



Keeping in touch: Northumberland Rural Employment Hubs

Mental Health Awareness Week 2020



[Mental Health Awareness week](#) is held every year in the week starting the 2nd Monday in May and this year the campaign is more important than ever with so many people are struggling with conditions such as anxiety, depression and loneliness as a result of the Covid-19 Lockdown.

Northumberland Rural Employment Hubs is joining in by making mental health the focus of this edition of our newsletter.

This year the theme of the week is a very positive one: 'Kindness' which also resonates particularly strongly as we have all become aware of how important it is to support each other through these difficult times.

You can find out more about the campaign, download a free supporters pack to give you ideas of how to be kind to others and read inspiring stories of kindness [on the website](#).

Being Kind to Others

Being kind to others is one of the best ways of looking after your own mental health. Research has shown that people who are kind and compassionate see clear benefits to their wellbeing and happiness and often reduced levels of stress.

Acts of kindness can be very simple - give someone a compliment, phone someone you haven't spoken to for a long time to remind them you care, make someone you live with a cup of tea, take time to tell a child a story by video call to give their parents a break.

If you want to take being kind a little further - why not think about volunteering. Again - this doesn't

have to be too complicated or take up too much time, and even those who are self-isolating can volunteer from home. For instance, you might

- phone someone who you know is self-isolating on their own
- help a neighbour who has no IT skills to order shopping online
- observe wildlife in your garden or outside your window, and record what you see for one of the many 'citizen science' projects going on.

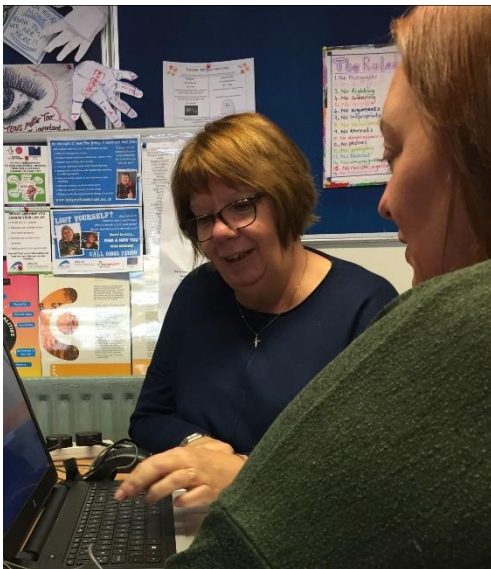
If you would like some support to think about volunteering:

- talk to your Bridge Worker or Work Coach about what opportunities might suit you.
- Northumberland CVA, can provide a buddy to support Bridge Project members to try volunteering for the first time, and are actively looking for buddies and 'connectors' - members who have been with the Bridge Project who would like to act as peer mentors to those who are new to the project.
- Check out Northumberland CVA's [volunteering pages](#)
- Look for opportunities on the [Do It Volunteering Website](#)

Employment Hub volunteers support their local communities during lockdown

At the employment hubs, we are really lucky to benefit from the kindness of our team of 7 volunteers, all of whom have personal experience of coping with long term unemployment. Indeed 6 of them first came to the employment hubs to look for our support. They have found that using those personal experiences to help others has been of great benefit to them too.

Two of them have told us how they are continuing to support their local community during lockdown whilst the employment hubs have had to go online:



Tracey started volunteering at our Amble Employment Hub when she had to give up paid work due to health problems. She told us:

"I've been off work for a year, and it would be easy just to stay indoors and let the situation get you down. Volunteering helps you stick to a routine, get up and out, get ready for work: it makes you get up and go. You make friends and we always have good banter."

Since lockdown, Tracey has continued to keep active by volunteering for the local foodbank which needed extra help as they started delivering parcels to people's homes rather than asking them to come into the foodbank to collect them.

Janet regularly volunteers at our Hexham Hub. Her family has been really hard hit by the Covid 19 crisis with both her uncle and her sister in law dying after being diagnosed with the virus.

She told us:

"After everything that happened, I felt so helpless. I've had depression before and was worried that if I didn't do something positive, it might happen again. So, I contacted my local councillor Christine Cuthbert to see if there was anything I could do to help in our local area.

"Now I'm giving out food parcels to older neighbours who are self-isolating and it really helps. They always greet me with a smile and tell me how much they appreciate my support and how much it means to them that someone is thinking of them. It makes me feel good to know I'm making a difference, and that helps me feel more in control in these unpredictable times."



Grow Your Own Starter Packs being delivered now



This week we started delivering 'Grow Your Own Starter Packs' to members of CAN's Employment Hubs and Warm Hubs. We hope nurturing plants will help the wellbeing of our members whilst coping with lockdown, both older people, and young families.



Thanks to Tom at Wylam Nurseries for providing the packs, Northern Gas Networks staff for delivering them, and Northern Gas Networks and the Community Foundation for Northumberland Tyne and Wear for funding the project.

If you would like a pack – get in touch.

Current Job Opportunities

Despite the lockdown situation, there are still employment opportunities available in Northumberland.

For the latest vacancy information, take a look at our [Facebook page](#), or contact us to ask for a work coach to help you with your job search

LOOKING AFTER YOU

Keeping Active



Deep Breathing has long been recognised as a great way of managing stress and anxiety, and some experts believe it can help with sleeplessness, lower your heart rate and bring down your blood pressure. Why not try this simple breathing exercise:

1. Sit comfortably in a chair, on the floor or lie down. Make sure you are totally comfortable. Any discomfort will become a distraction.
2. Place your hands on your belly.
3. Breathe in and out through your nose normally, slowly and calmly. Fill your belly with breath. Your hands should move up when you breathe in and down when you breathe out. Make sure you relax your shoulders.
4. Breathe in to the count of 3, then breathe out to the count of 3, slowly, do this for 4 breaths, then breathe in for the count of 4 and breathe out for the count of 4, repeat 4 times, breathe in for 5 out for 5. After each exhale, hold for 2-3 seconds before inhaling again. Over the next few weeks try to breathe in and out holding for longer, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 seconds but DON'T rush this and always stay within your comfort zone, stick with 5 if that suits you. If you start to feel dizzy or light-headed at any time just go back to breathing normally.
5. Continue to slow down the pace of the breath.

Ideally, practice twice a day for 5-10 minutes each time. If you can practice before you get out of bed on a morning it could set you up for the day ahead, if you practice at bedtime it may help you sleep.

Get in touch

For more information about the Rural Employment Hubs contact Julia Plinston on 01670 517178 or email info@ca-north.org.uk

The Northumberland Rural Employment Hubs Project is a partner in [The Bridge Project](#).

Eating well



Christine's Foodbank Challenge - Pilchard Fishcakes

Last time we asked if anyone would like to challenge Christine to create a recipe, based on suggested ingredients, and Amble Foodbank responded by asking for recipes using typical contents of a food parcel.

- baked beans
- 4 tins of meat (eg stewing steak, corned beef, ham, hotdogs)
- tinned tomatoes
- tins of veg (peas carrots sweet corn)
- tins of pasta (spaghetti or macaroni)
- tins of tuna, pilchards or sardines,
- pasta sauce,
- eggs
- bread
- potatoes
- dried pasta
- rice
- biscuits
- and whatever veg has been donated

Christine immediately went to work and has already thought up several recipes which we will share over the next few editions.

This week's recipe is for Pilchard Fishcakes Tinned pilchards are good for providing much needed Omega 3 fats vitamin B12 and Vit D and Iodine.

These fish cakes are a meal in themselves, great with baked beans. Give them a try: we think you will be pleasantly surprised. Good luck!

