

COVID-19 and Homelessness

Activities during lockdown

Introduction

Across the sector, huge and ongoing efforts have been made to accommodate people sleeping rough. Many people are now inside, including those who are used to spending the majority of their time outdoors.

It is crucial that we consider the impact of lockdown on people who are homeless – they are experiencing lockdown in an unfamiliar environment, do not have the comfort of a home built up of possessions and their usual routines for survival and socialising are drastically interrupted.

Support is key during this time, but it is also essential that we look at ways in which we can help people to manage the boredom and isolation of lockdown. This resource will point you in the directions of ideas and materials that you can give the individuals you support, and we have separated them into online and offline ideas. This list is by no means exhaustive, and there is a lot out there – plenty of opportunity to get creative!

Try to match the activities to the individual as much as possible. Ask what they enjoy, what they're interested in, and what they'd like to try – then see if there's anything out there to match.

Produced by

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Let's end homelessness together

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When someone has easy access to internet

With easy access to internet, and to devices enabling access, there are nearly limitless possibilities for entertainment online.

Access to devices

Many organisations have put out appeals to the public for the donation of digital devices such as iPads, laptops and phones, so that people can maintain connectivity in lockdown. Others are also asking for donations of phone top ups, dongles, etc. to help keep people online.

- Good Things Foundation is collaborating with FutureDotNow to help people with digital devices as well as connectivity to support them in getting online during self-isolation/lockdown. The DevicesDotNow campaign links up with businesses across the country to donate tablets, smartphones, laptops, and connectivity in the form of sims, dongles and mobile hot-spots. Currently, only organisations who are registered with Good Things Foundation as an Online Centre can request free devices and connectivity for their clients, but they are planning a second phase when any charity/community organisation will be able to request help.

www.goodthingsfoundation.org/

<https://futuresdotnow.uk/>

<https://futuresdotnow.uk/devicesdotnow/>

- The Learn My Way platform offers free courses teaching individuals digital skills: www.learnmyway.com/
- Make IT Click also offers learning for digital skills: <https://makeitclick.learnmyway.com/directory>

Video classes

There are lots of free video classes being offered at the moment, e.g. learning a new skill or getting fit. You could also work with an existing partner to continue a regular activity over video, which has the added benefit of bringing in a familiar face.

- Streetwise Opera is an award-winning performing arts charity for people affected by homelessness. They run a programme of regular creative workshops in homeless centres and arts venues in five regions across England. They are currently running their workshops online, Monday to Friday at 12pm. To watch live or after please go to their YouTube page: www.youtube.com/user/streetwiseopera/live
- NHS have free workout videos: www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/
- Joe Wickes is doing PE workouts at 9am every day, and you can watch previous sessions on his YouTube channel at: www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYIRfn6rYQ
- Yoga options:
 - Yoga With Adriene www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene/videosoga
 - Yoga With Tim www.youtube.com/channel/UCciuZl2ydLCvN5txlLW0rlg
 - Yoga At Home www.youtube.com/user/SarahBethShow/videos

Online Learning

Lots of courses are being offered for free or at a discount.

- Lots of courses, many for free, are available at Future Learn www.futurelearn.com/
Including University of East Anglia's free online screenwriting course:
www.futurelearn.com/courses/screenwriting
and University of Sheffield's songwriting course www.futurelearn.com/courses/songwriting

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- Free online courses at Coursera:
<https://blog.coursera.org/coursera-together-free-online-learning-during-covid-19/>
- Free online courses at The Open University: www.open.ac.uk/courses/coronavirus#free
Including one for writing fiction: www.futurelearn.com/courses/start-writing-fiction
- Gov.uk has also created a list of online home learning resources:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-online-education-resources/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-online-education-resources-for-home-education

Entertainment

There are also numerous offerings of films and TV across streaming devices, as well as theatre productions and live music concerts.

- Online comedy festival shown free: The Stay at Home Festival: <http://cosmicshambles.com/stayathome>
- National Theatre are streaming full plays for free every Thursday on their YouTube channel:
www.youtube.com/channel/UCUDq1XzCY0NIOYVJvEMQjgw.
- E-books: check with your local library, as they will have an app that lets you access their online collections.
- Musicals: Andrew Lloyd Webber's YouTube channel is streaming full-length musicals every Friday at 7pm for 48 hours: www.youtube.com/channel/UCdmPihKMaXNNeCr1FjuMvag/featured
- Free documentaries available to stream on Documentary Tube: <http://www.documentarytube.com/>
- Livecams of Monterey Bay Aquarium provides calming footage for animal lovers:
www.montereybayaquarium.org/animals/live-cams Lots of zoos are doing this, so worth checking!
- Tabletopia for playing board games online, with some games free: <https://tabletopia.com/>
- SHP have created this online, interactive resource with activities. It's aimed at 16-25 year olds:
https://www.canva.com/design/DAD5tPUIZOQ/JzXVxtVvlqLixlKenNKyew/view?utm_content=DAD5tPUIZOQ&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton#1. (A PDF and/or video copy can also be provided, if you email anna.suswillo@homelesslink.org.uk).

Mental Health

- Headspace are offering meditation and calming activities: www.headspace.com/covid-19
- NHS have launched Every Mind Matters for resources around looking after your mental health in lockdown: www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/

When someone has no internet access

If there isn't widespread internet access in an accommodation setting, more creative solutions will be required to vary content. Many of these suggestions will require the worker to access the resource online, in order to download and supply the individual with materials.

