

CONNECT

The West Yorkshire Adult Eating Disorders Service

Information about your treatment with CONNECT in light of the current COVID-19 crisis

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Are individual treatment sessions going to continue?

We are continuing to offer the majority of individual sessions via telephone or video call. This is in accordance with the current national guidance which advises us all to adopt social distancing. This is for your safety and for the safety of others. Your lead professional will make contact with you to discuss the logistics and frequency of on-going sessions.

All new patient assessments will take place via a video call. Unfortunately, no new appointments can be undertaken via the telephone. We are working towards re-commencing face to face contacts, including new patient assessments whilst ensuring the safety of all concerned and adhering to government enforcement of local lockdown areas, quarantine periods and test and trace processes.

Are groups going to continue?

Sadly, we are not able to run any of our groups face-to-face currently. We are planning to continue our groups online using video conferencing technology. The group facilitators of the group that you are due to join will be in touch with you prior to the group commencing and will advise you about what you need to do to be able to take part in the planned group sessions.

Depending on clinical need, you may between group sessions continue to receive individual support from various team members. These will take place via telephone or video call.

What if I don't want to have video or telephone sessions?

Unfortunately, this is the only way we can safely deliver sessions currently. If you would rather not receive treatment in this way then, we will have to discharge you from the service and you can be re-referred when we are able to offer face-to-face group sessions again.

What will happen with physical health monitoring?

We will not be able to weigh you in sessions and we know that self-weighing can be extremely problematic for many people with an eating disorder. This is something we would usually discourage; however, given the exceptional circumstances, this is something that can be discussed on an individual basis and individual arrangements will be made.

If your GP is still providing regular physical health monitoring, then we ask that you get weighed when you see your GP. It may be that your GP is no longer routinely offering face-to-face appointments. If this is the case, then we will talk to you about symptoms that you need to be aware of, in terms of the risk posed by your eating disorder, and what steps to take if you experience these symptoms. This should be in line with your existing or newly devised risk management plan. If you are concerned about your physical health, then please call your GP, contact NHS 111 or go to A&E.

How long will face-to-face sessions be replaced by telephone and video sessions?

It is difficult for us to give you an accurate time frame at present. We will be reviewing the available guidance daily to inform our plans and we will let you know as soon as we have further information.

We are working hard to reset the service whilst ensuring the safety of all concerned. Future face to face contacts will require all staff to wear appropriate PPE throughout the duration of the appointment and the environment will be cleaned prior to your entry into the consultation room. Staff and visitors to all LYPFT hospital sites are required to wear a mask upon entry and whilst in the communal areas of the building.

Prior to any face to face contact you will be contacted by the service in order to undertake a health screening questionnaire and your temperature will be taken at the start of your appointment. If your temperature is raised you will be immediately asked to leave the building and to return home, in order for you to arrange and wait for a swab test from one of the national testing sites. Unfortunately it is not possible for the service to arrange and co-ordinate testing on your or your family's behalf.

Does this mean treatment has stopped?

No. There is evidence that therapeutic interventions can be offered effectively via telephone and video calls and effective treatment will be continuing as usual, albeit in a different and adapted format. We encourage you to commit to the telephone or video sessions offered to you in the same way that you would commit to face-to-face sessions. This includes protecting the session time as much as you can by ensuring you are sitting down in a quiet place, free from distractions, where you will not be disturbed and not multi-tasking.

What happens if I am due to complete treatment soon?

We will arrange a discharge review meeting with you via telephone or video conference and your discharge will continue as planned.

What happens if I become unwell with possible COVID-19 symptoms?

Please follow the most up-to-date government and NHS advice by checking the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>. Please advise team members as soon as possible.

What happens if a member of staff that I am working with becomes unwell?

You will be advised by the member of staff or by one of the members of our administration team that the member of staff is on sick leave and any planned sessions will be cancelled. If you need support during this time, then please call our administration team 0113 8556400 or email them on connectenquiries.lypft@nhs.net and, capacity permitting, we will arrange for another member of the Connect team to offer you a telephone or video session.

What is happening with ‘The Hub’ support groups?

The Hub is a weekly support group which is open to anyone with an eating disorder, whether or not they are working with Connect. We are not able to run The Hub face-to-face currently due to the national advice; however, we have successfully established it online, through the use of a secure digital platform. Further details are posted on our social media pages - find us on Twitter [@lypft_connect](#) or find us on [Instagram here](#). You will be asked to email virtualconnect.lypft@nhs.net in order to express an interest in joining the HUB and in return you will receive the joining instructions via email.

