



In this newsletter we will be looking at Covid-19 and everything you need to know in relation to HIV, service updates from Brigstowe, Brecon and Unity Sexual Health whilst sharing some tips on health and well-being.

Stay Safe

Team Brigstowe x

Bristol has a dedicated hotline for its most vulnerable citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic. Call the We Are Bristol support number:

0117 352 3011

**Open from 8.30am-5pm,
Monday to Friday,
helping people obtain food supplies,
medication, other essentials,
and follow-up support.**



What is COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

COVID-19 is a new condition caused by the SARS-CoV-2 strain of the coronavirus, which spreads very easily from person-to-person. Nobody has existing immunity to it.

About 80% of people with COVID-19 get a relatively mild illness. The people most at risk of serious illness and death are the elderly and those with long-term medical conditions such as lung disease, kidney disease, heart disease and diabetes.

There is currently NO evidence that people living with HIV are more likely to catch COVID-19 than anyone else.

The symptoms of coronavirus are:

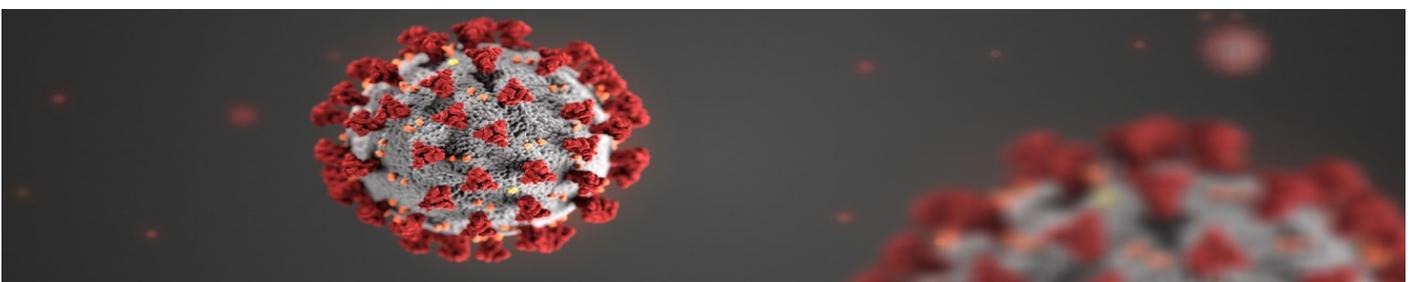
- A cough (New and continuous)
- A high temperature (You feel hot to the touch on your chest or back or 37.8°C or higher.)
- Shortness of breath

However, these symptoms do not necessarily mean you have the illness. The symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu.

It's estimated that perhaps as many as 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 have no symptoms but can still pass the virus on to others. This is why it's essential we follow the Government's Guidelines.

We all NEED to:

- **Stay at Home**– stop socialising face-to-face
- **Stop all unnecessary travel**
- **Keep 2 metres away from other people when out**



To Help Protect Yourself

You should only leave the house for one of four reasons:

- Shopping for basic necessities– food and medicine– infrequent as possible
- One form of exercise– a walk, cycle, or run, Preferably alone or with members of your household
- Any medical need, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person
- Travelling to and from work, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home.

To help protect yourself you can:

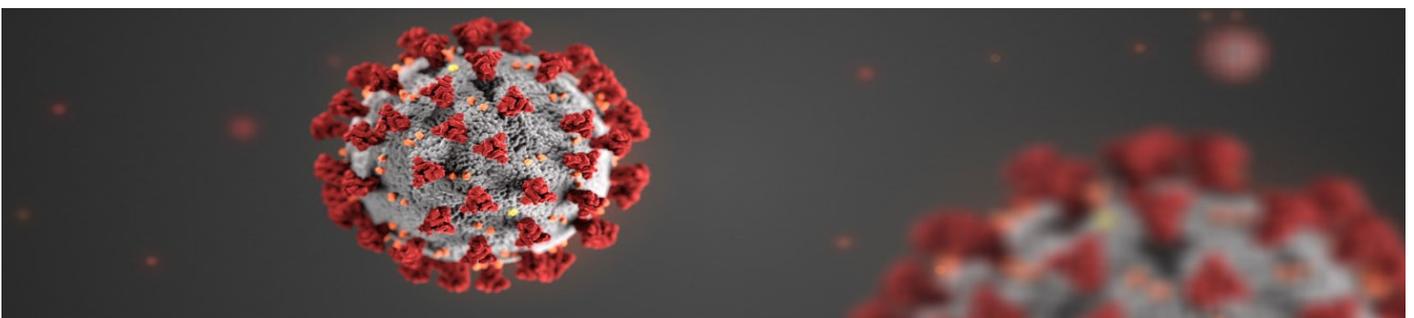
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands

