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

# Are individual treatment sessions going to continue?

We are continuing to offer individual sessions via telephone or video call. This is in accordance with the current national guidance which advises us all to stay at home unless absolutely essential and 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.

# 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 details of this are currently being worked out. The group facilitators of the group that you currently belong to (or are due to join) will be in touch with you as soon as we have more information about this and they will advise you what you need to do to be able to take part.

In the meantime, you will be offered a weekly telephone or video call of up to 30 minutes with one of your group facilitators who will ask you to check-in and will offer you some support. Your group facilitator will make contact with you to arrange these appointments.

You will continue to receive monthly individual support sessions from your Lead Professional. 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 sessions again.

**What will happen with physical health monitoring?**

We will not be able to weigh you in sessions and we encourage you not to leave the house in order to weigh yourself elsewhere, as current guidance is to stay at home unless it is essential for you to go out. We know that self-weighing can be extremely problematic for many people with an eating disorder so this is something we would usually discourage; however, given the exceptional circumstances, this is something that can be discussed with your Lead Professional 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 offering face-to-face or routine appointments. If this is the case, then your Lead Professional 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 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.

**Does this mean my treatment has stopped?**

No. There is evidence that therapeutic interventions can be offered effectively via telephone and video calls and your treatment will be continuing as usual, albeit in a different format. You remain in treatment and we will continue to support you in an adapted way. 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.

If you have missed any group sessions due to the delay in setting up the video conferencing technology, then you will be able to complete your remaining sessions, once the online sessions are set up, prior to discharge.

**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 your Lead Professional 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 have one in the East, which is usually held at The Mount, Hyde Terrace and one in the West, which is usually held at Huddersfield University. We are not able to run The Hub face-to-face currently due to the national advice; however, we are in the process of setting this up online. Further details about this will be posted on our social media pages @lypft\_connect on Instagram and Twitter. Please check regularly for further information.

**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** –116 123. 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)** – 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](http://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** – 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 <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Tolerating-Distress>.
* 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. Search for @lypft\_connect. 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 [https://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk](https://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/) and the resources suggested on the self-help pages of our website <https://www.leedsandyorkpft.nhs.uk/our-services/services-list/connect-west-yorkshire-harrogate-adult-eating-disorders-service/>
* 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.

**Connect 20 March 2020**