping or pharmacy collections.</p> <p>If the person you are speaking with says that they need practical support, ask if they have any friends or family that may be able to help them. If this is not possible, you can feed it back to your volunteer coordinator to arrange for deliveries or provide them with the Compassionate Swindon phone number which is 01793 445500 so that they can make other requests.</p>
Personal information and confidentiality	<p>Before making any calls, it is important to read this section to make sure that your own information and the information of the person that you are supporting is protected.</p> <p>Make sure that the phone numbers you have access to are stored safely and that no one else can access them. If you are able to lock</p>

	<p>these away in a safe place, please do so, or keep them saved on your phone with password protection. If you need to destroy this information, please ensure it is shredded in a confidential manner.</p> <p>When you make a call, you must dial 141 before putting in the number of the person you are calling. This will withhold your phone number.</p> <p>It is important to uphold the confidentiality of the individual that you are supporting at all times. You may receive or hear personal information or details during conversations and you will have access to an individual's phone number and address. All forms of personal information must be treated with respect and be handled in a highly confidential way.</p>
<p>Safeguarding</p>	<p>Please be alert to any concerns relating to the safety of the people you are supporting. If you have reason to think that the person you are supporting is at risk of harm, you can raise these in the following ways:</p> <p>If your concern relates to an adult, you can contact the Swindon Borough Council Adult Social Care team on 01793 463555</p> <p>If your concern relates to a person up to the age of 18 (or 25 with a disability), you can contact the Swindon Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email: swindonmash@swindon.gov.uk • Telephone: 01793 466903 (during normal office hours, 8.30am to 4.40pm Monday to Thursday, and 8.30am to 4.00pm Friday) <p>If anyone is in immediate danger, please contact 999.</p> <p>Further information relating to safeguarding can be found on the Safeguarding Swindon Partnership website.</p>
<p>Opening the conversation</p>	<p>Before making the call, you should make sure you have a quiet place to chat where you will not be interrupted and that you have sufficient time set aside for the call.</p>

	<p>It is OK to set a time limit for yourself for the call, for example around 30 minutes. The most important thing is that you make sure that you actively listen to the person that you are speaking with so that you both make the most of the time you have on the phone.</p> <p>Introduce yourself to the person and explain that you are calling on behalf of Compassionate Swindon, which is arranging calls to support people during the coronavirus epidemic. Explain that you are calling to have a chat and to check if there is anything that they need.</p> <p>Some opening questions could be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you today? • What have you been doing today? • Have you been speaking to friends or family recently? If so, how are you keeping in touch with them?
<p>Topics for the call</p>	<p>The main aim of the conversation is to have a chat and to help the person feel connected. It may also be useful to ask some practical questions to understand if they need some additional support.</p> <p>A few topics and suggestions are below:</p> <p><u>Practical questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you managing to prepare your meals? • Are there any medications or regular prescriptions that need collecting from the pharmacy? • How are you keeping active? <p><u>Wellbeing advice and questions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a typical day like for you? Do you enjoy reading or watching TV? • How do you keep a routine? • Are there any regular groups that you attended and is it possible to keep in touch by phone or via the internet? • Is there anything new that you would like to learn? • Are you able to get out into the garden for some fresh air?

	<p><u>Approach</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to relax and put the person you are calling at ease • Resist distraction where possible, focus on the person you are calling • Use open questions and good listening skills, enabling the person to talk comfortably and at their own pace • Explore their current situation allowing them to tell their stories in their own way • Show empathy but not sympathy, this can make people feel more helpless • Be encouraging and gentle in your approach, use statements such as ‘perhaps you can tell me more about that...’ • Allow for moments of silence, avoid rushing the conversation, give them time to express themselves
<p>Questions and situations that may arise</p>	<p><i>“Do I need to stay at home all the time”?</i></p> <p>The main messages from the government are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home) • If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times • Wash your hands as soon as you get home <p>Do not meet others, even friends or family. The reason for these measures is to slow the spread of the virus and to protect those people who are most vulnerable.</p> <p>People who are <u>at very high risk of severe illness</u> from coronavirus will have received a letter which provides them with further advice. This group need to be ‘shielded’ for protection from infection.</p> <p>If someone is in the ‘shielded’ group, they are strongly advised to stay at home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact for a period of at least 12 weeks from the day they receive a letter. Further information is available in the shielding guidance.</p> <p><i>“I like talking to you, can you call me again next week?”</i></p>

Please do not promise what you cannot then follow through. If you know that you will be making regular calls then you can reassure them that you will call next week/at an agreed future time. However, if there is a chance you will not be making calls in the future please speak to the volunteer coordinator to make sure that the person is contacted again.

“Can I take down your phone number, so I can call you if I need anything?”

Establish what they mean by ‘need anything’. Politely tell the individual that you are not permitted to give out your personal contact details. However, you can feed it back to your volunteer coordinator to arrange for deliveries or provide them with the Compassionate Swindon phone number which is 01793 445500 so that they can make other requests.

“I have had a bereavement and don’t know how to get help”

Grief relating to coronavirus will be complex due to the additional social distancing and potential lack of closure due to restrictions around hospital visits and funerals. People who have suffered a bereavement may have to deal with increased trauma, and may be cut off from some of their usual support network. Those who are already struggling with bereavement, or whose relatives or friends die through other causes will also be affected.

The [national Cruse website](#) has produced resources and information about coronavirus-related grief.

You can also suggest that people contact Swindon Cruse Bereavement Centre on [01793 619933](tel:01793619933) or swindon@cruse.org.uk if they feel they need additional support.

“I’m feeling very sad/depressed/hopeless, I think I need some help.”

If you feel comfortable, talk to them to understand their needs. If a person discloses a mental health condition that has been previously diagnosed, you could ask them what has helped them to deal with this previously.

	<p>Some relevant resources and services are listed below for other issues raised. If you have any concerns you should speak with your volunteer coordinator.</p> <p>The NHS Every Mind Matters website has information about a range of mental health conditions, and provides suggestions for looking after mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) provides support and information, aimed at preventing suicide.</p> <p>The Samaritans are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – they can be called for free anytime, from any phone on 116 123.</p> <p><u>Swindon services</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swindon and Gloucester Mind: www.sgmind.org.uk; phone 01793 432031• Ipsum www.ipsum.care; phone 01793 695495• LIFT Psychology: https://lift-swindon.awp.nhs.uk/ (please note website will be updated shortly); phone 01793 836836 <p><i>I have heard some information from a friend/relative about the coronavirus, do you know if it's true?</i></p> <p>If someone asks you questions about Covid-19 only use information from reliable sources to inform them if required i.e. NHS website: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/. It is OK to say you don't know the answer and will try to find out.</p>
--	---

If you have any comments on this guidance, please email publichealth@swindon.gov.uk