If you have symptoms you need to **STAY AT HOME** for 7 days and self-isolate. If you live with others they should stay at home for 14 days from the day the first person gets symptoms.

It's important that you **do not** go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital if you have symptoms. Use the 111 online coronavirus service to find out what to do next.

If you feel you can't cope with your symptoms at home, your condition gets worse, or your symptoms do not get better after 7 days, then call the NHS 111 Coronavirus Service.

Only call 111 if you cannot get help online



COVID-19 & HIV

COVID-19 is likely to be worse in those with a 'weakened immune system'. This does not mean that all people with HIV are considered at an increased risk. Those on HIV treatment with a good CD4 count and an undetectable viral load are **not** considered to have weakened immune systems. A 'good' CD4 count means anything over 200.

Effective treatment means the vast majority of people living with HIV have an undetectable viral load and good CD4 (over 200). Clinic's don't usually do the CD4 count test anymore because if you remain undetectable your CD4 won't fall. So if you don't know your CD4, don't worry it usually means this is good.

There is **no need to stockpile your medication**, just make sure you have access to **one month** of medication.

CD4 more than 200 & Undetectable Viral Load & on Treatment

- Follow general advice

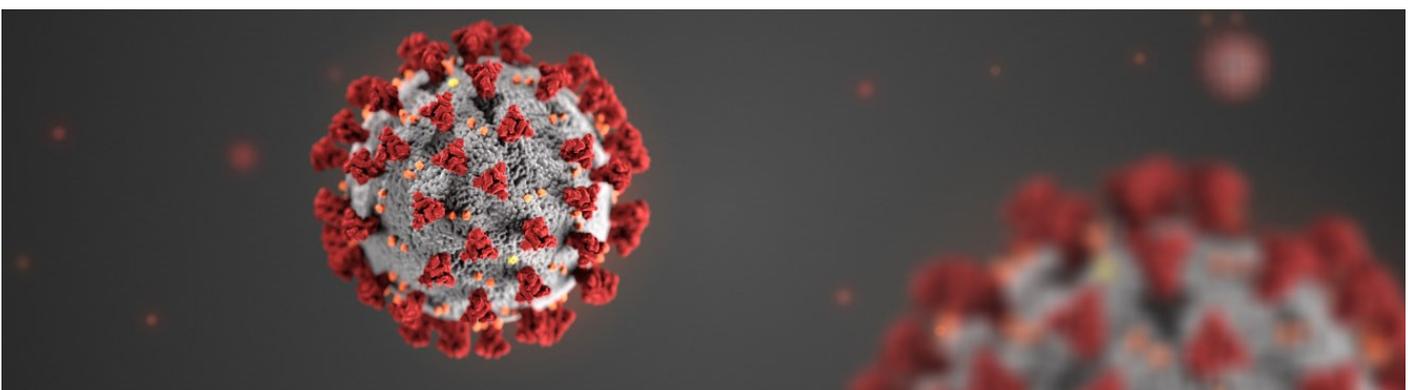
CD4 less than 200 & Detectable Viral Load & Not on treatment

- Heightened risk **but** follow general advice

CD4 less than 50 or have had an opportunistic infection in the last 6 months

- Extremely vulnerable. Follow shielding advice for 3 months

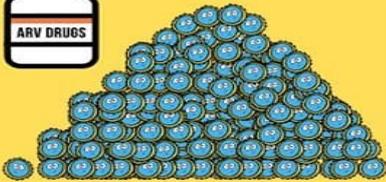
Thank you to BHIVA, THT, Positively UK and Prepster for the updates and information





I HAVE HIV, WHAT ADVICE SHOULD I FOLLOW?

