

## Richmond Council statement on Coronavirus (COVID-19)

21<sup>st</sup> April 2020

Richmond Council's Director of Public Health, Shannon Katiyo, said:

People have a need to interact socially at different levels, whether with another individual, in a group or as part of a wider community. Social distancing and self-isolation will have an impact on our ability to interact socially and this will affect people in different ways. While some will take a positive view on the potential benefits, it's important to acknowledge that these measures will present some people with more difficulties or challenge.

Some people have taken a positive view about the opportunity to spend more time with their immediate family, get to know their housemates better, move back in with their parents for the duration of the distancing measures, using time spent on the daily commute in a different way, and perhaps the opportunity to spend more time on homely pursuits.

Unfortunately, other people will increasingly become isolated or experience feelings of loneliness. Loneliness is not the same as social isolation because people can be isolated (alone) yet not feel lonely. People can also feel lonely and yet be surrounded by people. This means the impacts of social distancing and self-isolation are not only limited to people who live alone.

The recent extension of social distancing measures for a further three weeks, now mean that some people are faced with having to spend the next few weeks, or potentially months, in isolation or feeling lonely?

Social isolation and loneliness can affect anyone but we know that some people are more vulnerable than others, and some people have factors that enable them to cope better.

So therefore, it is more important now than ever to show the people around us that they're not alone. That could be as simple as connecting with friends and family over the phone or social media. You can also help by checking in on a self-isolating neighbour by text or posting a note through the letterbox.

If you are isolated or feeling lonely, there are some things you could try!

### **Stay in touch**

Making sure that you stay in touch with friends, family and neighbours can help to ease any feelings of loneliness you and others may experience while in isolation.

- Call your friends, colleagues and relatives regularly on the phone and see how they are.
- Create WhatsApp groups with neighbours, family or friends. Share how you're getting on and ask other people how they are.
- Ask a friend to cook a meal, watch a film or read a book at the same time as you on Skype or FaceTime.
- Use Facebook and Twitter to keep up to date and keep in touch.

Technology can't replace the power of human connection, but there are ways of staying connected in isolation that will help. For more information see: [Campaign to End Loneliness](#)

### **Do something you enjoy**

If we are feeling worried, anxious, lonely or low, we may stop doing things we usually enjoy. Make an effort to focus on your favourite hobby if it is something you can still do at home. If not, picking something new to learn at home might help.

We're lucky enough to live in a digital age – over the last week, I know people who have attended online yoga class with friends, had a virtual bake-off with family from across the globe over Zoom and set up an online book club with friends.

There are lots of free tutorials and courses online, and people are coming up with inventive ways to do things, like hosting online pub quizzes and music concerts.

### **Keep moving**

Exercise decreases stress boosts your mood and improves your energy. Getting exercise doesn't need to be difficult – you don't even need to leave the house! Clear some space in the living room and give our easy 10-minute workouts a go.

The NHS have produced some [exercises](#) that you can do at home

### **Volunteer**

You'll feel better by helping others.

### **Adopt a pet**

Animals can be a source of comfort and may also lower stress and blood pressure.

### **Talking helps**

Remember: it is OK to share your concerns with others you trust – and doing so may help them too. If you cannot speak to someone you know or if doing so has not helped, there are plenty of helplines you can try instead. If you're struggling with being home alone and it's affecting your work, it might be worth talking to your manager (if you feel OK to do so) or set up a lunchtime or after-work video chat over a cup of tea with your colleagues.

For more hints and tips about managing loneliness, go to

<https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/blog/coronavirus-and-social-isolation/>  
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/feeling-lonely/>