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COVID MESSAGE

The wellbeing and health of our staff and clients are of utmost importance to us, particularly during this tricky time. We're following government guidelines and continuing to offer our clients the services they require and offering

alternative support when needed. You can access lots of useful resources on our website www.second-step.co.uk, [blog](#), [Second Step Wellbeing Colleges Facebook page](#) and follow us on Instagram and Twitter: [@wearesecondstep](#).

Wellbeing support moves online

WORDS: CLARE COX
PHOTO: MARK SIMMONS

Taking care of your mind, as well as your body, is extremely important while we're all at home during the coronavirus pandemic. And this is why our wellbeing services in Bristol and North Somerset have joined forces to create a new online college to help with isolation, anxiety and boredom.

Since 23 March, life in the UK has been very different for us all. We find ourselves in a new routine with strict limitations on our usual social and leisure activities, with many of us working from home and trying to home educate our children. Social distancing is now part of our vocabulary. It's clear the pandemic is having an effect on people's wellbeing and mental health, with charities like Mind seeing a rise in telephone calls for emotional and listening support.

Soon after the lockdown was announced, our wellbeing college became virtual. Within days, our tutors and coordinators had worked around the clock to plan and produce an online service with useful video tutorials and mindfulness activities.

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Online: New content is added to the @secondstepwellbeingcolleges Youtube channel on a regular basis.

EDITOR'S WELCOME

As the observant among you will have noticed, we've got a new look – and a new name – for the Second Step newsletter. It's called Hope, which is an important value of ours, the name of one of our important frontline services and something we all need during this ongoing pandemic. We've revamped the newsletter with a renewed focus on client stories and successes. This issue tells the stories of two of our clients: Alan and

Christine. Their stories of courage and change give hope to us all. We also share the new-look online wellbeing college which is offering a wealth of resources for keeping well during the Covid-19 crisis. Everyone's welcome – find out more at: second-step.co.uk/wellbeing-college and on the [Second Step Wellbeing Colleges Facebook page](#). Enjoy! We hope you like it.

They also created a new Facebook page and Youtube channel: **@wearesecondstep**. Rachel Austin, service manager for North Somerset, said: "For some of our clients, our services are a lifeline and so we had to get them online quickly. Our job is to get alongside people who often have difficult mental health problems and, offer them hope, to help them navigate their way through this crisis with useful material about keeping well."

Keeping mentally well

A YouGov poll commissioned by the Mental Health Foundation just before the lockdown, revealed that six out of ten people felt anxious about coronavirus. Chris Kinston, Senior Operations Manager for our Recovery and Mental Health Services said,

"Figures like this highlight the need for material to be available to everyone online, not just our current clients."

The online wellbeing college at second-step.co.uk/wellbeing-college

includes mindfulness sessions, therapeutic art classes, and a virtual wellbeing café which is open every Wednesday from 2-3pm on Zoom for everyone. Courses usually taught in the Bristol Wellbeing College have also moved online, with teaching sessions on boosting your mood and maintaining wellbeing based on the five steps to wellbeing. For people like Andy who usually attends sessions run by the North Somerset team, the online service is vital.

"The YouTube channel is great! It's nice to hear a familiar voice, and to watch tutorials to give me ideas of wellbeing activities I can try at home, while self-isolating."

Enrolled learners who receive support from Bristol Mental Health services are also able to access private Zoom sessions and be part of a closed Facebook group to connect with like-minded learners. Nina Simmonds, Bristol Wellbeing College Tutor said: "People are feeling really vulnerable right now, so having

these smaller sessions enables people to stay connected to their community of learners." Andy agrees. "Even though the wellbeing groups can't run, I still feel supported. Having the Facebook page brings our community together and helps us to feel connected, which is really important for my mental health and wellbeing right now."