CD4 > 200
Undetectable
viral load
On ART



CD4 < 200
Detectable
viral load
Not on ART



CD4 < 50 or
Opportunistic
infection in
last 6 months



Follow general
advice

Heightened risk
Follow general
advice

Extremely
vulnerable **Follow**
shielding advice
for 3 months



I HAVE HIV, HOW DOES CORONAVIRUS AFFECT ME?

What will happen to my appointments?

- **Clinics will reduce face to face appointments**
This will help to keep you safe, but also free up doctors who may be redeployed in other departments
- Your appointment may go ahead as a **phone or video call**, or your local clinic may **prioritise emergency appointments**.

How can I access my prescriptions?

- You may have **less frequent blood tests** but your local clinic will always ensure you have access to medication
- There is **no need to stockpile**, just make sure you have access to **one month of medication**

Brigstowe's Response to COVID-19

As of Tuesday the 17th March, the Brigstowe office is now closed with all staff working from home.

We are providing advice and support through video and telephone calls. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require **any** form of support during this time.

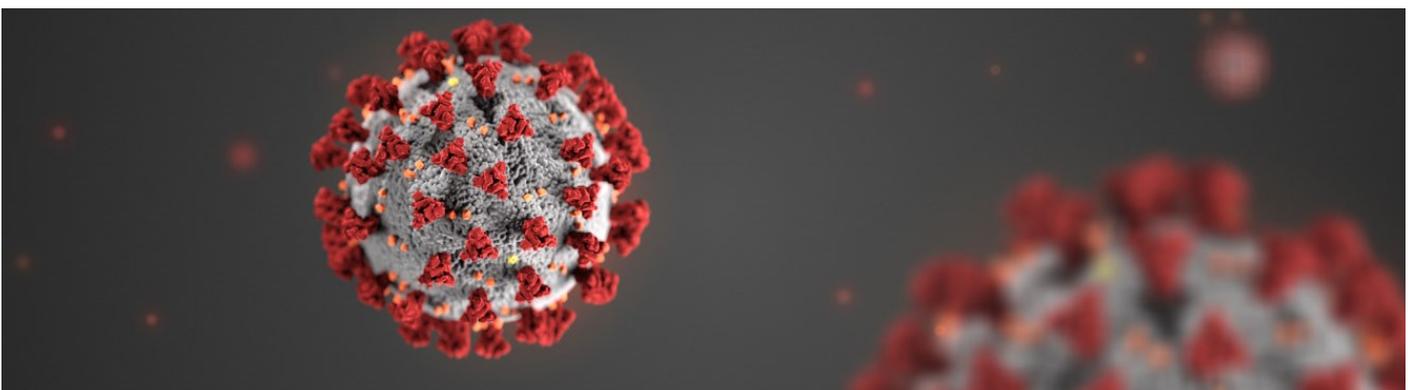
Individual staff are contactable in the usual way or you can contact us by email on: info@brigstowe.org or by phone on: 0117 955 5038.

We have already seen an increase in the number of calls we are receiving and the amount of support our clients need.

We have identified new needs to best support the people accessing our services. Some of these are:

- Access to medication
- Access to food
- Support for people worried about going to work but haven't disclosed their status to their employer
- Destitute asylum seekers not able to access services who need emergency payments
- Regular check-ins via video call to ensure well-being is maintained through our inspirational Volunteer Peer Mentors and Support Staff.

These are just a few but we are regularly checking in with our clients to assess and adapt when needed.



Brecon (Clinic)

Service Update as of 06.04.20

Brecon are still operating but are doing so at a reduced capacity.

