

Welcome to the January 2021 edition of Kent & Medway Healthy Workplaces newsletter. If you have news to share from your workplace, please contact us at workplacehealth@medway.gov.uk or call 01634 334307. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please contact us using UNSUBSCRIBE in the subject box. Email: workplacehealth@medway.gov.uk

We hope you have had a relaxing Christmas break and we would like to wish you a very Happy New Year! Although 2020 has been an exceptionally difficult year, January 2021 is a great time for us all to have a fresh start, to reassess our needs, make New Year's resolutions and focus on the good things that lay ahead for all of us. Please do get in touch with us if you would like to discuss your programme for 2021 or if you need any health and wellbeing resources.

Action for Happiness have their Happier January 2021 calendar which this month is focussing on the 10 Keys to Happier Living. As we all know, it can be hard for some of us to get back into the day-to-day routine after the Christmas break and become motivated, especially in these challenging times. Why not use this to help you feel happier at this time of year?

Dates for the diary

January:

All month: [Dry January](#)

20th & 22nd: Mental Health First Aid Course sessions 1 and 2, 9.30am – 1.30pm

21st: Musculoskeletal Health and Physical Activity at Work Seminar

February:

3rd & 5th: Mental Health First Aid Course sessions 3 and 4, 9.30am to 1.30pm

4th: [World Cancer Day](#), [Time to Talk Day](#)

Request your Time to Talk day resources here

<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/time-to-talk-day-2021>

17th – 25th: [Randoms Acts of Kindness Week](#)

All month - [Heart month](#)

March:

All month: [Ovarian Cancer Awareness](#)

1st - 7th: [Eating Disorders Awareness Week](#)

10th [No Smoking Day](#)

11th: [World Kidney Day](#)

15th – 21st: [Nutrition and Hydration Week](#)

19th: [World Sleep Day](#)

20th: [World Oral Health Day](#)

April:

1st – 30th: [Stress Awareness Month](#)

1st – 30th: [Bowel Cancer Awareness Month](#)

7th: [World Health Day](#)



Places still available!

Musculoskeletal Health and Physical Activity at Work Seminar – January 21st

Medway's Public Health team will show us how improving physical activity levels can benefit our overall health and wellbeing and will touch on nutrition. Look out for further seminars during 2021 including those on Food & Mood, Financial Wellbeing and other topics to follow.

To book, please visit:

<https://kentandmedwayhwpmkhealth.eventbrite.co.uk>

New Members of the Team

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome new members of staff to the Kent & Medway Healthy Workplaces Programme. The new members join Michelle Saunders and James Flower whom most of you will already know.

Rak Dass is the Workplace Health Project Coordinator who will be covering the Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley area. Rak comes to the Workplace Health team with a background in regeneration, business development and adult education and is looking forward to sharing his considerable wealth of knowledge.

Kathryn Swinney is the Workplace Health Project Coordinator for businesses in East Kent. With a BSc degree in Exercise Science with minors in Nutrition and Psychology, she has worked in employee wellbeing, university, and community health settings. Kathryn is passionate about sleep hygiene and the benefits of exercise on mental health.

Helen Moers is the Workplace Health Project Coordinator for the West Kent businesses. Prior to joining the team Helen worked in the NHS and has a background within Learning and Development, HR, Organisational Development and project management.

Justine O'Neill is the Workplace Health Project Assistant supporting Michelle Saunders and the coordinators. Justine has extensive business administration experience and in her spare time co-ordinates the volunteers at the Slough Fort Trust in Allhallows.

Service Update.

Given the prime minister's announcement on Monday, there are some small changes to services running currently. The Workplace Health programme continues to run, and we will be carrying out appointments by phone, MS Teams or Zoom and delivering a range of on line training and seminars.

