Week ending 5 February 2021

BETHS VIP

(Very Important Publication)

Messages from Mr Blyghton, Headteacher

We have almost made it to the end of this half term and I must thank all of you who have taken the time to write to me with your positive emails. It really has been refreshing to read how well many students have coped so much better during this lock-down than the first and I hope it is because we have structured their day better and made it more like a normal school day. Since the first lock-down, we have all learnt so much regarding better virtual teaching methods and I would hope that your son or daughter has therefore had a much better learning experience.

Our catch-up Year 12 Parents Evening took place on Wednesday and worked well with no hitches, which was a huge relief! This was again held over School Cloud and we continue to look at other platforms to host our parents evenings or to be reassured by School Cloud that they have dealt with and put right all the issues that they have previously encountered. Once we have either secured another platform or are convinced that School Cloud can be relied upon, we will re-schedule our parents evenings for those year groups yet to meet with teaching staff. Thank you for your patience.

You may have heard that there should be an outcome on Monday 22 February, following the recent Ofqual consultation around GCE and GCSE results. As I indicated previously, once these are known, we will work to accommodate these arrangements but, in the interim, would urge students to continue to study as hard as they can until this is known.

My staff have been asked not to set any homework during the last week of term, or during the half term, itself, so I hope you will all have the opportunity for a well earned rest away from a computer screen, if possible.

As I promised last week, I have included many of the comments made by parents and carers in the latest survey, which you can find over he next few pages. I have also responded to these comments in blue.



Dates for your diary

Friday 12 February
Year 12 reports issued to parents

Monday 22 February
First day back

Last day of Term

Year 9 Parents Evening (Postponed)

Thursday 25 February







- Work load to be considerate of students mental well being
- Better scheduling of classes, more mental health and well being guidance
- · Check in with our mental health its not all about work and results
- Maybe not force so much work on year 13 we are already stressed enough. You don't understand what its like being at home 24/7 the motivation just isnt there. You just need to encourage us more and try to ease the pressure off us.
- Hours on PC window by young people can be damaging to health, particularly their sight and subsequently regular headache, would suggest less hours on virtual learning and PC Windows,
- Prep work should be given to students this does not have to be compulsory but it would be nice what we should prepare ourselves on for the next lesson ensuring mental health of students is supported. Lessons are very long 1hr 40 minutes is too long. Breaks in between should happen
- An event to help the year group socialise with each other to make new friends
- Raise awareness of mental health.
- Crucifying students for missed lessons and logging in late during the times we are in has a horrid effect on their mental health as far as I'm concerned. Our kids are not 'lazy' or 'not going to bed on time' they are doing their best to receive an education during a time where absolutely nothing is certain, and they have been told to stay indoors, for fear of being the murderers of their own elderly family members. Being far more lenient on things such as total lesson attendance, and not making them wake up at 9am for lessons when they've been out of school for so long that not a single one goes to bed before 2am, and this is involuntary.

I have grouped these into the mental health and well-being category. We have a school day to provide a routine to students starting with form time and then up to three sessions in the day. Some year groups are provided with a break in the sessions. It has been difficult to gauge an appropriate amount of work to set per session to ensure that whilst students are stretched and challenged are not swamped by the volume of work set. It is a delicate balance that needs to be regularly discussed between teacher and student. Form Time is there for students to discuss with their Tutor issues that have arisen over the past day and is an opportunity to raise well-being issues. I hope we can continue to address issues as they arise and those who want and need support that we are there for them. The VIP has a series of phone numbers on the last page to contact a variety of groups who support those in need.

From the last email sent out to parents re testing students. I feel you should push for advise that any parent
that refuses their child to take the covid test/check, then the child will need to be home schooled until
further notice. Our family welcomed your suggestion as it showed that the school took the students welfare
seriously.

Until Government guidance states that all members of the School Community are tested regularly, I am only able to advise that students are tested.

