

Date: 24 March 2020

**Covid-19 (coronavirus):
Where do teenagers and young people fit in to this global crisis?**

ARE YOU OUT? GO HOME.

This is designed to help teenagers and young people understand the Covid-19 (coronavirus) crisis that everyone across the world faces, how it affects you and your families and friends, what you can do to help in this crisis, how you can continue your learning and education, safeguard mental health and stay connected in a safe way.

In this document:

- Questions and worries that may be buzzing around your head.
- Social distancing – what it means for teenagers and young people.
- Learning, education and skills.
- Getting, and sharing, information you can trust.
- Looking after your mental health.
- Your actions and decisions will be the difference between life or death for someone.

Why should you care? Because you are very likely to be fine, but you may transmit the virus to others who will really suffer.

This is a war. Do your bit to fight and win it.

#CovidYoungHero #Coronavirus, #StayHome #SaveLives

The most important and urgent thing is to save lives, and every single individual, especially teenagers and young people, has a role to play in that national effort. You won't know whose lives your actions saved but somewhere, someone else's actions will save the lives of people you do know and love very much.

Questions and worries that may be buzzing around your head:

"I'm not sure if we should be genuinely scared."

"One minute I was revising for my exams, the next my school closed and my exams were cancelled. Now I'm worried I won't be going to the sixth form or university and my whole life is on hold."

"There's no point some people socially distancing if others aren't doing the same, so why should I?"

"The government should be clearer about school and exams, there has been no mention of year 12 or year 10."

"I'm a carer for my mum and I can't get food for us because I'm not old enough to drive."

"Everyone is having arguments about whether it's okay to go to the park or each other's houses or not and we're all falling out just when we need each other."

“Snapchat stories are a big problem - we are already not supposed to be in people's houses and when one person is seen breaking that rule, it's going to encourage others to do the same.”

“I can't believe we will be where Italy is at the moment in two weeks' time.”

“My parents are telling me I can't go out for any reason at all and we're having rows.”

“What does social distancing even mean? No one is really explaining it to me and my mates.”

“I had a Saturday job in a café and now it's gone and I don't have any money.”

“I want to go to the mosque to pray but it's closed.”

“It feels like I am in prison and that I will never see my friends again.”

“Will Reading be cancelled?”

“Is it okay to meet my friends at the park? How many of us can meet up? Can we go into shops?”

“Everyone keeps saying the government is lying and I am really scared.”

“Can I still see my boyfriend/girlfriend?”

“I suffer from anxiety anyway, now I'm even worse and I'm really worried I won't be able to see my doctor and get help.”

“I'm healthy and I'm fine and so are all my friends, so I don't get what the big fuss is about and why it's ruined my life.”

“As long as we're allowed outside it will be fine, but as soon as all social contact is banned people will really start to struggle.”

“I have asthma and I'm scared I will get it and die.”

“I can't stand it, I want everyone to stop talking about it and for it all to go away.”

“I feel useless. I want to help, but I don't know how.”

“Are we all going to die?”

The world has turned upside down; it's scary and confusing, and has disrupted just about every aspect of everyone's life. That applies to every teenager and young person, just as it applies to your mum or dad and the rest of your family, your grandparents, your mates, your neighbours, your teachers, lecturers, sports coaches, shops, favourite pub or club... yes, even Amazon and Netflix.

Covid-19, The Virus, Corona... is a completely new virus that spreads very easily and rapidly, makes some people very ill and kills people who do not manage to fight it off. Many of us will already have it but if we have no symptoms, we don't know we have it. We can carry the virus and spread it without even knowing we have ever had it – or we can develop

symptoms only after having been infectious for a few days. If you've ever seen the film Contagion, you'll know what this looks like.

Lots of people are going to get it, many will get mild symptoms and recover with some rest and paracetamol. But lots of others won't. If a large number of people fall ill with the virus in a short space of time, the NHS will not be able to cope with the numbers of seriously ill patients. So we all need to do everything we can to slow the spread of the virus and help the NHS so it can treat as many patients as possible and save lives. For those over 70, the death rate for those infected is 15%. It is progressively lower for all age groups - for young people 0.01%, so extremely low - but ANYONE, in any age group, can be infected and become seriously ill – or worse.

Are you ready to be a hero? Here's how.

Social distancing – what it means for teenagers and young people:

Think of it as physical distancing instead. It is not necessary to stay in your bedroom 24 hours a day, but it is not possible to meet your friends in the pub or go to the gym or clubbing or to a restaurant now that they have all been closed until further notice. This is to protect your own grandparents, your parents, and those of your friends, and any vulnerable people, including children and young people of any age, with medical conditions that make them more likely to need emergency medical care to help them survive if they get this virus.

Remember: if you pass them the virus now and they have to go to hospital, they may never come out.

Scientists think the virus can be transferred by airborne particles (eg through coughs and sneezes), or by people touching infected surfaces and then transferring them to their bodies by touching their faces. Mouths, noses and eyes are all potential ways in for the virus. It can live on hard surfaces for days.

- Wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds VERY frequently – especially when you have had to go out, and when you come back in, before you eat, after using the toilet. Wash your hands because you're bored!
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Individuals can now only go out for essential food or medicines, to look after a vulnerable person or because they are a keyworker. Obey social distancing rules – that means staying at least TWO METRES away from anybody else at all times, unless they live with you.
- Keep any trips outside to a bare minimum - only go out if you have to.
- You can go outside for exercise once a day – a walk, cycle ride or a run - alone or with people you already live with. You cannot meet up with friends or anyone else you do not already live with, and you must not gather in groups.
- If you bump into friends, you must not touch, hug or kiss them. Wave or just say hi.
- Avoid all group gatherings, either outside or inside, including in your homes and your friends' homes.
- Some of you would like to go to church, mosque, synagogue for prayer but this also carries a risk; all prayer centres in St. Albans are closed till further notice.
- Instead, stay at home and help in preparing a place where you can pray.
- Don't pass your phone around to others.
- Organise regular online group gatherings (e.g. Netflix Party, Houseparty) to catch up and exchange how you're feeling, play music and have fun. Turn it into a party. Remotely.

- Use common sense and good hygiene in close personal relationships. Avoid any contact of any kind with anyone with symptoms of the virus e.g. a persistent cough and/or a temperature.
- Do not visit elderly or vulnerable relatives and friends – organise virtual contact instead.
- Be honest and responsible if you are ill with virus symptoms – a persistent new cough or a fever – and self-isolate according to medical guidelines: if you live alone this is 7 days; if you live with others, ALL of the household for 14 days.
- This is going to be a long haul but the more of us that comply with the rules, the sooner the world will be able to get back to normal.

This quick animated graphic illustrates the impact that social distancing, staying at home and not going out to socialise with your mates can have on the number of people getting ill:

https://thespinoff.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Covid-19-Transmission-graphic-01.gif?fbclid=IwAR0UGCRSMSxr1YzEuBE5Hds9og3FFkvt4B7HQCu_G12yEWDhugVUIb2bATA

This short video explains it in a bit more depth:

https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2660801087350872&id=173915612706111

Learning, education and skills:

Speak direct to your school, university or college about plans for you to continue to learn while shutdowns are in place. Using your usual timetable as a structure will help you stay on track with what you would have done at school. Utilise online learning structures, set up group chats for different subjects and maintain as many links as you can. Teaching staff are preparing lessons and engaging online and they are there for you – but don't save all your questions until 11pm!

A lot of the focus, particularly at this time, is necessarily on those in Years 11 and 13 – if you are in Years 10 and 12, there is far more time to structure and deliver your learning, so don't worry. Each year group's cohort is in this together nationally; teachers, exam boards and universities will take the disruption into account for all of you and you have the time ahead to recover and rebuild.

Lots of people are feeling loss because of the impact of the virus - consider using the time to gain instead. This will help you to look forward, stay positive about the future, increase your skills and employability and be ready to take the next steps when the crisis is passed.

Learn another language, learn online first-aid, pick up that guitar, join an online choir, build a website, gain lifeskills like meal-planning and cooking or laundry or repairing clothes, help entertain and educate younger siblings... your parents are having to adapt too and may well welcome additional help as they adapt to working from home or volunteering and doing what they can to fight the virus too.

You can also think about volunteering (over 18s) in the crisis response and/or apply to work in food retail or production, two very important areas as the UK fights this crisis. The food supply industry is hiring; you can get paid while helping, and have allowable social interaction.

Getting, and sharing, information you can trust:

There is lots of information from all sorts of sources, a lot of it not true, some of it partly true, and a lot of it completely wrong and potentially extremely dangerous. Here are some useful points to remember:

- Just as when life is 'normal', do not believe everything you read on the internet or social media, and do not help the spread of false, misleading or dangerous information by sharing anything on social media unless it is from a trusted source.
- Like, follow and trust sources like your school, your university, things directly from the NHS or Public Health, your local council or town or parish council, local councillors, the police, fire service and formal organisations that are setting up structures to deliver crisis response – in St Albans and Harpenden and surrounding area, that is Communities 1st.
- Be wary of people you do not know who turn up unannounced on the doorstep offering help, even if they seem genuine, have an official-looking pass or a letter. Unfortunately, people are trying to take advantage of the situation by posing as crisis response officials. Please pass this on to your parents, siblings and any elderly relatives, especially those who live alone.

Looking after your mental health:

It may seem as if this global crisis cannot be happening, that it must be a dream - or a nightmare - and we will all wake up soon. Mental health is especially important during a crisis, and you can help to safeguard your own and that of others.

Apps like Calm, 7 Cups of Tea, Headspace are a good place to start

Other suggestions for protecting mental health: reading, podcasts, exercise, fresh air, decluttering room, building a daily schedule/routine, being mindful about your eating, focusing on one thing at a time, whether it's eating, reading, studying, watching TV, exercising, using phone etc. Overall, focus on small immediate activities and tasks. Avoid too much news and social media. **If you need help – Samaritans.org: Tel 116 123 Email: jo@samaritans.org**

Your actions and your decisions *will* make a difference between life or death.

Yes, this is your life turned upside down, your education and studies postponed, your social life and relationships disrupted, and your usual activities on hold.

Yes, it sucks.

But this *is* a war - against an invisible, but deadly, enemy - and you are a crucial part of the battle. Your own actions over the next day, week, fortnight, month, probably the next few months, WILL save lives. **Just stay at home.** Again: you won't know whose lives your actions saved but somewhere, someone else's actions will save the lives of people you do know and love very much.

Isn't that worth the sacrifice of some meet-ups, nights out and pub sessions?

Do your bit. Be a #CovidYoungHero #Coronavirus #StayHome #SaveLives