Most health improvement services including local Stop Smoking and Healthy Weight groups in Kent and Medway continue to run in their online versions. NHS Health Checks continue to be delivered but in a reduced capacity. In Medway, these are available at the Smoke Free Advice Centre in Chatham, but a booking is essential. The Kent team are also continuing to deliver health checks where venues allow it to be carried out in a safe manner. If you have appointments for a health check or stop smoking session, please still attend unless you have been contacted and asked not to do so, or have COVID symptoms or are self-isolating. Many GP surgeries have reduced their capacity for NHS Health Checks in Kent and Medway to allow them time to focus on delivering the COVID vaccination programme. For up to date services please visit:

Medway: www.abettermedway.co.uk

Kent: Call 0300 123 1220 or email oneyou.kent@nhs.net

Top Tips for Winter Health

During the winter months with shorter days and dropping temperatures, we may find that it is a struggle to keep healthy, warm and active. We are more prone to picking up germs and it can be harder to stay motivated. Here are some top tips to keeping yourself in good health during winter.

1. **Keep warm and active**

Cold weather can make some health problems worse especially if you are 65 or older or if you have a long-term health condition. It is important to keep warm in winter both inside and outdoors to prevent colds and flu. If you are heading outside for a walk, wear several layers of light clothes. This will keep you warmer than wearing one thick layer as the layers trap warm air. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/keep-warm-keep-well/>

2. **Eat healthily and boost your diet**

It can be easy to crave high carbohydrate comfort foods at this time of the year, but it is important to eat well all year long. Winter is the perfect time to enjoy vegetables such as kale, cabbage, cauliflower, and brussels sprouts. In addition, it is important to boost your diet with vitamin supplements including Vitamin D. See page 6 for more information. <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/> <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day-tips/>

3. **Keep your medicine cabinet updated**

Good food, regular exercise and adequate sleep are some of the best medicines to keep you healthy, but it may be a good idea to keep your medicine cabinet stocked up in case <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/your-medicine-cabinet/>

4. **Have a health check – be proactive with your health**

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200221/a_better_medway/575/nhs_health_checks

5. **Exercise regularly** - with many of us having to spend more time at home due to the Coronavirus pandemic, it can make it harder to keep active as there is strong evidence that people who are active have a lower risk of heart disease, stroke and depression. Try not to sit still for more than an hour or so. Do 150 minutes of moderate activity every week <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/#what-counts-as-moderate-aerobic-activity> . For information regarding walks <https://www.medway.gov.uk/selfguidedwalks>

6. **Stay connected** - it's important to stay virtually connected for your mental health

7. **Sleep well** <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/>

8. **Stay hydrated** - staying hydrated is necessary all year long, be sure to drink your 6-8 glasses of water each day! <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/water-drinks-nutrition/>

9. **Cut down on alcohol** <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-support/>

10. **Practice frequent hand washing** <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/best-way-to-wash-your-hands/>

11. **Quit smoking** https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200221/a_better_medway/441/reducing_smoking

12. **Keep up to date with your flu vaccine** <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine/>

If you do fall ill - The sooner you get advice, the sooner you are likely to get better. You can get help and advice from:

- a pharmacy – pharmacists can give treatment advice for a range of minor illnesses and can tell you if you need to see a doctor
- your GP – you may be able to speak to a GP online or over the phone, or go in for an appointment if they think you need to
- NHS 111 – go to 111.nhs.uk or call 111 if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do

Business Mile



If your business is recognising the need to implement a workplace initiative that will help protect employees' wellbeing, then The Business Mile might be the answer. With COVID-19 impacting how and where people work, this is a pivotal time that calls for businesses to take action. The Mason Foundation's workplace initiative, The Business Mile, provides a simple solution. From SME'S to large global companies, The Business Mile will support workforces to become more active, healthier and happier, by encouraging employees to walk a mile, whether on their own, or as part of a workplace team. The resulting impact will be a happier team, with increased productivity and reduced employee absenteeism. The Business Mile can be easily adapted to meet the constantly evolving needs of your workforce and their environments, so get in touch today to find out how you can help your employees do 'Their Mile, Their Way'!