- Some of the medical team have been allocated to the wards, therefore they have a reduced cover of 1-2 Consultants
- The Nurses have also been allocated to the wards so providing Mon—Thurs cover with Kieran and Liz working opposite each other
- They are contacting patients by phone regarding medication on or near to their original clinic date.
- Anyone who they feel needs to be seen they will arrange directly

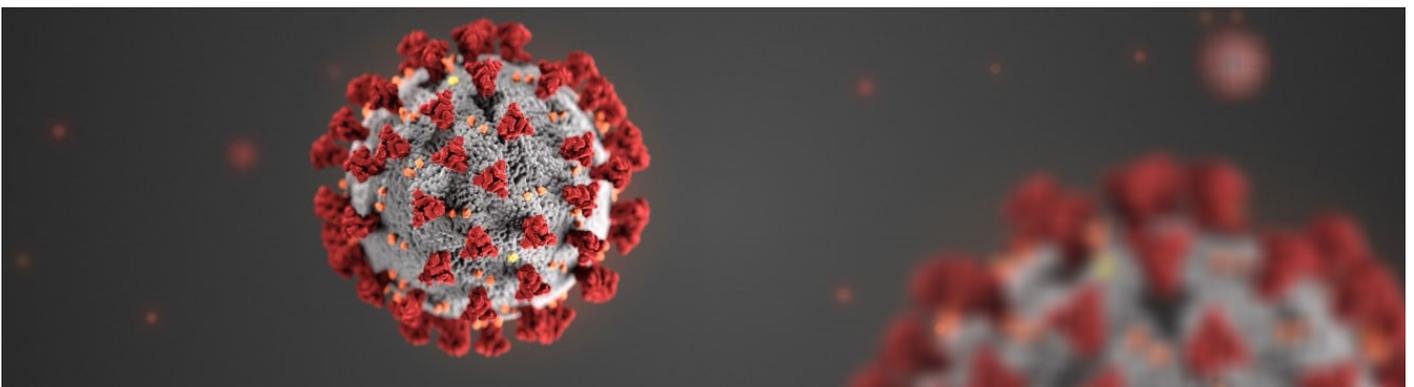
There will be no Drop-In Service

Any face-to-face consultation will be booked by appointment only

If you are running out of medication then please email or call and leave a voicemail on:

0117 414 6400

Brecon.nurses@nhs.net

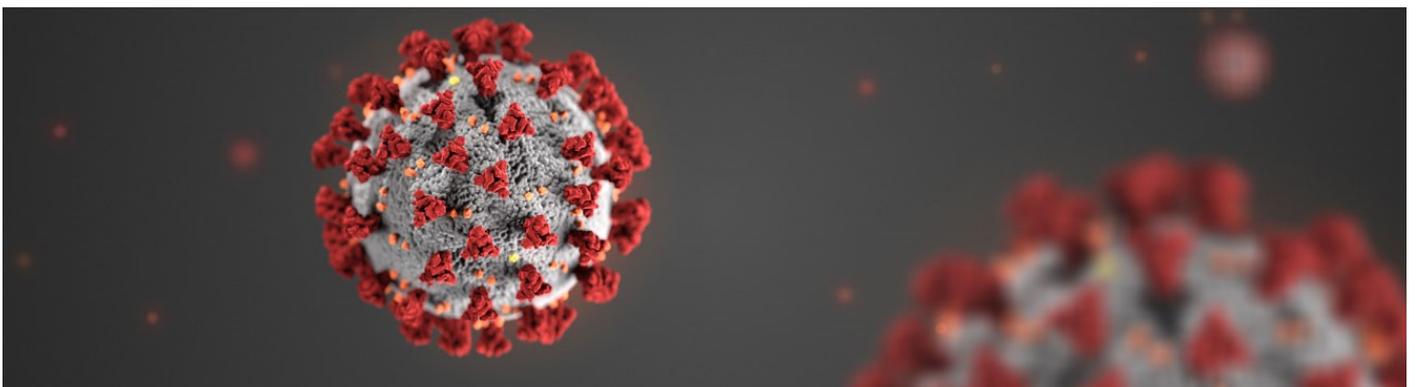


Unity (Sexual Health)

Service Update as of 08.04.20

Unity Services are running but have reduced services.

