



THRIVING THROUGH RESTRICTIONS

Support to Our Personnel in Challenging Times

INTRODUCTION

With another set of COVID-19 related Restrictions coming into force it is entirely probable that many of you may be feeling worried or unsettled by what's going on. It might feel like so much of what is happening is outside of our control and its impact on us will be different for us all, not least because there are a lot of unknowns about the immediate and long-term future. It's only natural that these uncertain and challenging times can affect our mental health and wellbeing. The RAF's distinctive character, spirit and attitude can help us pull together in difficult times, such as now, and protecting our mental health is key to us coping with and recovering from the impacts of COVID-19.

The RAF is as busy as ever with personnel supporting COVID-19 and MACA operations and our personnel continue to undertake essential operational work and training all while supporting the government's COVID-19 preventative measures in maintaining social distancing including working from home. We all have a critical role to play in supporting our colleagues as well as our wider community, working through this, together, in the most co-operative, responsible and kind way we can. Now more than ever, being able to stay fully connected to our families, friends and colleagues is vitally important; but we all need to be honest with each other and recognise that it really is ok, to not be ok and that asking for help is not a weakness.

This booklet offers some useful tips, guidance and signposting to the array of help and support available through your command chain, pastoral teams, HR staff, medical centres, SSAFA and the RAF Mental Health Network and focuses on multiple areas we can consider; not all will resonate or be relevant to us all but there may be elements each of us can use. As the RAF Mental Health and Wellbeing Champion, I wanted to let you know how the Royal Air Force can continue to support you, to help you look after your own wellbeing during this challenging time. Even if you feel fine, there may be others around you who are not and this may assist you in supporting them by highlighting additional help that is available.

AVM Jennings RAF Mental Health Champion

This short booklet will cover:

- Page 2. Chain of Command / Line Managers Responsibilities and Leadership.
- Page 3. MODNET Health and Wellbeing portal & EAP and Useful Contacts.
- Page 4-8. Looking after yourself; mentally and physically (including weight management and alcohol).
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The current enduring COVID 19 situation can be unsettling, very disruptive and affect both our wellbeing and mental health. While it is important to stay informed, there are many things we can do to support and manage our wellbeing during such times.

The **MOD SharePoint** has useful and up to date information and guidance around isolation, social distancing, homeworking, travel and events. Support is available in a range of ways and found on the [COVID-19 portal on the intranet](#) and [Defence Connect](#). provides information on remote working and the latest detailed HR FAQs (updated daily), with advice around absence management and reporting. To stay close to government advice regarding what you need to know, visit the **GOV.UK** page.

The Chain of Command / Line Managers Responsibilities and Leadership. In light of the ongoing COVID measures, Line Managers remain responsible for their personnel and must put in place regular, routine work practises and communication plans to follow the Government and RAF direction in dealing with COVID-19. For Serving Personnel as part of good leadership it is essential that the Chain of Command “know your people” and offer support as required. The RAF Internet and Sharepoint Health Wellbeing websites¹, are supported by Stations who are committing significant amount of time and effort to providing a large number of H&W and opportunities including Station specific digital interaction which are communicated regularly. Where personnel are vulnerable, Units should continue their regular Health / Welfare Committee reviews using alternative communication channels; meetings can be arranged via Skype, VTC, and BT ‘Meet Me’. In line with RAF COVID-19 plans units must report cases, suspected cases and self-isolation of their staff through their Chain of Command.

Leadership, as always, requires leaders to set the standards and show the way. Leading remote teammates, especially in times of crisis, is more challenging than leading in person, so the first step is to **recognise** that this is a new situation that requires a different leadership approach. The basics of leadership remain, but the need to **connect and communicate** to your people is even more important for their wellbeing and to continue to deliver the RAF’s priority outputs.

Support. Make special efforts to understand your teammates’ personal and family circumstances and work with them individually to help them to continue to contribute. Watch out for signs of stress and fatigue and use all of the RAF’s support mechanisms if required. The best way to observe people’s state of mind is face-to-face, so schedule team meetings as often as the risk level allows. Some people may become stressed and need more support than others, so approach each case individually. Leaders should set up a ‘Buddy Check’ system where sub-leaders and teammates check up on others, provide help as required, and report back any concerns. Support is everyone’s responsibility, not just the leaders’.