Watch their video using this link <https://youtu.be/Y-StxPMOzJo> and visit their website at

<https://www.themasonmile.com/the-business-mile/>

They are happy to offer a 10% discount to businesses who purchase the full 12-month license during January 2021 in response to this newsletter. This offer will only run for January and will revert back to full price in February. Contact info@masonfoundation.co.uk for more details.



Making better choices today can have a big impact on your health. One You is a Kent based service to help you get healthier and feel better with free tips, tools and support. One You is able to support you to make small, practical changes that fit in with your life and helps you find a balance, so that you can feel better every day. Visit their website via

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/one-you-kent>

Live Well Kent is delivered on behalf of Kent County Council and the NHS by two charities - Porchlight and Shaw Trust. Porchlight works across Kent to address people's housing, social, economic and health issues. It makes a positive impact on adults, children, families and communities as a whole. Shaw Trust is a national charity helping people to achieve their ambitions and gain greater independence. For the services offered by Live Well Kent including keeping healthy, training, meeting people and everyday living, find out more at <https://livewellkent.org.uk/>



Blue Monday is claimed to be the most depressing day of the year and it is normally on the third Monday in January which this year lands on 18th January. Whilst not clinically proven, it's certainly a good conversation starter for wellbeing.

Blue Monday was first referenced in 2005. A British psychologist called Dr Cliff Arnall created a formula that pinpointed the most depressing time of the year based on weather, time elapsed since Christmas, levels of debt, time elapsed since failing New Year's resolutions and monthly income in order to predict the day when high numbers of people would book a holiday. As the negative connotations associated with Blue Monday increased, Dr Arnall began to campaign against it and insists that we should instead focus on the positives. "Whether embarking on a new career, meeting new friends, taking up a new hobby or booking a new adventure, January is actually a great time to make those big decisions for the year ahead," he said.

So instead of assuming that the 18th will be the gloomiest day of the year, let's turn this year's Blue Monday into a positive one for 2021! Let's use this day to take stock, look forward to the future and increase our awareness of self-care and mental health issues. Connecting with others is one of the best ways to combat isolation and a sense of feeling 'flat' after the festivities in December. Samaritans is turning Blue Monday into "Brew Monday" by encouraging people to connect over a virtual cuppa. Reach out to colleagues for a virtual cuppa and a chat to listen to another person to work through what's on their mind. Go to <https://www.samaritans.org/support-us/campaign/brew-monday/> for more information.

You could also use Blue Monday to help raise funds for charities. So why not turn Blue Monday into a positive experience by putting on a staff event such as a quiz or a competition to raise money and to create a feeling of opportunity and empowerment? Why not mark the day by asking your staff to dress in blue clothes, dye their hair blue or eat blue foods?

Sometimes the January slump can go much deeper. If you are in emotional distress and in need of urgent mental health support, please do reach out to the numbers below:

Mental Health Matters/ Release the Pressure – 0800 107 0160 24/7 helpline <https://www.kent.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/health/release-the-pressure>

Samaritans – 116 123 (free phone number) 24/7 support line, you can also send an email or download the organisation's self-help app. To make an appointment to speak with a trained volunteer, call 01462 455333.



Shout Crisis Helpline - If you need immediate support, you can text SHOUT to 85258 anytime day or night and chat by text.

Saneline – 0300 304 7000 4.30 pm – 10.30 pm helpline

Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT) – Single Point of Access (SPA) 0800 783 9111 – referral line for NHS Mental Health Services

Heads Together - a campaign co-ordinated by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge

<https://www.headstogether.org.uk/get-support/>

Mind – 0300 123 3393 infoline

Stepchange – for financial and debt advice <https://www.stepchange.org/>

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

Benefits of Vitamin D

Did you know that Vitamin D is sometimes called the “sunshine vitamin”? This is because it is produced in your skin when it is directly exposed to sunlight. However, at this time of the year when there is less sunlight available as the sun is too low in the sky and more people are working from home indoors, it is much harder for our bodies to generate its own supply and many people can quickly become deficient.