- Students are given abnormally large amounts of work, that they wouldn't receive if they were in school.
- It would be preferable if students would only have their cameras on during registration rather than for the entirety of the lesson in order to prevent distractions or overly self- consciousness
- More teaching time and follow up on students learning as I don't feel my son is working hard. So he is not being pushed
- Keep the students busier and more engaged with online learning. Most of the days I'm asking for feedback on how was school it is 'a bit boring'.
- I would like more timely feedback but understand this is up to students and parents to be more vigilant. Would love some text books to support geography / history / RE as this would be great to reinforce the great PowerPoint presentations on teams etc.
- Yes in the delivery of online lessons. The quality of lessons varies dramatically and my childs education is suffering even more than it should be as a result.

- In between the 100 minute lessons, put something like a 5-10min break
- As all learning has moved online the amount of screen time that is expected of the boys is getting too much. At least a 5 minute break has been introduced during the 1 hour 40 minute lessons.
- Just consolidate on what has been done so far by way of consistency please

I have grouped these under work load issues and as you can see that depending upon your perspective, either too much or not enough is being set. We have asked staff to provide a break for KS3 lessons as they would have had that in a school session. Staff have been asked to provide a variety of opportunities to learn via different styles and I think they have been doing a pretty good job in providing live lessons. Depending upon which year group your son/daughter is in may determine the weight of information delivered. I know those on examination courses may be expected to complete additional tasks to test their knowledge.

- Let teachers with bad internet connections/those teaching lessons that require a whiteboard for diagrams (eg A-Level Further Maths) go on site to teach their remote lessons.
- Recording some of the teaching sessions for a limited time would be good. That would allow the students to re-listen to the explanations at a later time.
- Teachers should try to use Microsoft teams efficiently.
- More interactive and engaging lessons. Quizzing and polling during lessons to check knowledge
- Currently half of the tasks are on Teams and the other half are on Satchel One. It would make the homework and classwork more accessible if it was fully transitioned to teams as quickly as possible. This is something the school are already doing, although it would be nice if it was at an accelerated pace.
- I believe that the teachers could take the register more than once in a lesson because some people join late due to technical issues and the teachers just say ok and that they will change it but they don't end up changing it and parents have then been messaged to say that I'd been absent from a lesson.

I have grouped these under technical issues. Staff, if they wish to, have the opportunity to work and teach from a classroom from the school site. In terms of whiteboard both Teams and Zoom have a facility that allows for a shared screen whiteboard or a shared screen that allows notes or exam questions to be displayed and an opportunity to annotate. Staff have been offered the opportunity of an e-pen and board to assist in this. We have been offering Staff Training since last summer each week to upskill Staff. You will appreciate that some will learn quicker than others and whilst there still a choice, prefer to use more than one media platform. It is our intention to move entirely to Teams.

- Option to make students to take their final year again at the school. I know it is difficult but a pandemic comes once in 100 years but a student's school life is once in a lifetime opportunity to do well.
- Don't make us do online tests that will effect our grades. A lot of unfair issues that occurred.
- No support or advice regarding arrangements for SEN children with changes to exams
- Getting more information out to students about exams and what's the plan in general would be good to sort of plan out for the year. Been asking about the EPQ with no reply you know stuff like that
- Yes, I think some regular 1-2-1 conversations with Subject Teachers and Form Tutors over the phone to see how the students are doing and answer questions they may not feel comfortable raising in remote lessons would be beneficial, especially for those taking exams

Regarding examinations for 2021, I think we need to wait for the Ofqual Consultation to be concluded and scrutinise the proposals that emerge from it. Once we are in a position to understand how the process will play out, we can then discuss with students and parents what will happen. We will ensure that all students will afforded the best possible opportunities to demonstrate their abilities in their respective subjects once we know the arrangements. In terms of EPQ for Y12, it is intended to be rolled out later this term virtually.

The remainder are related to in-school issues. Whilst not currently an issue I have still responded.

- Enforce hand sanitising before/after entering a class room. Enforce cleaning the desk, seat and other
 equipment after use in the class. Its been announced to the school but not enforced or even reminded by
 teachers.
- Practice actual social distancing in schools, reduce the size of students in a classroom, make masks compulsory in classrooms as well as out of classrooms, sanitise the desks before and after use at all times
- The sixth form bubble was far too large to be effective. During First lockdown lessons were inconsistent and too little. Teacher feedback was poor and insufficient. Whilst it is improved now, it felt like we were teaching ourselves a lot of the time.