Additionally we host daily #CONNECT conversations on Instagram and the live conversations are another source of support. Please check regularly for further information and updates on forthcoming Instagram posts and conversations.

What should I do if I am struggling to keep myself safe?

Connect is not able to offer immediate or crisis support, so it is important you are aware of the following services that can offer this support if you feel overwhelmed by distress or unsure if you can keep yourself safe. Please note the provision of these services may change as the Covid-19 crisis develops:

Samaritans – call 116 123. They offer 24 hour support for those experiencing distress, despair or suicidal feelings. You can also contact them via email at jo@samaritans.org (Please note, responses to email are NOT instant. The aimed response time is within 24 hours). Samaritans also have a text support number 07725 90 90 90 (please note, responses may take a few hours).

Connect Helpline (this is a separate organisation with the same name) – call 0808 8001212. Telephone support line opens from 6pm to 2am every night for anyone who is distressed. Leeds residents can also get support via instant chat at www.connecthelpline.co.uk Connect chat is open from 6pm-2am every night. If you have hearing difficulties or are deaf, you can also contact Connect for support via Glide: 07922 249452 or Skype and FaceTime: survivor.led@lslcs.org.uk

Leeds Crisis Assessment Service – 0300 300 1485 is a 24 hour number, seven days a week, if you feel that you need professional help to keep yourself safe. Please note, the out of hours service is run by skeleton staff, so if you feel at immediate risk, go to your nearest A & E Department. If you are deaf or have problems with hearing, you can text on 07983 323867 and the communication support you need will be arranged.

Dial House (Leeds Survivor Led Crisis Service) – call 0113 2609328 or text 07922 249 452 between 6pm and 7pm on the night you want to come. Open Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Provides a sanctuary for those in emotional distress, use of the house as a safe place and access 1:1 support with a worker. They have facilities for children and can provide transport to/from the house. Please check their website for updates on service provision during the Covid-19 crisis <https://www.lslcs.org.uk>

Dial House at Touchstone - 0113 249 4675 or 07763 581 853 to make an appointment for crisis support (telephone only at present). This service aims to provide a culturally specific service for anyone who identifies as being from a BME background. They are open on Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 6 to 11pm.

How do I cope with the ongoing uncertainty and my distress?

This is an exceptionally difficult and challenging time for us all as human beings. None of us have ever faced this situation before and we are all just doing the best we can to work out what to do as we go along. Remember that you are not alone if you are struggling to cope. Please try to treat yourself with kindness and compassion. It is understandable if you experience an increase in using old, familiar, unhealthy coping strategies at times of heightened stress. Whilst this is completely understandable, we encourage you to think about what you can put in place to take care of your physical and emotional well-being in healthy ways. This might include some of the following ideas:

- Acknowledge and allow your difficult feelings whatever these may be. They are a completely understandable human response to these challenging circumstances.
- Maintain regular contact with friends and family via telephone and video calls. Communicate what you need in terms of support and set boundaries if you find certain topics of conversation unhelpful.
- Pay attention to your needs and respond to these in healthy ways e.g. doing activities that bring you enjoyment or help you to relax.
- Write a list of alternative, healthy coping strategies to manage distress and difficult feelings. You might like to [look at these self-help materials for ideas](#).
- Create a written plan or timetable to structure your time (including meals and snacks) and try to create a routine that supports your well-being (e.g. getting up and going to bed at regular times each day). Try to stick to your usual daily routine as much as you can.
- Connect with us via social media. We are on Twitter and Instagram. Find us on Twitter [@lypft_connect](#). Find us on [Instagram here](#). We will be posting daily suggestions and resources to help you to look after your well-being. We are also hoping to provide regular interactive 'live' chats via Instagram and we are happy to respond to suggestions from you regarding useful topics.
- Limit the amount of time you are spending watching the news or reading information about the pandemic on social media. Seek information in order to update and protect yourself once or twice daily for a limited time only. Get information and advice from reliable sources only such as the NHS or World Health Organisation websites.
- Use self-help resources such as www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk and the resources suggested on the [self-help pages of our website](#).
- Have a look at the Beat website and consider using their telephone and online support services. They are offering resources and support for coping with the Covid-19 crisis with an eating disorder <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/coronavirus>

Please remember that you are not alone. We are here to support you and will continue to do our best in these challenging times.