1. There will be **no walk in** service at both the Unity Central Health Clinic or the WISH Centre
2. All existing, booked face-to-face appointments at Unity Central and Unity Community Clinics will be cancelled. They will be in contact to rearrange your appointment at the earliest opportunity
 - If you have no symptoms but want a check up then please request a test online– www.unitysexualhealth.co.uk. This service is only available to residents of Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire only.
 - If you have **severe symptoms** please call: 0117 342 6900
3. Emergency Contraception
 - Aged under 25– free at any pharmacy or your GP
 - Aged over 25– purchase from any pharmacy or contact your GP
 - No coil or implant services available
 - Any issues please call: 0117 342 6900
4. For abortion advice and support please call: 0345 872 5435
5. If you are due a Hepatitis B vaccination please call: 0117 342 6900
 - Hepatitis A and HPV vaccination have stopped until further notice
6. If you are on the PrEP Impact Trial or have queries about PEPSE then please call: 0117 342 6944



Financial Information

Benefit Update

Recovery of Over Payments, Social Fund Loans and Budgeting Advances have been suspended until July 2020. DWP will automatically suspended these deductions. If you pay by standing order then you can contact your bank direct and stop payments during April, May, June.

DWP will continue to recover Advance payments taken from Universal Credit claims.

Priority Need Register

All Utility Companies all have Priority Need Registers

Look online or contact your utility companies direct if you want to register yourself

This is a link to Wessex Water to:

- ensure you always have easy access to water
- choose how you receive your bill and information
- ask for help with reading your meter
- set up a password for when we visit.

<https://www.wessexwater.co.uk/help-and-advice/priority-services>



Register with your electricity distributor

Electricity distributors also offer Priority Services, such as, password schemes or bills in large print/braille.

If you're medically dependent on electricity, elderly or disabled and potentially vulnerable in a power cut, or you have specific communication needs, you may want to sign up to your electricity distributor's Priority Services register.



In our region there are two companies that distribute electricity; Western Power Distribution or Scottish and Southern Electricity Network.

To find out which distributor provides your area please visit:

<https://www.energynetworks.org/info/faqs/who-is-my-network-operator.html>



Peer Support

Would you like to connect with a person who is also living with HIV?

Our peer mentors are trained volunteers who can connect with you on a regular basis one-to-one. They are there to be a listening ear, share experiences and discuss coping strategies with you, after all they are also living with HIV and so understand what you may be going through. They will also support you in identifying goals and will encourage you to make positive steps to achieve them.

Our mentors would usually meet with you face-to-face but in light of the COVID-19 situation meetings are taking place over the telephone as well as video calls such as WhatsApp, FaceTime, Skype and Zoom – all of which are easy and free to use & we can help you set them up.

If you would like to connect with a mentor, or would like to find out more contact us on info@brigstowe.org 0117 9555038

Telephone Befriending

Not having someone to talk to regularly can be lonely, particularly at a time like this. During the COVID-19 situation Brigstowe will be setting up a telephone befriending service where one of our trained volunteers can chat with you on the phone weekly.

Hearing a friendly voice can make all the difference in times like these. The befriender will check in with you, see how you are getting on & provide you information on support available if you need it.

The telephone befriending service will be up and running by the end of April – so expect a call from us - we want to know how you are doing.





Terrence Higgins Trust At Home

Services and support available to you without leaving the house.

THT are expanding their services to support you through this difficult time and ensure you have what you need during lockdown.

This brand new hub brings together services including free online counselling for people living with HIV, HIV tests through the post, and advice and information online and over the phone.

Online Counselling for people living with HIV– if you're living with HIV in the UK and aged 18 or over then you can access their free online counselling and emotional support service. Their counsellors can help you with issues such as anxiety, distress or concerns relating to HIV or your diagnosis.

myHIV forum– this is a free, welcoming and safe space to meet other people living with HIV in the UK.

Low-cost HIV self test kits– for £15 they will be delivered to your home in a discreet package and you can read the result yourself in just 15 minutes.

THT Direct helpline– their free national helpline can answer your question about HIV and sexual health over the phone or by email. 0808 802 1221 or info@tht.org.uk

More information can be found on:

www.tht.org.uk/our-services/at-home



TALK & LISTEN,
BE THERE,
FEEL CONNECTED



DO WHAT YOU CAN,
ENJOY WHAT YOU DO,
MOVE YOUR MOOD



REMEMBER
THE SIMPLE
THINGS THAT
GIVE YOU JOY



EMBRACE NEW
EXPERIENCES,
SEE OPPORTUNITIES,
SURPRISE YOURSELF



Your time,
your words,
your presence

MANAGING CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19) ANXIETY



For You

- Avoid excessive exposure to media coverage
- Connect through calls/text/internet
- Add extra time for daily stress relief
- Practice self-care
- Focus on your mental health