Staff have been reminded to ensure that work stations are cleaned before and after each session and that students are sanitising their hands on entry and on leaving the room. Where there is a change in bubble using the room, it is cleaned before the new class enters. It is not physically possible to reduce class sizes short or rotating students in and out of class. The same is for the sixth form bubble – the school site is not big enough to quarantine each year group into their unique bubbles. Hence, to ensure as many students were in school receiving face-face lessons, we arranged the school as we did.

Make sure that social distancing is happening when waiting for lunch. It's a poor excuse that the caterers
don't do halal. It's contradicting equal opportunities. Vegetarian is not the same as halal. The school should
fix this or find different caterers that do make halal food. I've got 6 Muslim boys in my class alone. I'm not
an anomaly. We should be recognised and catered for just like everyone else.

This is an issue that we can raise again with the School Caterers.

Improve social distancing measures and quarantine the whole year instead of half

The issue in the year group was confined to one half of the year, hence half the year group remained in school to receive face-face teaching whilst the other half self-isolated.

• I feel like the year 12s especially need some type of workshop or a way to integrate with other students and make friends. The majority of us have come from new schools and might not know people. When we came into the school we were pushed into our forms and then straight into our lessons. Some people have made friends but some struggle in large environments like that so it may be helpful if there's a way for some to meet new people.

If we had been back immediately in January, the rationale was to have been to have had Year 12 Form Time and to have had afternoon lessons in School to integrate the year group. It is my intention that once we are able to is to bring the year group together and make up for lost time.

And some complementary ones ...

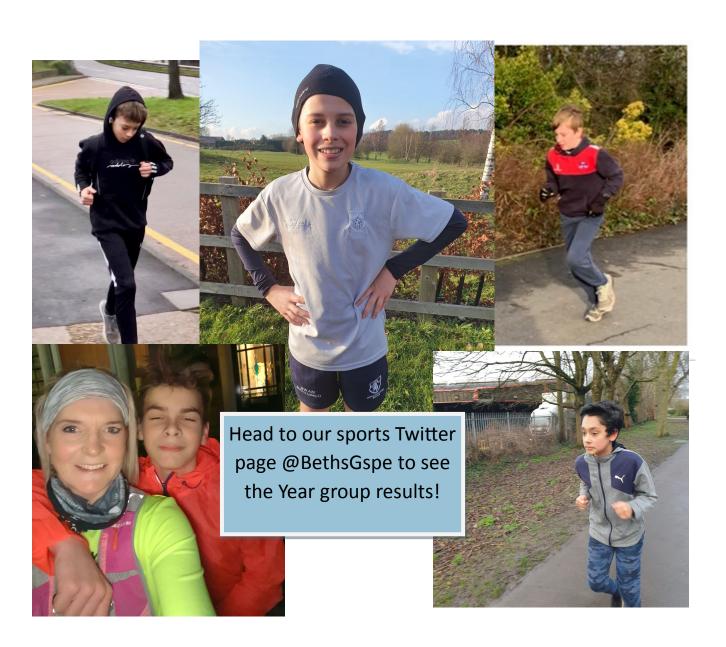
- Continue with the regular communication it is greatly appreciated and excellent online teaching and feedback. Thank you for all you are doing to support the students and their families.
- Continue with regular communication to parents and students and excellent online teaching and feedback.
- Continue the good work
- You are all doing a sterling job under difficult circumstances. It is very clear you have the children's interests and well being at the heart of every decision. Thank you
- I think the school have been very understanding and helpful when it comes to Beths reminding students that there are services and professional in the school that are available if they need it. Beths was very understanding with my own mental health when I need help
- It is very hard to find any improvements to make. The measures taken at school and especially lessons from home go extremely well, in our opinion. We just hope that everything will continue as of now.
- Keep doing the good work
- The school has really got outstanding procedures for the Corona Pandemic, and that is one of the reasons why in our case Year 7 and Cray haven't had to self isolate. All the procedures communications have been strong and tight, so it has been really good and it has provided us with lots of confidence in the school. We find though that not being able to access Design Technology, Music and other shares common classes areas with shared equipment is not ideal. So looking into how this could be delivered in a safe Covid way would be fab. But please, rest assure we trust you with our children and we are very happy to support in any decisions you take.
- I believe you are doing what you can do at the moment.
- The school are doing the best they can do at the moment.
- You are doing everything possible in such a difficult time
- It's hard to say, I think the school has gone through a lot to put the present programmes together and it's much appreciated
- I think the school has done an excellent job. In particular keeping us informed throughout, with regular email updates which is most helpful. As always, quick off the mark and I felt my child's safety as well as educational needs were looked after very well. The headteacher has done a great job!
- You all are highly appreciated for your hard work and dedication as usually, and especially during this unprecedented time with a lot of you turns by the Govt. Thank you All. With the camera on during lessons have given our boys a good sense of compliance and focus on study ,that they are been supervised and closing monitored just like they feel when are in classroom when a teacher is lecturing. For PE rather than having free periods ,they can engage in PE questionnaires that are automatically marked. But honestly you all are highly appreciated. You are all doing great job
- You are doing your best under ridiculous pressures. Thank you
- The school is currently doing all they can. My son is motivated and the online learning is interactive. The laptop was very handy. Thanks for all you do especially in this difficult time.
- To the best of my knowledge I really appreciate all the good efforts of all the teaching staffs in Beths, they are really great and supportive to their students. Great Kudos to them all.
- Frankly, the performance on the first lockdown was poor, with many providers out performing Beths, such as Harris Academies. However, the response now is great, so well done. It took some time, but it is so much better.
- Please make sure teachers set the appropriate amount of work for a lesson as on some occasions the tasks have been too large to complete in the time given. Other than this thank you very much for everything you are doing. Beths is truly a fantastic school and the teachers are amazing.

