

In this together

As we find ourselves living through the challenges and anxieties that COVID-19 (Coronavirus) has brought to our daily lives, amidst the difficult messages and sad news that can become overwhelming, we have also seen messages and stories of hope, solidarity and community spirit.

In this edition, we want to celebrate some of the good news stories as well as address some of the more difficult topics. We also want to share some helpful information on where support is available, staying safe and how to keep well and active while social distancing measures are in place. Most importantly, this is a time when we see just how amazing people and services can be, coming together to support each other and fight this new threat to our way of life as a community.



We are all Heroes

Here are some of the inspirational stories and work that we have been seeing...

Care Homes

Across Somerset care homes have been keeping active and lifting spirits with activities including crafting, baking, singing and gardening while virtual support continues via calls, including Slimming World.



The adjustments made to ensure support for emotional and mental wellbeing is heart-warming. See more stories [@VoyageCare](#), [@DiscoveryLDA](#), [@SomersetCare](#) and many more of our lovely Somerset care providers.

Somerset Coronavirus Support

Helpline 0300 790 6275 is now available for anyone in Somerset who needs Coronavirus related support from their councils, read more [here](#).

Somerset Mental Health Alliance

working with [SomersetFT](#) and [Young Somerset](#) have launched:

Mindline Somerset
Emotional support helpline

01823 276 892 The [Helpline](#) is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Tom's 26 Mile Challenge

Local superhero Tom is raising money for [Love Musgrove](#) by aiming to do an amazing 17,000 laps around his garden. Watch his video and find more information [here](#).

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Somerset Coronavirus Appeal

Has raised over £450,000 since its [launch](#) on 19 March, the funds are being awarded to local charitable groups supporting the most vulnerable people affected by COVID. One of the grant awards went to [Mencap Taunton](#) for their COVID Virtual support for adults with learning disabilities project.



Our [Village](#) and [Community Agents](#) have been supporting some of our most vulnerable and isolated residents across the county. Helping with shopping, prescriptions, support to attend hospital appointments has been a lifeline to many people. See some of the stories and thanks [here](#).

Learning Disabilities Specialist Health Team

They continue to triage all referrals that are made to the service, with the majority of clinical work being carried out remotely. When the risks of not doing a direct assessment are seen as too high to be safely managed, these assessments are carried out from a safe distance.



Recently, Zoe Mackman (Physio) and Karin Purvis (Speech & Language Therapist) carried out a joint eating and drinking assessment, maintaining a safe distance from the person, care staff and each other. This involved observing from the person's garden and discussing their advice with the staff team through the windows and patio doors. Both were prepared for all weather eventualities! It did involve a little planning and co-ordination on both their parts to ensure that they maintained an appropriate distance, but was effective. On telephone follow up, the care team had implemented the advice given, with a positive outcome for the person.

Above is [the team](#) before the social distancing measures began.



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Thinking about what is Right

During a pandemic, one of the greatest challenge to any individual or organisation is the strain placed on decision making and the ethical concerns that arise. As humans, the thought that our rights could be overshadowed can become emotionally and mentally distressing or anxiety provoking. [The Ethical Framework for Health & Social Care](#) sets out 8 values and principles to ensure the response to COVID-19 is done in the best way possible for each of us during this exceptionally difficult time.

As a health system, Somerset is committed to ensuring our rights as individuals are respected and any difficult decisions are made with consideration and sensitivity, on an individual basis, following national guidance and advice. For more information and assurance please see:

- [Joint Statement on Advance Care Planning \(BMA, CPA, CQC & RCGP\)](#)
- [Advance Care Planning \(Somerset CCG\)](#)

Making Communication Understandable

Early steps have been taken within our provider trusts to make additional support available to ensure patients of all ages who are unwell and have a learning disability and/or specialist needs are supported. Our health and social care colleagues have been working tirelessly to adapt and put measures in place to ensure the safety of individuals and that services continue to run. [Reasonable Adjustments](#) have never been more vital to ensure the best outcomes for people as we face this pandemic. We have seen a flood of resources developed to assist with communicating; see the [Resources page](#) overleaf.

Given the fast pace that our health and social care professionals have had to respond to fight this pandemic, it can become a challenge to maintain clear and effective communication. In particular taking time to have those difficult and sensitive discussions with individuals and families is essential.

Planning Ahead in a Pandemic

Understandably there has been a great deal of anxiety amongst the community around terms like [Advanced Care Plan](#), [Treatment Escalation Plan \(TEP\)](#) and [Do Not Attempt CPR \(DNACPR\)](#) decisions. Sadly, in times of pandemic it becomes even more important to plan for the what might happen if you become very ill. With COVID-19 being a new virus and with no immunisation yet, it could affect anyone even if they are healthy. All these plans are intended to encourage people and their families to think ahead, have the chance to discuss what they would want with their care and treatment teams. This will help at times when difficult and/or complex decisions are needed, especially if the person cannot communicate for themselves or decisions have to be made urgently. [TEP forms](#) include the outcomes of these discussions and decisions, recording the treatment choices people would and in some cases wouldn't want to receive. In addition, the [DNACPR form](#) can provide clarity on a person's specific decision for CPR to be given in the event their heart or lungs stopped. These are very individual and personal plans to make and this is why it is important that during COVID-19, to ensure discussions take place, everyone's plans are in place and they are comfortable with what has been agreed.