A helping hand

Another useful resource is the new Dear Friend blog series second-step.co.uk/dearfriend written by volunteer Kara. The series will be answering some of the mental health and wellbeing questions we have during this challenging time, like how to cope with loneliness, anxiety and dealing with the strains we may be having on our relationships.

Whatever you might be feeling during this period, it's important to keep your own mental health and wellbeing a priority and keep the five steps to wellbeing front of mind: staying active, learning, taking notice, giving and connecting with others.

ENROL AT BRISTOL WELLBEING COLLEGE

If you are receiving support from Bristol Mental Health services, or you are a carer for someone who receives support, you can enrol and join us. Contact bristol.wellbeing.college@second-step.co.uk or 0117 914 5498 to find out if you are eligible and become a learner today.

We're regularly posting new content on our Youtube and Facebook channels so please follow [@secondstepwellbeingcolleges](https://www.facebook.com/secondstepwellbeingcolleges) and visit the virtual online college at second-step.co.uk/wellbeing-college



GREEN THERAPY

Gardening helps to reduce stress

Research has shown that gardening helps to improve mood and reduces symptoms of stress and depression. At Wellbridge House, the accommodation side of our Community Rehabilitation Service, we've been encouraging gardening sessions to help residents' wellbeing. Our clients have been sowing, growing and learning about how to care for plants. Gardening has offered a sense of personal and social responsibility, emotional and physical wellbeing and socialisation, all of which is very powerful during recovery.



Support: Colette is currently helping Alan via regular telephone support. She says they are just days away from finding him a flat of his own – a huge and positive change for him.

It's about being heard

WORDS: JANE EDMONDS
PHOTO: SECOND STEP

One of our peers, Colette, works in the High Support Accommodation Service. Here she speaks about her work with Alan who's been at our Wayland Court project for over a year.

"If you ask me what is the one thing that's made the difference for Alan, I would say it's that he's now being listened to, he's being heard."

"It's taken a long time, mind you, I've been working with him for over 18 months. Just last week the GP listened to him for the first time and next week we've got a mental health assessment with a psychiatrist. That's a real win. Through all of this I've seen Alan's behaviour change. He's faced his problems and he's not doing the things he used to do. It's helped that my history is in supporting men who have experienced historical childhood sexual abuse and trauma. It's helped that I understand his addiction issues and it's helped that I'm here to help him have a voice."

"A client has been missing his regular Karaoke night, so we now chat on the phone and then sing a few songs together with me strumming along on the guitar. I'm sure we sound awful, but it makes us both laugh."



WE LAUGH TOGETHER

Supporting the most vulnerable in our communities is hugely important to us during the pandemic. Our frontline staff in Bristol, Bath and Somerset are still working with clients offering face-to-face and telephone support.



Recovery Coach Tasha

New start in Somerset

WORDS: CLARE COX
PHOTO: TASHA FUSSELL

Step Together is our ground-breaking new service in Somerset that helps people with complex needs get their lives back on track.

We believe that with the right support, everyone can take control of their life and make their future their own. A mum of one of our clients tells us the impact it is having in her daughter's life.

"I'm so grateful for the support my daughter has received through Step Together. Sadly, I haven't had a close relationship with her the last few years, but my husband and I are told regularly how she is doing through her Recovery Coach Tasha.

For years, she's not trusted any services. Now she's finally accepted some help from Step Together and is very pleased with the support she is getting. Things are being put into place to keep her well and safe. Thank you for fighting for my daughter and supporting her - it makes me feel a little better knowing she has someone in her corner."



Christine's story

WORDS: JANE EDMONDS
PHOTO: ANNIE SPRATT

The smell of lavender is evocative for many and is particularly so for Christine, who says for her it's lifesaving. Here she tells us why.

A few months ago I had a period of crisis and I called the Crisis Team's helpline. It was a real call for help as I was in a bad way. When you call them you know you'll get through to someone who has access to your notes and can help in a way that's meaningful to you.

This time the person I spoke to was able to read in my notes that I use lavender to help me. It's the smell.