Thank you all for your contributions. We will take on board your concerns, put into place mechanisms that can addressed and appreciate your kind words that recognise we trying to do things right.

Beths 100km Run to Brighton!

Only one more week left to go to get to the ultimate goal of 100km! Some of you have already made it to 'Brighton', others are making their way up the leader board.

Well done to everyone who is participating. Sport and exercise is such a great thing for everyone—mentally and physically.



We are preparing for a new challenge, suitable for all staff, students and parents, irrespective of their personal fitness, to raise money for Comic Relief which is taking place on Friday 19 March 2021.

We have looked towards an aspirational goal this time and so will be running, walking, cycling, cross training or rowing (for all those who have home gym equipment) from the school to the University of Oxford (virtually, of course!) Final plans are currently being put in place so please keep an eye out for

next week's VIP but, if we used a 'closed road' route, from the school to the University it would be exactly 100 miles. Mr Webb is now working on a finite plan and will update you all next week with further information.



Musician of the Week

Congratulations to Owen this week's Musician of the Week. Check out the video on our social media pages, or on our website:

Beths Grammar School - Music & Performing Arts

If you would like to be considered for Musician of the Week, please email msmarriott@beths.bexley.sch.uk. We have some wonderfully talented students!

Chinese Mandarin—by P Koli, Year 11

In October 2020, Our Year 11 MEP took the HSK 3 exam to determine our Mandarin ability with all other MEP schools in the UK. It was an interesting experience because it showed us how a Mandarin exam would be and gave us an official qualification that would be on our CVs, showing our Mandarin skills. We have now got our results back and I did very well on the exam, mainly because I revised the key words. I also revised sentence structures – this helped me a lot because it made it much easier for me to understand the questions, so I could do better on the test. If I wasn't sure about a question, I looked for a key word and tried to work it out from there. I am very happy with my exam result and it has made me more confident for my GCSEs.

This is my 5th year learning Mandarin at Beths and I really enjoy it. My favourite experiences with Mandarin were in China, when we used our language skills with the local people, asking for directions and other everyday tasks in Beijing Foreign Studies University. Going to places like the Great Wall and the Forbidden City and using our Mandarin skills to talk to the people there was really fun! At home, we have been using Quizlet Live to improve our Mandarin knowledge, this has really helped me as it makes sure I stay focused.