Vitamin D is vital in regulating the absorption of calcium and phosphorus, for normal immune system function and for normal growth and development of bones and teeth. It can also help with depression. If your body doesn't get enough vitamin D, you are at increased risk of developing bone abnormalities such as soft bones (osteomalacia) or fragile bones (osteoporosis).

The symptoms of a vitamin D deficiency in adults can include fatigue and tiredness, aches and pains, generally feeling unwell, weakness and bone or muscle pain and stress fractures.

It is therefore extremely crucial that we ensure we maintain good levels of vitamin D during the winter months, by eating foods rich in Vitamin D such as oily fish (mackerel, salmon, herring and sardines), cod liver oil, egg yolk, meat and milk. Some breakfast cereals and yogurts are also fortified with added vitamin D. Both vitamin D2 and vitamin D3 can be taken in supplement form. Vitamin D3 is produced in response to sun exposure and is found in animal products, whereas vitamin D2 occurs in plants. Vitamin D3 has been found to increase blood levels significantly more than D2.

The advice from Public Health England is to supplement your diet with 10 micrograms (400 IU) of vitamin D a day between October and early March to keep bones and muscles healthy, particularly vulnerable groups such as the elderly, those who don't get outside and those with dark skin. Clinically vulnerable groups will be eligible for free Vitamin D supplements throughout the winter period, starting in January.

Find out more about vitamin D and its role in healthy bones by visiting

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vitamins-and-minerals/vitamin-d/>, [At-risk groups to receive free winter supply of vitamin D](#) and [Statement from PHE and NICE on vitamin D supplementation during winter](#)

Programme News:

Congratulations to the following workplaces on achieving their awards!

Obart Pumps - Bronze

Gravesham Borough Council – Silver

Rivermead Inclusive Trust – Gold

If you've not yet started your award, or need guidance in moving to the next level, please contact us on

workplacehealth@medway.gov.uk

Tips to stay positive if you are worried about Coronavirus

There are some great tips on the link below with regards to staying positive amidst the growing threat of Coronavirus. Have a look to see the ways to cope as we kick off 2021 during lockdown.

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-anxiety-tips/>

In addition, Young Minds have advice to talk to your children about coronavirus

<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>

If you are worried about your mood, try the mood self-assessment here [Mood Assessment](#)

Public Health England Guidance on how to look after your mental health and wellbeing during the COVID-19 outbreak <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19>

There is also some useful advice [on Mind's website](#) and [Rethink's website](#).

In addition, here are some simple tips to help you to stay positive:

1. Colour can be a mood booster - wearing the right colours can make you appear healthier and feel good
2. Read a self-care book
3. Do a good deed for someone else such as buying flowers for a friend or a random act of kindness
4. Indulge in scented candles or fragrances as certain smells can lift your mood
5. Pamper yourself - treat yourself to a gift
6. A number of diet-friendly foods can help improve your mood – such as bananas, nuts, pasta, blueberries, cherries, and pomegranate.
7. Listen to some music - not only does your brain release dopamine (a neurotransmitter linked to motivation and reward) when you listen to music, but it also helps to improve your mood.
8. Look forward to the future and write your goals in a journal
9. Have a quick rejuvenating nap
10. Practice gratitude
11. Learn something new
12. Structure your day

Kent Sport is running a 4-week Jumpstart January Physical Activity Challenge across Kent and Medway. Here are the [details about how to join the Challenge](#). The Challenge is open to everyone and is a great way to get active and stay active in the New Year! You can join at any time in January and even backdate your activities! Start logging your activities now until 31 January and be in with a chance to win prizes from the End of Challenge prize draw. [Sign up to the challenge here!](#) The [Everyday Active website](#) is now live and offers some great ideas and advice on how to start moving more and how to keep active.