It reminds me of happier times, of summers in France when I stayed with family friends when I was a child and there were fields of lavender.

Childhood memories

It's a good memory of my childhood, and I haven't got that many. Smell is such a primitive sense, it bypasses and cuts through the complexities of our thinking and goes straight to the heart of the matter.

I've been carrying around a small bottle of lavender essential oil for a few years now and I use it to help me keep calm and to reduce my anxiety in certain situations. Its importance is recorded on my notes, so that when I called that day the person on the line asked me to go and get my lavender.

I was in no state to remember to do that myself. So I went to get it and smelt it and I calmed down right away and I was then able to have a useful conversation with them.



The suicide prevention team, Hope, is working harder than ever checking in with their clients during lockdown. Team manager Jez said: "We're not assuming people are all right because they were ok the last time we spoke. We're checking in regularly and revisiting everyone's safety plan, recognising this is a time of isolation for many of us. We know lots of our clients don't have access to the internet, so phone contact is more important than ever. We're also noticing the impact on ourselves and spacing out calls and looking after ourselves."



OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers, who have adjusted to new ways of working during this time to support service users most at need. From telephone support and producing new content for our website, to connecting with clients on social media groups - we couldn't provide our vital services without you!

STOP PRESS SAFE HAVEN

Our Safe Haven Centre in Weston Super Mare opened on 1 May as a telephone crisis service for people already in mental health services, as part of our response to the Covid-19 pandemic. With social distancing measures in place, our planned face-to-face service was not possible and so staff members have been redeployed to provide a temporary, telephone-based service for the most vulnerable people in North Somerset who have been referred by the AWP Crisis Team. The telephone support is open 4pm to 10pm, seven days a week.

STOP PRESS FOOD DONATIONS

A huge thank you to local companies Neal's Yard, Bird and Blend, Holland and Barrett and Better Foods for your donations for our wellbeing bags that are going out to clients. The bags contain such things as mugs and tea, pencils and colouring sheets, seeds and compost, hand cream, bath salts, hand sanitiser as well as coffee and chocolate.



Staff: Some of our staff that shared their kindness stories. Left to right: Ali, Kelvin, Tasha, Jeremy, Rooth, Colette.

Kindness matters

WORDS: CLARE COX
PHOTO: SECOND STEP

For Mental Health Awareness Week (18 May - 24 May) we shared stories of kindness from our staff, including this one from our High Support Accommodation Service team.

"It's about going that extra mile to achieve a positive outcome for all of our clients. We love to see them thrive and reach even the smallest of goals.

We helped a client recently who was shielding due to underlying health conditions. She wanted to still be independent and go out to get her medication and shopping, but we encouraged her to allow us to do it for her. We queued 90 minutes to get her medication so that she could self-isolate

and take care of herself. We did a bit of shopping, and helped her set up an order online so that she could do her own shopping too, and then we picked it up for her.

We also helped her speak with her two children and family when she had no means of contacting them. We provided a phone for her and a safe space to hold a socially distanced meeting.

It's massively important to help promote independence with all our clients and to help them identify when they need support from staff or outside agencies. Kindness is about enabling people to still do the little things that make them feel stronger."

HELPFUL NUMBERS DURING LOCKDOWN

Bristol MindLine: 0808 808 0330 every night 7pm-11pm
Well Aware: 0117 958 5522 24/7
Mindline Somerset: 01823 276 892 24/7

We Are Bristol: 0800 694 0184 Mon-Fri 8.30am-5pm, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun
AWP Mental Healthcare Helpline: 0300 303 1320 24/7
Hope Project 0117 909 6630

SECOND STEP

PUTTING MENTAL HEALTH FIRST

THANK YOU FROM THE BOARD

We'd like to thank everyone involved in keeping our clients safe and well through this testing time. It's great to see staff, peers, volunteers and partners coming together to work in new ways with such passion and positivity. We're enormously proud of you all.

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