"Learning Disabilities are not in themselves ever a reason for a DNAR and every person's case must be dealt with carefully involving the patient, relatives and carers."

**Dr Barry Moyse, Medical Director,
Somerset LMC**

"Although the NHS is facing unprecedented pressures and challenges relating to COVID-19 we are committed to ensure we consider and make reasonable adjustments to care systems and clinical practice so that all people have the same protection and support at this time with managing COVID-19."

**Paul Townsend, Director of
Mental Health & Learning
Disability Care, Somerset
NHS Foundation Trust**



LeDeR Reviews Continue...

It is even more important now that we continue to receive notifications and information when someone has died. The information provided in a notification can help our response during COVID-19 whether the situation was due to the virus or not. The more information included in notifications, the better.

[Notify us of a death online](#) or by calling **0300 777 4774**

Your Local Contacts

Local Area Contact for Somerset

Karen Taylor, karen.taylor38@nhs.net / 01935 384101

Co-ordinator for Somerset

Lisa Jones, lisa.jones81@nhs.net / 01935 381945



Human Rights, MCA and the Coronavirus Act

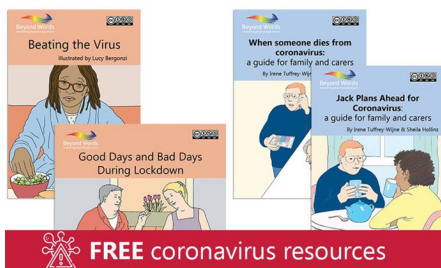
We are all facing incredible stress with our usual rights to move freely and enjoy liberties having been reduced in order to fight a very real threat to our way of life. During this time we also ***"have an obligation to ensure everyone is protected and included in the response to this crisis." (UN, 2020)*** and a duty to protect those most at risk.

During the pandemic, the same principles of the [Mental Capacity Act \(MCA\)](#) apply and COVID-19 Guidance is in place for the use of MCA. For those who lack capacity to make decisions and have no power of attorney, a [MCA best interest decision](#) is required. When the person does not have close family or care support an [Independent Mental Capacity Advocate](#) is also a right for specific important decisions.

The [key aims of the Coronavirus Act 2020](#) is to enable health and social care to respond to the virus and manage the increased demand while still supporting people with respect and dignity.

Supporting Communication and Engagement

Clear and effective communication has never been more important than it is now. We need to make every possible adjustment, ensure we speak to and understand each other, especially when it comes to making decisions.



Beyond Words has produced a series of [coronavirus easy-read e-books](#) that are available for free.



PhotoSymbols have been producing [easy read posters](#) to help make communicating about COVID-19 and the changes happening, as national guidance comes out.

Overcoming PPE barriers to communicating and anxiety can be difficult. There are communication aids that can help. [Widgit Symbols](#) has some free resources and like the [CardMedic app](#) used in hospitals, there are a number of [Apps for Complex Communication Support Needs \(Android/iPad\)](#). Have a look at a [guide on using technology](#) from the National Autistic Society.



[Laminating your photo to wear while in PPE](#) can also ease anxiety.

Caring for Someone during COVID-19

Whether a person is healthy or unwell, we all face a number of challenges due to changes in our lives, the way services have had to adapt or the restrictions in place. The following articles and resources can be helpful for your health as well as the person in your care.

[COVID-19 guidance for care staff supporting adults with learning disabilities and autistic adults](#) (available in [easy read](#))

[WeLDNurses](#) have twitter [chats](#), fortnightly Tues 8:30pm [#WeLDNs](#)

BGS [COVID-19: Stress, Coping and Resilience](#) and other [resources](#)

[COVID & Mindfulness: Resources for health and care staff](#)



We have also put together a resource list for end of life care during the pandemic, you may find it useful even if supporting someone with any complex condition; [COVID-10 End of Life Support Guidance](#).

Keep Active & Involved During Lockdown or Isolation

There are many ways to [keep active and social](#) while restriction are in place.

[Heart and Soul at The Hub](#) has an interactive and accessible survey to contribute towards the research questions being asked. [Our Voice Somerset](#) posts about activities and local forums.



Some people may wish to join a network such as the [Choice Forum](#) value having members of all abilities and backgrounds. Mencap has an [online community](#). There are also some [accessible game apps](#) for the quieter times. Also see [5 Ways to Well-being when self-isolating](#).

Useful Websites

Somerset's [Coronavirus webpage](#) contains vital update information and access to local support.

SSAB has a [Coronavirus updates page for Somerset Adult Care Providers](#) which hosts a wealth of resources and support information.

[Healthwatch](#) published a range of articles linking to guidance, resources, advice and information.

Also see the [Somerset Health and Wellbeing](#) COVID page.

Bereavement Can Also Start Before a Person Dies

Preparing for the death of a loved one or person in your care can be very difficult and the impact of this can be much greater during coronavirus restrictions. Below are some useful resources that can help support those expecting or experiencing grief.

Somerset Bereavement Support Partnership emotional and bereavement support provided by Marie Curie;

0800 3047 412 9am-5pm. View the booklet [here](#).

Mencap has some [useful guides](#) as well as a free online [chat service](#).



Cruse Bereavement is widely known for its support during loss and grief. They provide numerous resources as well as a helpline.

0808 8081677



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