Communication is vital in challenging situations. Engage all your team, especially those working remotely, on a daily basis through appropriate means of communication – consider multiple media but plan specific to your circumstances and communicate it. Include regular scheduled meetings. Keep people on task by setting mission and team priorities and communicating regular updates to keep up situational awareness. Where individuals are more vulnerable, including anyone who is self-isolating or off sick, contact them more frequently. A good idea is to set up social media contact groups such as WhatsApp, Instagram and Snap Chat to keep in contact but follow the MOD social media guidelines and SyOps.

¹ [RAF Sharepoint Health-and-Wellbeing \(COVID-19\)](#) [RAF Health-Wellbeing/COVID-19.](#)

Treat your teammates as equally as possible. If they don't all have access to the net or they are unable to work away from their place of work, devise workarounds – rotate laptops, download to home computers, rotate people in the office. If someone has to work in the office, consider whether you, their leader, should be there with them. **Trust** your people to get the work done around their other demands. If people are looking after children or vulnerable people, trust them to work their own flexible hours. **Empower** your people even more than usual. Use this as thinking time to experiment and give your teammates the freedom to allow their expertise and imagination to flourish.

Encourage people to regularly access either the MODNET Coronavirus Portal for updated guidance including new measures to delay the spread of coronavirus and the latest FAQs offering advice or the **RAF intranet** and to use the new **My RAF app**. The My RAF App can be accessed via the **MyRAF webpage**, all that is required is a Defence Connect account.

<https://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/defnet/raf>

RAF Stations' SharePoint / Station COVID 19 Plans have local information. For example, HQ Air has set up a COVID-19 News tab on the HQ Air publishing page and has asked HQ Air personnel to inform their staff of this change, requesting they set up an alert for this tab so that they receive the latest information being published by the Stn and at the following Government Link.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/COVID-19-covid-19-uk-government-response>

The **MODNET Health and Wellbeing portal** provides a go-to-guide for health and wellbeing. The portal provides Service specific advice, tools and resources to support individual's mental health and resilience, including physical health and wellbeing. This includes current policies and initiatives, as well as links to other single Service, Civilian HR sites and Defence affiliated charities.

<https://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/defnet/HOCS/Pages/Health-and-Wellbeing-Portal.aspx>

If you or a colleague would like support, there are multiple channels for you to find help:

- **SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity** has very experienced professionals and can be reached on your local station or through the **PS & SWS RAF** Contact Number – **03000 111 723** which all serving personnel, Reserves and their families should use as this will connect them with someone from the service.
- The **RAF Association** has an extended local network, accessible through your Hive or Community Support team, or you can reach RAFA helpers on their hotline - **0800 018 2361**.
 - A telephone outreach service is now available which will proactively support the RAF community in checking on their welfare and offer them regular contact (telephone or online).
 - A friendship helpline is available for anyone in the RAF community to call if they are feeling isolated, in need of more specific support or simply want a chat with someone friendly who understands.
 - RAFA also introduced an online version of its new Station in-person courses Finding It Tough? mental wellbeing programme. Called “**mini-FIT**” this

project provides a digitally accessed course to consider social distancing measures.

- A support programme including a listening and counselling service is available Regular and Reserve RAF Service Personnel (SP) as well as their families and RAF veterans. through the **RAF Benevolent Fund - 0300 102 1919**. [IBN 3/20](#) refers.
- A new 24/7 emotional support helpline is available for all adults within the RAF Family, providing immediate emotional support. The helpline is available 24 hours a day and is for those that don't have the time or privacy available but has 10 minutes and would benefit from talking to someone on a more ad hoc basis. This is in addition to the Listening & Counselling Service and offer of Relate relationship support.
- A new online wellbeing zone is now available for all the RAF Family, with a range of information about topics such as resilience, nutrition, physical and mental health. The RAF Benevolent Fund now offers four self-help programmes for people struggling with specific wellbeing issues; the modules are Space from COVID, Space for Resilience, Space for Sleep, Space from Stress and Thrive workshops for partners (aimed at enhancing resilience and wellbeing generally) available online, and counselling for young people (aged 11+).
- If you're not ready to talk, the RAF Benevolent Fund can help through the mindfulness app '**Headspace**'. If you are a currently serving member of the RAF (regular or reserve) and you would like to request a Headspace membership please email headspace@rafbf.org.uk from your MoD email account, quoting your service number.
- <https://www.rafbf.org/news-and-blogs/more-3000-raf-personnel-sign-headspace>
- **Combat Stress** has a 24-hour helpline - **0800 323 4444**
- **Samaritans** is free to call on **116123**; email jo@samaritans.org or visit Samaritans.org
- If in a crisis please ring **NHS 111** or go straight to A&E.



Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). In line with the Permanent Secretary, Defence civil servants are advised to make use of the EAP. It is a confidential employee benefit for civilians and their line managers. The programme is designed to help deal with personal and professional problems that could be affecting Defence employees home life or work life and general wellbeing. The EAP service provides a complete support network that offers expert advice and compassionate guidance 24/7, covering a wide range of issues. It offers not only reactive support when someone needs it but also proactive and preventative support to deliver the best possible outcomes.

<https://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/defnet/HOCS/Pages/Employee-Assistance-Programme.aspx>

Personnel and emotional support should continue to be sought, in the first instance from within the chain of Command and where directed from other specialist staff. There will be specific unit level measures in place to deal with COVID-19, however Personnel staffs, Station Chaplains, Station Medical Staffs and specialist welfare staffs such as SSAFA Force Help social workers are available to speak too and provide support as required. Useful welfare and community information is available on the RAF Hive Facebook page and RAF Community Website.

www.facebook.com/RAFHIVE

[New RAF Community Support SharePoint Site](#)



Individuals who do not have access to MODNET or other MOD Comms should access the NHS COVID 19 and Public Health England websites for up-to-date information.

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>

It's important to remember to take care of your mind as well as your body and to get support if you need it. Stay in touch with family and friends over the phone or on social media. Where you are working from home or social distancing there are simple things you can do that may help, to stay mentally and physically active during this time.

EXERCISING

Look for ideas of exercises you can do at home on the NHS website

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/easy-low-impact-exercises/> or other online fitness apps such as The Body Coach or the Dame Jessica Ennis-Hill - J.

<https://www.thebodycoach.com/blog/pe-with-joe-1254.html>

<https://www.jennisfitness.com>



RAF Central Fund A charity that works to safeguard the health and wellbeing of serving RAF personnel through grant funding for sport and physical activities.

www.rafcf.org.uk



The RAF Central Fund has partnered with **LES MILLS™ On Demand** which offers all serving RAF personnel 60 days free access to their online fitness solution plus a special discounted rate for those wishing to continue their membership beyond this period. RAF personnel can access their 60 day free trial by clicking on the link below.

FREE WORKOUTS

WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

With the latest Government Restriction asking us to Stay at Home homes and get out less, the temptation might be to head to the fridge or food cupboard. Mindful eating is about being aware of why you eat. We often eat due to negative emotions, stress or boredom.

Having an unhealthy body weight can cause increased risk of injury and increases your risk of serious health problems e.g. heart disease, high blood pressure, sleeping difficulties, back pain, mobility and joint problems, reduced fertility and reduced quality of life. Tackling the negative impacts of unhealthy body weight such as eating healthily, undertaking regular exercise, not smoking and having a healthy Body Composition all have significant benefits to your health.

Home working and self-isolating present many challenges, including how to keep active. Exercising is important for both physical and mental health, as well as burning off any excess calories. Aim to be active every day. You should undertake 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity a day, at least five times a week and physical activity to improve muscle

strength, twice a week. The DNAS factsheet DNAS PH12 'Physical activity' provides more information. Most people will lose weight if they eat and drink between 1500 and 1800 kcal a day. Remember, women tend to need less energy compared with men.

The Defence Nutrition Advisory Service at the Institute of Naval Medicine (INM) provides expert, evidence-based advice and specific information on diet, nutrition and military feeding. range of nutrition topics, as well as practical tips to promote healthier lifestyle choices and optimise 'military' capability has produced a number of useful pamphlets which provides information on the importance of energy requirements you're your lifestyle is more sedentary than usual, how to move more and sit less and working off those additional treats.