BlessingManifesting

For Kids

- Reassure them that they're safe
- Let them talk about their worries
- Share your own coping skills
- Limit their news exposure
- Create a routine & structure

For Quarantine/Isolation

- Keep in contact with your loved ones via social media, texts, and phone calls
- Create a daily self-care routine
- Keep yourself busy: games, books, movies
- Focus on new relaxation techniques

WELLBEING

Have a routine– Keeping to regular routines and schedules as much as possible and/or creating new ones is really important. Make sure you plan some time for looking after yourself.

Try to stay connected– Talk to the people who make you feel better. This could be family or friends. If you can, try to get some virtual face-to-face time through apps like FaceTime or Skype. Or set up some new group chats on Facebook Messenger, Snapchat or WhatsApp.

Keep yourself healthy– Make sure you're eating as healthy as possible, with plenty of fruit and veg. Make sure you're drinking enough water. Try to get some exercise (sticking to social distancing rules). Sleep. Sleep is really important for our mental and physical health.

Take some deep breaths– Deep breathing can really help if you're feeling anxious or worried. Inhale through your nose, hold for just a second, then exhale through your mouth. Try to take long, slow, deep breaths for 3 to 5 minutes to clear your head, reduce heart rate and help you relax.

Talk to someone– If you're finding things particularly difficult, then talk to someone. If that isn't a friend or relative we are always happy to help.

Things to avoid– Try not to use alcohol, drugs or tobacco to cope with the way you're feeling. These negatively impact on your mental and physical health.

4 tips to succeed when Working From Home

1

Designated Work Space

Make sure that you have a set space to work from, and that this is not the same one that you tend to relax and unwind in. This will maintain a sense of separation.

A Focused Dress Code

It is still important to 'dress for work'. Putting on a work outfit subconsciously switches you into a different head space. Likewise, changing out of this outfit allows you to switch back out of work mode.

2

Managing Your Time

Allow yourself short breaks away from your desk in order to remain at your most productive, a quick coffee break or walk around the block will only cost 5 minutes of your time but may hugely impact your productivity for the rest of the day.

3

Allow for walk 'timeouts'

Unless you make the conscious effort to get out, days can go by without communication with anyone outside your home. Make sure that you take the time to check in with friends via social media and video calls.

4



Domestic abuse is unacceptable in any situation. If having to stay at home during isolation makes you in danger, or feel unsafe, remember you are not alone and help and support is available.

Women

National Domestic abuse helpline:
0808 2000 247 (Freephone) open 24 hours
www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk



Men

Respect Helpline:
0808 801 0327 (Freephone)
Monday & Wednesday 9am - 8pm,
Tuesday, Thursday & Friday, 9am - 5pm
www.respect.uk.net

Respect

LGBT+

Galop Helpline: **0800 999 5428**
(Freephone)
Monday - Friday 10am – 5pm,
Wednesday & Thursday 10am - 8pm



If there's an emergency, do not be afraid to call the police on **999**. If you are unable to talk on the phone, call **999** and then **press 55**. This will transfer your call to the police who will assist without you having to speak.

Now let's hear from a few of the Brigstowe Team as they share their 'Top Wellbeing Tip' during these times.



Martin, Volunteer

"I would say my top tip for lockdown is a simple act I believe works for all occasions sent to test us. Take yourself somewhere where it's just you, get still, let the limbs un-tense and take a deep breath. Think of nothing but an inhale (deeper than your lungs will initially allow) and an exhale. Stopping and being the most momentary you can. If you can add fresh air and/or sunshine on to your face, even better. Take that moment to remember that you're here in the now and here ALIVE."

"Everyone's sleep pattern is probably out of sync at the moment, either not being able to sleep or continuously waking up. Normally this would really annoy me, but instead I'm trying to just flow with it. When I wake up really early in the morning, instead of trying to get back to sleep & getting annoyed with myself, I go for a walk around the block. Having this early morning alone space, outside, before anyone else wakes up in the neighbourhood seems to have turned into a routine for me now....which I'm kind of enjoying!"