Use of Mp3 Players

Michael House in Bournemouth have been putting out requests to the public for unwanted mp3 players. They are then using these to download personalised content for individuals to listen to eg. audio files of creative writing activities. This principle can of course be applied to other devices too.

- Download TEDTalks Radio Hour podcasts: www.npr.org/podcasts/510298/ted-radio-hour
- There are free audio guided writing prompts at the The Writer's Greenhouse: www.thewritersgreenhouse.co.uk/, as well as daily writing projects and lots of prompts you could print.
- Radio Headspace has podcasts reflecting on mindfulness, meditation, etc: <https://soundcloud.com/radioheadspace>

Wellbeing/Distracton Packs

Many organisations have sent out activity or wellbeing packs to people who would usually use their services. These can be easy to assemble, using materials purchased, donated, or printed off from the internet. The key thing is to have a variety of content and tailor as much as possible to individual interests.

The Beth Centre and Southwark & Lewisham's Women's Space bought things from their local shops prior to lockdown. They added a newsletter, games such as origami, dot-to-dot, colouring in etc, as well as sweets, pencils, a notebook, and a bath bomb.

For the dedicated women's accommodation in Manchester, the Greater Manchester Women's Support Alliance (an alliance of women's centres across GM) Great Places had activities donated from Hobby Craft and pulled together activity packs. They also managed to fund a tablet for each woman to have in their room so they can access the internet. A local flower shop donated a plant to brighten each room.

The Booth Centre in Manchester have a new project, Connecting Through Activities, and have posted out packs to people. The remote project will include art, creative writing, singing, drama, keep fit and a job club.

- FutureNHS are distributing distraction packs to places accommodating people who are homeless. Access through their Collaboration Platform (you will need to register to access): <https://future.nhs.uk/HomelessHealthCOVID19/view?objectId=19666384>
- Derventio Housing Association have made their own distraction pack free to access. <https://derventiohousing.com/about-us/news/free-distraction-pack-with-tips-and-ideas-for-lockdown/>
- Harbour Housing in Cornwall have created their own distraction pack, which they're happy to share. Please email anna.suswillo@homelesslink.org.uk if you'd like a copy.
- AtlasArts are offering a free download of their adult colouring book of botanical drawings until the end of May 2020: <https://atlasarts.org.uk/2020/04/03/patterns-of-flora-colouring-book-free-download/>
- Dundee Creative Arts are regularly creating downloadable activity sheets: www.dca.org.uk/stories/article/activity-sheet-round-up
- Free downloadable Wellbeing Booklet from Sage Holistic in Brighton: www.sageholistic.co.uk/media
- Free colouring packs from Brighton Fringe: https://issuu.com/brighton_fringe/docs/bfcolouringbook

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- Printable (and digital) colouring with The Collective Colouring Book, with inclusions from famous illustrators: <https://linktr.ee/thecollectorclub>
- Printable wellbeing pack available for download from Barons Court Project: <https://www.baronscourtproject.org/>

Art Projects

Art provides an important way for people to express how they are feeling. However, it is important not to forget that the arts also provide a means of connection and community, and several places have created online galleries of work produced. Although it can be difficult to facilitate this offline, there are options.

Back on Track in Manchester created a weekly newsletter for those staying in hotels. Originally, it was staff generated content, but it has now expanded to containing contributions from individuals accommodated and volunteers and is helping to create a sense of community and shared experience. Other services have used the function to phone into a zoom call, so that people can still participate in a group conversation even if no internet.

- Firstsite are offering 'Art is Where the Home is' free downloadable art activity packs, including contributions from celebrated artists: <https://firstsite.uk/art-is-where-the-home-is/>
- With One Voice are also mapping the lockdown art activities for people experiencing homelessness: <https://arthomelessint.ushahidi.io/posts/create/6>. They are also offering bi-monthly global video conferences to give people in their network a chance to talk about the challenges and opportunities they are facing during COVID-19. These meetings are held every last Wednesday of the month. The next meeting is on May 27 2020, 10am London time: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83636496387> and 5pm: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86835456814>

Other Activities

- With One Voice have produced a resource about creating a mobile library for people staying in hotels: http://with-one-voice.com/sites/default/files/2020-04%20%7C%20Mobile%20library%20during%20COVID-19_0.pdf
- The Sensory Trust's website has a selection of activities to help people connect with nature: www.sensorytrust.org.uk/information/creative-activities/index.htm. This is proven to help improve mental health, and all the activities are easily adaptable for use with people with different abilities, including people of all ages with disabilities, and those with dementia.
- Heart n Soul are offering free activity packs every fortnight, with audio instructions available, for those with learning disabilities and/or autism www.heartnsoul.co.uk/whatson/creative-packs
- FEANTSA will be offering a free webinar for professionals on Focused Oriented Art Therapy on 13 May 2020 at 10am: <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/6209051419980332302>
- Give people the chance to feel useful – could they be the main contact for their building, or help organise any food drops?
- St Petrock's contacted their local library manager, to see if they could have the deleted stock (these are books that are cancelled from the library distribution list that are usually sent on to another company – which isn't possible at present). This could easily be replicated in other areas.
- NOAH in Bedfordshire invested in £12 Gameboy consoles as an offline entertainment option.

Please let us know of any others resources you've found and ideas you've had so we can add them!

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