ALCOHOL FREE DAYS

The Covid pandemic has had a huge impact on our lives, and particularly the disruption experienced by those working during this time. To fill newly free time, relieve worry or uncertainty, or just to alleviate boredom it has been easy to increase our alcohol intake and not have Drink Free Days. Emerging evidence suggests that the impact of the pandemic on the nation's drinking has been an increase of alcohol consumption in the general population.

A recent Drinkaware study looking at the impact the pandemic has had on the nation's drinking, has highlighted an increase in our alcohol consumption.

Impact of the pandemic on drinking habits (Drinkaware Survey 2020)

- 14% percent of those working from home during lockdown, when they hadn't been previously, drank more alcohol throughout lockdown, compared with 11% of those who didn't change their work location.
- Those who felt the pandemic had a large or moderate negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing were more likely than those who experienced a small or no impact to have drunk more than normal throughout lockdown (14% compared with 8%).
- Those who ate less healthily were more likely to have drunk more than normal throughout lockdown (16%) and almost one in six (16%) of those who had gained weight drank more than normal throughout lockdown.
- Among those drinkers who smoked, more than one in five (21%) of those who smoked more compared to normally, also drank more alcohol throughout lockdown.

Why drinking less can benefit you

A sound night's sleep. Improved mood. More energy and money. Cutting back on alcohol can have positive effects often within just a few days. In the longer term, drinking less will reduce your risk of a number of serious health issues.

Drinkchat Free online chat service for anyone who is looking for information or advice about their own, or someone else's, drinking. Trained advisors are on hand to give you confidential advice.

<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/advice/support-services/chat-with-an-advisor>

Drinkline Free, confidential helpline for anyone who is concerned about their drinking, or someone else's.

Helpline: 0300 123 1110 (weekdays 9am–8pm, weekends 11am–4pm)

SLEEP

Sleep is a vital indicator of overall health and well-being. Sleep hygiene is “behaviours that one can do to help promote good sleep using behavioural interventions”. Obtaining healthy sleep is important for both physical (especially for the immune system) and mental health. It can also improve productivity and overall quality of life. Everyone, from children to older adults, can benefit from practicing good sleep habits. Frequent sleep disturbances and daytime sleepiness are the most telling signs of poor sleep hygiene. In addition, if you're taking too long to fall asleep, you should consider evaluating your sleep routine and revising your bedtime habits. Just a few simple changes can make the difference between a good night's sleep and night spent tossing and turning.

www.sleepfoundation.org/

WELLBEING

There are also sources of support and information that can help, such as the NHS Every Mind Matters web platform which is a useful site of information that provides information to help you manage and maintain your mental health and gives simple and practical advice on how to get a healthier mind, how to deal with stress and anxiety how to boost your mood or sleep better.

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/>

A number of Mental Health charities such as **Togetherall** (previously The Big White Wall):

<https://togetherall.com/en-gb/>

and **The Samaritans** are providing specific information for the RAF and their families and additional advice on how to deal with the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) particularly if individuals are having increased feelings of stress or anxiety.

Samaritans has created a dedicated hub and resources for those worried about the current situation and how the coronavirus outbreak is affecting mental health.

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-having-difficult-time/if-youre-worried-about-your-mental-health-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>

<https://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/defnet/RAF/Pages/COVID-19-information-for-all-Whole-Force-personnel-and-the-wider-RAF-Family.aspx>

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/support-and-information/worried-about-someone-else/>

LONELINESS & SELF-ISOLATION

The current isolation and social distancing measures mean that more of us will be spending a lot more time at home and many of our social activities will no longer be available to use, this can cause individuals to feel more isolated and lonelier than normal. Tackling loneliness

matters to everyone - to individuals, employers, communities, educators and to health professionals and this will be more prevalent during Infectious disease outbreaks like the current COVID 19 (COVID 19). Supporting people to have meaningful social relationships is crucial to people's physical and mental health. During this outbreak we all can all play an important role in preventing loneliness. Be in touch regularly with your work colleagues / Line management, friends and family members (outside of your home) through social media, phone or by letter and if you are undertaking any specialist care – then your welfare / health professional or counsellor. It will mean a different rhythm of life and a chance to be in touch with others in different ways than usual.