"My top tip for wellbeing in these difficult times if possible make sure you get out for your daily exercise. This can be a walk, jog, run or bike ride.

I am still getting out regularly on my bike to keep me sane!"

Dave, Advice & Support Worker

"Having a structure to my day really helps me cope with all the change. Mealtimes are a part of my daily routine that has stayed constant during lockdown. And I really like cooking. Following a recipe helps me focus my mind on one task and it gives me a break from everything else running through my head. On a good day I learn a new recipe and eat something really nice. On a bad day I forget to turn the electric hob on and spend ages wondering why the pan of lentils is taking so long to cook."

Clare, Peer Support Coordinator



Lauren, Positive Voices Manager



We all need a friend and at Brigstowe we are no different. Now more than ever, our friends are so important. So with that in mind let's hear from one of our long term friends of Brigstowe.



"Brigstowe is very close to my heart. I have a number of friends in the local Bristol area living with HIV who have struggled to come to terms with the condition and, sadly, suffered stigma as a result of disclosing their status. The work that Brigstowe does to support these people is nothing short of astonishing, especially given the widespread cuts in funding that I know they have experienced in recent times. I know that for a number of people Brigstowe provides a life line and essential support for people living with HIV who really need their help.

I first came across Brigstowe in 2019 when I attended a talk provided by of their employees which gave an overview of the services the organisation provides. At the talk, one of the Brigstowe volunteers gave a refreshingly honest and open account of their experience living with HIV which I know struck a chord with every single person sitting in the room (you honestly could have heard a pin drop...). The talk also covered key facts about HIV in order to dispel some of the myths surrounding the condition. I must confess that, although I consider myself to be relatively well informed about HIV, I also had been harbouring some misconceptions about the condition.

After the session, for me it was a no brainer: I made a commitment to donate to this fantastic cause on a monthly basis. I also commenced discussions with my employer, Burges Salmon LLP, to see what we could do as a firm to support Brigstowe. Since then, Burges Salmon LLP has raised several hundreds of pounds for the charity. We also hosted a Lunch & Learn, led by Brigstowe, which was attended by around 50 Burges Salmon employees in November last year. The feedback after the session was extremely positive. I look forward to continue showing my support for this fantastic charity in the future."

John Smith, Associate at Burges Salmon LLP

Useful Numbers and Links

Community

ACORN- a community based union is organising local volunteers to support people in the community who need shopping, prescription collection, post and anything else they may need if they are stuck at home. If you require assistance or would like to volunteer then please visit:

www.acorntheunion.org.uk/corona

Employment

For all the advice needed in regards to your employment and how to manage your HIV in conjunction with Guidance surrounding COVID-19, the fab people over at NAT (National AIDS Trust) have this very useful guide:

[https://loopedin.nat.org.uk/topic/hiv-and-coronavirus-\(covid-19\)/1](https://loopedin.nat.org.uk/topic/hiv-and-coronavirus-(covid-19)/1)

Useful Numbers

Here are some useful numbers in case you need support, some of which are open outside office hours:

- **Samaritans 24hr helpline** (to talk about anything difficult) – 116 123
- **Social Services Helplines (Connecting Care)** – 0800 073 0907 or 0117 900 2655
- **Bristol Mental Health Crisis Line** – 0300 555 0334
- **Bristol City Council Homelessness and Housing Advice:** 0117 352 6800
- **Southmead Hospital HIV Clinic** – telephone the HIV Specialist Nurses on 0117 4146400
- **THT Direct** (for HIV specific advice and guidance) – 0808 802 1221
- **SHELTER** are offering telephone advice around housing issues - 03445151430. The Bristol service is available Mon-Fri 9-5. The National Hub is available Mon-Fri 8-9 and Sat-Sun 9-5
- **CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau)** are operating a telephone system, whereby you leave your name and number and an adviser will call you back. Mon-Sat 9-5. 0117 946 2550

If you require Food Bank Services, then please call the office and speak to one of our Support Workers: 0117 955 5038

Here's a link to a home learning website for parents with children of school age: <https://www.integra.co.uk/home-learning/>

If you are interested in fitness, whether it is serious exercise, or something at a more relaxed pace visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/>