

# MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TO THE RESCUE



A series of free resources to provide support to those whose work colleagues, family or friends are struggling with anxiety relating to the COVID-19 pandemic have been published by Mental Health First Aid Ireland, and the organisation is also running a survey that aims to help assess how working at home for an extended period is affecting the Irish workforce.

Providing mental health first aid in the workplace can be challenging and with current social restrictions in place, there are additional challenges facing employers and employees and those concerned about family and friends.

A number of publications have been compiled by Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) Ireland to provide initial support to those individuals who may be experiencing distress related to the COVID-19 crisis and the resulting isolation.

'Providing MHFA in the time of social distancing' outlines the steps someone should take in order to provide support via phone, video call or text message. The publication talks about the signs to look out for, how to listen and communicate

properly and how to prepare for the conversation such as ensuring the call or video chat is private and that no family or colleagues can hear what is being said.

'Dealing with COVID-19 anxiety' explains how those experiencing heightened anxiety can implement self-help methods to manage their symptoms. Seeking social support is highlighted as an important aspect of managing anxiety as well as adopting a healthy lifestyle and learning to

accept some levels of uncertainty.

'Assisting someone distressed by the Covid-19 pandemic' discusses how many people will be spending most of their time at home, with family members or in shared households and how they can provide support to those they live with.

The role of a mental health first aider is to assist the person until appropriate professional help is received and the document lists a number of useful contacts for those experiencing a mental health emergency such as suicidal thoughts.

## REMOTE WORKING SURVEY

Donal Scanlan, Manager of Mental Health First Aid Ireland, said that the documents contain similar content that is provided during his organisation's two-day training courses. "They are really useful resources for people who may not know how to deal with a sudden onset of emotional distress experienced by a relative, friend, neighbour or colleague.

"Most of us are used to seeing our families, friends and colleagues in the flesh multiple times per week. However, without that physical connection, vital cues of a mental health difficulty can be missed. We hope that by publishing this content and making it widely available, that people will recognise the signs to look out for, even over a video chat or text message, and will be able to confidently talk to that person about how they are feeling."

The organisation is also running a survey that aims to help assess how working at home for an extended period is affecting the Irish workforce. "This survey will help us build a bigger, more accurate picture of how homeworking is affecting our working lives through these unprecedented times and provide useful data to support business."

The free documents are available to download at [www.MHFAIreland.ie/resources](http://www.MHFAIreland.ie/resources).