- Create a new daily routine that priorities looking after yourself.
- As part of your relaxation try reading more, watching movies, have a new exercise routine or relaxation techniques.
- Listen to free mental wellbeing audio guides.
- Search and download relaxation and mindful apps such as the RAF Ben Fund **HeadSpace** or online Community apps.
- Focus your time and energy into helping yourself feel better.
- On social media remember you usually only see things people want to share.
- Try not to tell yourself that you're alone – many people feel lonely at some point in their life and support is available.
- Try not to use alcohol, cigarettes, gambling or drugs to relieve loneliness; these can all contribute to poor mental, and physical, health.

If you are self-isolating due to health reasons continue to follow the Government and NHS guidelines.

CROWDED LIVING

With numerous businesses, schools, colleagues, nurseries closed and a large number of people working from home, there will be many families and people living cooped alongside each other for long periods of time. Chat about what to do in moments when things are stressful, understand that it is ok if you get on each other's nerves but decide on a signal that means you need space or need a moment in separate rooms. If you have a garden go outside or a garage / shed then use the additional space. While you able, continue to get out and about but be mindful of social distancing measures.

CONSTRUCTIVE WORKING AT HOME

Get dressed. This does not necessarily mean uniform/work clothing but washing and getting dressed will not only improve your state of mind, it will psychologically prepare you to start work. Some people find that dressing formally is helpful, and useful if they need to dial into a video call. Likewise, changing out of work clothes when you clock off for the day helps your brain to understand that the working day is over.

Establish boundaries. Most personnel will probably have set hours of work, and it's important to stick to these when you're working from home. Be ready to start your day at the same time as you would normally arrive in your office or workplace and finish your day at the same time. At the end of a working day, it's best to switch off your computer and tidy away papers and other items. Space allowing, set aside a specific, separate area in your home where you can set yourself up - ideally with a properly adjusted desk and chair, similar to your workplace. The **NHS advice** is that you should adjust your chair so you can use the keyboard with your wrists and forearms straight and level with the floor.

If there are other people in the house, finding a space where you're not likely to be disturbed is essential. It's also important to not "overcompensate" because you're anxious about working from home, don't over communicate just to ensure visibility. You know if you're on task and being productive so keep yourself in check.

Get out and about (if you're not self-isolating). Working from home shouldn't mean you stay cooped up indoors all day. While you might not miss your daily commute, it does guarantee that you leave the house at least once during the day. So, get outside and enjoy that fresh air. A different perspective will also help undo mental blocks and give you a fresh pair of eyes for any tasks you're struggling with.

Pick up the phone. If you're working from home, depending on your situation, you may be working alone, so you won't get distracted by colleagues' conversations and other office noise. When you're at work, you're more likely to engage with colleagues but when you're working from home, you could spend the whole day without speaking to anyone which can be isolating. Make some time to pick up the phone and have a real conversation, rather than relying on email and instant messaging.

Take regular breaks. It's good to have a routine when you're working from home, but work shouldn't become monotonous. And you shouldn't stay glued to your screen all day. It's important to take regular screen breaks and get up from your desk and move around just as you would in an office. Research has also found that short breaks throughout the day are more beneficial than less frequent, longer breaks. Breaks in the office environment are both planned and occur naturally, in the spur-of-the-moment conversation, but when working from home, it's normal and acceptable to undertake the odd domestic task – but do not feel guilty about it. Consider it one of those unplanned, spur-of-the-moment breaks.

Many home workers recommend the Pomodoro Technique, a method of time management which breaks your working day into 25-minute chunks. Each chunk is followed by a five-minute break. It's important to stand up, stretch, move around and even go for a short walk to take a break from your work and your screen. Being cooped up without stopping for a break can mean your productivity levels drop, you become more tired and less motivated to complete what you're working on.

<https://francescocirillo.com/pages/pomodoro-technique>



LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Turbulent times can induce considerable stress and experiencing stress is about recognising a change in your **thoughts, feelings and behaviour**. For example, you may feel nervous, tearful and/or angry. You might be feeling more negative or become indecisive and be less able to concentrate.

