

Communication from Deafblind Scotland during the COVID-19 Pandemic



Update 2
April 2020

We hope you are managing to stay well during this difficult time and want to send all of our members our best wishes. The Government tells us that we still need to stay at home but that all of our efforts to keep our distance from others are beginning to make a difference. We hope to meet again before long but meantime we have gathered information to help you stay informed whilst staying at home.

NHS is Still Open

The government want to remind you that your NHS is still open, so please don't ignore the early warning signs of serious conditions.

If you are unwell with non-coronavirus symptoms, it's important to continue to seek medical help by contacting your GP. If symptoms worsen out of hours, call 111. In an emergency, dial 999.

Government Guidelines

Firstly, a reminder that during this national crisis the Scottish and UK Governments have instructed everyone to stay at home and follow social distancing measures.

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)

- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands often and as soon as you get home for at least 20 seconds

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are a new continuous cough and/or a fever/high temperature (37.8C or greater).

People at higher risk of severe illness

The Scottish Government has set up a helpline for people who are having to stay at home and to offer additional support to people who might be finding they are struggling to cope such as people with mental health problems. If you can't get emotional or practical support from family or friends or just need a bit of additional support call: **0800 111 4000**

Wearing Face Coverings

The Scottish Government have suggested that when we are able to go out there may be some benefit in wearing a face covering in places where you can't keep 2 metres away from other people such as on public transport or a food shop.

A face covering should cover your mouth and nose and be made of cloth or other material through which you can breathe, for example a scarf. You do not need to wear a surgical mask.

When applying or removing the face covering, it is important that you wash your hands first and avoid touching your face. After each use, you must wash the covering at 60 degrees centigrade or if not washable then dispose of safely.

Looking after your mental health

During these difficult times, it's important we all look after our mental health and wellbeing, as well as our physical health.

Many of us now need to spend much more time at home, possibly isolated from family, friends and loved ones.

Tips on protecting your mental health whilst isolating.

These tips are from SAMH, advice from the World Health Organisation and mental health charity Mind.

- **Establish a routine:** bringing structure to your day can make you feel better. Work out how you will spend your time each day, if you can write it down and check-in with your schedule regularly.
- **Connect with people:** while you may not be able to have physical contact with your loved ones, there may be other ways you can keep in touch: even a text, phone call or video chat could make a big difference. If you are unable to use these other ways then do contact Deafblind Scotland as we are here for you.
- **Keep track of your feelings:** Notice what makes you feel better or worse, then if you can take steps to avoid, change or prepare for situations that are not good for your mood.
- **Try to keep active:** You could try new ways to keep fit within your home or garden. Playing games which involve physical activity, or you could try going up and down the stairs more, dancing to music or cleaning your home.
- **Take in as much sun and fresh air as you can:** Go for a walk in nature, but keep to the one hour a day rule. If you are unable to be outside, try opening your window and spending time in rooms which get a lot of natural light.
- **Find ways to spend your time, relax and be creative:** Have a spring clean. You could try new crafts or activities

to help you relax such as cooking, gardening, playing musical instruments or singing.

- **Manage your news and social media intake:** try to find a source of news that you can trust to keep you informed. If you find yourself worried try to limit the amount of news and social media you access. Deafblind Scotland will make sure you have all the important information.
- **If you're feeling upset about being unable to go out:**
 - Open the windows to let in fresh air. Or you could spend time sitting on your doorstep, or in the garden.
 - Try looking at the sky out of the window. This can help to give you a sense of space.
 - Regularly change the rooms you spend time in.

For more ways to help protect your mental health visit the SAMH information hub: samh.org.uk/coronavirus. If you can't use a computer call Deafblind Scotland for support.

New Deafblind Scotland Helpline

Deafblind Scotland is providing deafblind people with a point of contact should you need to reach out to someone. If you are **feeling lonely or in need of a chat**, you can contact Deafblind Scotland and we will ensure we have a member of staff available by phone or by email during this time. We are here for you and want to help.

This service is available Monday to Friday 10am - 2pm

Phone: 07715 421 399

Email: info@dbscotland.org.uk

Dental Services

All routine dental care services in high street practices (including orthodontics), Public Dental Service Clinics (community clinics) and Dental Hospitals have been suspended.

Do not go along to your dental practice, community clinic or dental hospital.

If you feel you have an EMERGENCY dental need, in normal working hours, you should contact your dentist on their usual number. They will provide advice, reassurance and telephone assessment, including the use of pain relief or prescribe antibiotics. If your dentist feels that you have an **EMERGENCY** dental need, you will be contacted by a Health Board member of staff.

Hearing Aid Batteries

Because of Covid-19, many Deaf and hard of hearing people have not been able to collect new hearing aid batteries.

Scottish Government aim to supply batteries so that people have enough to see them through the time when they are telling us to stay at home. If you need batteries:

- 1) Contact your local Health Board to let them know you want new batteries.
- 2) The Health Board will arrange for you to either collect from a community hub, or deliver to your home if you can't go out.

Home Energy Scotland

Home heating and energy use will be affected by people staying home. Households in Scotland could face higher energy bills as a result of Lockdown. The Scottish Government's Home Energy Scotland advice service can support people whose home heating and energy use is affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Advisors can help with any questions people may have around staying warm and saving energy whilst self-isolating or working from home. They have the latest information from energy suppliers who have agreed emergency measures to make sure

vulnerable people and those with prepayment meters do not get cut off during the coronavirus outbreak.

Guide Communicator Service

The Deafblind Scotland Guide/Communicator Service continues to support deafblind people. The service is focusing on helping with essential shopping, daily exercise and medical appointments and prescriptions as well as providing support at home.

If you are normally funded to receive a g/c to book contact:

Phone: 0141 777 7774

Email: servicesadmin@dbscotland.org.uk

If you do not currently have a guide/communicator service but you are needing assistance, please contact for further information.

Where to find more information

NHS Inform is updated regularly and has all the health information that you need.

www.nhsinform.scot

BDA Scotland COVID-19 News in BSL. The videos have no subtitles or voice-over; they are aimed for BSL users in Scotland only.

bda.org.uk/coronavirus