Other behavioural indicators may be drinking more alcohol or smoking more than is usual or having difficulty sleeping. These changes are highly personal but may be a sign that you are becoming less able to cope with the increasing pressure being placed upon you.

It is important to note that while experiencing stress may affect your feelings of wellbeing, it is not an illness, but it can lead to illness, so recognising signs of stress (and your stressors) is important.

Stressors - A stressor is something which cause you tension, which could be external or internal. External stressors may be a life change such as job loss or relationship breakdown.

An internal stressor may include fear of failure, lack of control and expectations. In the current climate, your stressors may change. For example, being in the constant company of your partner or house mates may now be a source of stress. It is important to recognise these changes and the effect on your behaviour and the steps you can take to help.

Stress Management - There are some more positive activities in which you can engage, which may not only help reduce stress in a healthy way, but also improve your general wellbeing. For example, the NHS suggest the following:

- **Be active** - there is growing evidence to suggest that physical activity can help people with depression, self-esteem and self-control.
- **Connect with people** – humans are social animals and having a support system, people with whom you can share your problems with or simply relax with is a good stress reliever and can have a positive impact on your overall health. During these difficult times, it is important to try to maintain contact with friends and family, even though you can't always see them face to face. Just speaking on the phone to a friend or colleague can go a long way to improving your general wellbeing.
- **Take some 'me time'** - Due to work commitments we often don't spend enough time doing things we really enjoy. It is important to strike a work-life balance. Try to earmark 2 hours, 2 evenings a week to do something accessible such as running, writing, reading, painting etc.
- **Challenge yourself** - Setting yourself goals and challenges, which may or may not be related to work helps build confidence and self-esteem.
- **Help other people who need it** – there is evidence to suggest that helping others, through activities such as assisting those who are in the vulnerable category or having to self-isolate or undertaking community work – these small acts are linked to positive personal wellbeing. Of course, be mindful around maintaining your personal health whilst doing so.
- **Try to be positive** – this is easier for some than others as some people can be naturally more positive but, at the end of the day, try to focus on the things that went well, rather than the things that didn't go so well.
- **Accept the things you cannot change** – changing a difficult situation, especially in an organisational setting is not always possible, so in such situations it is important to remain focused on the things you *can* change rather than the things you can't.
- **Sleep** – the average sleep requirement for most adults is 7-8 hours and it is suggested that waking up at the same time every day is a good idea, so even though you've had a bad night's sleep, getting up at the usual time helps maintain your sleep routine.
- **Talk** - talking about how you are feeling might come more easily to some people than others but, talking through your feelings with a supportive other can be helpful.

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/stress-talking-toolkit.pdf>

If you are concerned for a colleague, the following is a link to the Samaritans Suicide Prevention and Peer Support in the Armed Forces leaflet which provides guidance in identifying, understanding, intervening, and supporting those who you may consider to be at risk of attempting suicide.

https://media.samaritans.org/documents/Samaritans_Armed_Forces_guide_2019.pdf

SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Limit the news. For your own mental health, and the mental health of your children, limit the intake of news. Constantly following the latest COVID 19 news will only increase the entire family's anxiety. Minimise the negative impact the current situation has on your children and explain the facts to them. Discuss the news with them but try and avoid over-exposure to coverage of the virus. Be as truthful as possible.

Make sure **information is age appropriate**. Emphasize safety for younger children, Explain they are safe and being taken care of. For older children, stick to the facts and make sure you are not sharing too much of your own anxieties with them. Process your feelings mostly with older adults.

Give kids an **outlet to discuss emotions**. Journaling is a good way for adolescents to process their feelings in this uncertain time. You can also set aside a time to talk as a family about how everyone is feeling and coping with the outbreak. It's important to acknowledge their anxiety but also their loss and grief about upcoming trips and school programs on which they will be missing out. Then turn to your family game time and your usual routines.

FINANCIAL WELLBEING

Financial worries are the second biggest cause of stress for service personnel and their families. The coronavirus restrictions have affected millions of people and things are taking a while to recover. In the current climate many people outside of the military are being prevented from working, have faced or are facing being furloughed, or have been made redundant or let go from their current employment. COVID-19 is causing extra money worries for many in the Armed Forces community. Money Saving Expert has brought together a guide on financial help and rights:

www.moneysavingexpert.com/news/2020/03/uk-coronavirus-help-and-your-rights/

The Money Advice Service provides free and impartial financial advice set up by the government to provide free and impartial money advice – 0800 138 7777 and if either you or your staff have been affected by the coronavirus they provide free personalised help with their **Money Navigator Tool**.

<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en>

- Advice if a family member has been furloughed and need help to get back on track, is facing redundancy or has lost their job, or family member is self-employed, and work has dried up
- Advice and guides to help improve your finances including future finances.
- Tools and calculators to help keep track and plan ahead
- Support over the phone and online.

Instant help: The Money Navigator tool provides action plans based on your own situation.

- The money issues you need to tackle first.
- How to stay on top of bills and payments.
- What extra help and support you're entitled to.
- Where you can get free advice for debt, housing or redundancy.

Worried about debt: If you have concerns about your finances, there are other organisations who can provide free money and debt advice.

[The Royal British Legion Benefits, Debt and Money Advice Service](#) **0808 802 8080** / [RBL MoneyForce](#)

[National Debt Line](#) **0808 808 4000**

[Money Advice Service](#) – set up by the government to provide free and impartial money advice – **0800 138 7777**

Gambling

Gambling is often a fun leisure pursuit and involves playing games of chance for money or material goods. National lottery, scratchers and other lotteries are most common forms of gambling with football and horse racing the most popular betting activities. Many welfare needs of the RAF Family are linked to problem gambling issues – e.g. loneliness, anxiety and depression, relationship issues and for some people coping with the stress of this and self-isolation may increase urges to gamble.

Problem gambling is an urge to gamble continuously despite harmful consequences or a desire to stop.

The RAF Benevolent Fund is working with **GamCare** to raise awareness of when gambling can become a problem and to help serving personnel and their loved ones to get help if and when they need it, providing specific information for gamblers themselves and affected others, including signposting for specific gambling support.



<https://www.rafbf.org/how-we-help/serving-raf/emotional-support/gambling-support-service>
<https://www.gamcare.org.uk/>

GamCare is the leading national provider of free information, advice, support and treatment services for anyone affected by problem gambling. GamCare and The National Gambling Helpline, operated by GamCare, is available 24 hours a day over the phone or via one-to-one live chat **Freephone 0808 80 20 133**. Additionally, the **GameChange course** is available for those who would like to work through an online course, supported by regular contact with a GamCare therapist.

CONCLUSION

During this next set of restrictions, there will likely be a period of 'test and adjust' as personnel find a battle rhythm which works for them, their family and the RAF. Keep your LM informed of your key outputs and agree a means to updating them. Likewise, if you are a manager yourself, ensure your personnel know and understand what is expected of them and support them as best you are able. It is important to realise that you are still contributing to the output of the organisation and that these measures are not a soft option but necessary measures to allow us to continue to deliver in these difficult and trying times.

WEBSITES & CONTACTS FOR FURTHER MENTAL FITNESS, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

RAF Coronavirus Health & Wellbeing: www.raf.mod.uk/coronavirus/health-wellbeing/

Chaplaincy Service RAF ([MODNET Required](#))

SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity can be reached on your local station or through the **PS & SWS RAF** Contact Number – **03000 111 723** www.ssafa.org.uk

HIVE www.facebook.com/RAFHIVE

The RAF Benevolent Fund has a support programme including a listening and counselling service is available through - **0300 102 1919** or www.rafbf.org.

RAF Association (RAFA) - www.rafa.org.uk

Royal British Legion. [Royal British Legion](#)

NHS <https://www.nhs.uk/> or 111

Live well www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/easy-low-impact-exercises/

Every Mind Matters www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/

Health and Safety Executive. www.hse.gov.uk/

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/assets/docs/stress-talking-toolkit.pdf>

Mind <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

Samaritans www.samaritans.org or telephone 116 123

Combat Stress. www.combatstress.org.uk or for Serving Personnel & families **08003234444 08001381619** for Veterans

Togetherall (SP) <https://togetherall.com/en-gb/>

Rethink Mental Illness. www.rethink.org