In the future, I want to improve my Mandarin skills and become more fluent, so I can use my knowledge in the world of work. I believe that Mandarin is a very useful language, as it allows you to learn lots about Chinese culture and opens many opportunities for jobs. Mandarin is a very interesting language, and is becoming much more popular. I would like to become fluent soon!

On Friday 12th February is Chinese New Yearthe Year of the Ox. Happy Chinese New Year everyone! We may make some dumplings at home.



Whilst the school is closed, staff are all still here – albeit virtually – to support students and families at this difficult time. Please do not hesitate to contact form tutors, heads of years, subject teachers, heads of departments or the senior team, if you have any questions or need our support. If you do need to contact any member of staff, all our email addresses can be found on the school's website.

The following link will take you to way these can be found: https://www.beths.bexley.sch.uk/page/?title=Staffing&pid=30

As we only have a skeleton staff in school, we would ask that parents and carers do not turn up at the school unannounced, as there is unlikely to be anyone available to help them. Likewise, we would urge all parents to contact us by email as this is currently our prime means of communication.

EMAILING STAFF

If your email to staff is to multiple members of staff, please can we ask that you cc everyone in. We have had occasions where emails have been sent to multiple staff members, separately, resulting in issues either being missed or duplicated.



The Multicultural Committee now have their very own Instagram page:

@multiculturalcommittee



Please go check it out and follow!

BETHS ALUMNI

We love to hear from any of our ex-students as to what they have achieved since leaving Beths so, please do keep us updated!

Contact us at headsoffice@beths.bexley.sch.uk with any career updates and also photos, videos or even articles you have written about your memories of the school—we would love to share them with current staff and students.

PARENTS ASSOCIATION

To be part of this amazing fundraising option, please follow the steps below:



Please go to smile.amazon.co.uk and search for Beths Parents Association. You amazonsmile need to start each shopping session at the URL smile.amazon.co.uk. Amazon will donate 0.5% of the net purchase price (excluding VAT, returns and shipping fees) of your eligible purchases. It doesn't cost anything.



If you shop elsewhere online, please join Easyfundraising. Again, it costs nothing and Beths PA will automatically receive a donation. You can sign up at www.easyfundraising.org.uk/BethsPA and we will automatically receive a donation anytime you shop. If you are eligible, please also give gift aid to maximise the donation.

Thank you for your continued support. Please don't hesitate to contact us at beths.parents.association@gmail.com if you have any queries or ideas about how we can raise funds and support our children through this challenging time.



Virtual Work Experience and Exploring the Veterinary Profession

Click <u>here</u> for more information.



Please head to www.prospects.ac.uk for a career planner quiz.

STEM & Medical Sciences Work Experience—Ages 12-18 'Live Online' or In-Person at UCL

Architecture—Computer Science—Dentistry—Engineering—Investment Banking—Medicine—
Psychology— Veterinary Medicine



Register now for unique opportunity to work alongside experienced engineers, doctors, psychologises vets and others this term. Students choose to attend 'Live Online' before Easter or in-person later in April.

Our in-person events have strict COVID measures in place.

Choose Your STEM Work Experience - InvestIN Education

Choose Your Work Experience (Ages 12-14) - InvestIN Education



We are delighted to announce the InvestIn "Success Beyond School" events for this term: **free-of-charge** interactive 'Live Online' seminars designed to help parents supercharge their children's career potential.

Wednesday 24th February: The Skills Surgery

How to break into careers in medicine, dentistry and veterinary science

Wednesday 3rd March: The Power of Networks

How your child can build a powerful professional network

These events are for parents of students aged 12-18 and free to attend.

Parent Event Series - InvestIN Education



Most of the GP spaces have filled up until the end of March now - but we do have spaces on our "Virtual Ward Round Course". We actually built a hospital ward where we can live-stream hospital patient cases directly to aspiring medical students. I have included details of the next Ward Round Live course below:

Next available course:

Name: Ward Round Live

Ages: 15+

Next Date: 15th February 2021

Time: 10am - 4pm

Link: https://educationprojects.co.uk/medical-projects/ward-round-live/

For more information on careers and apprenticeships, please head over to our website.

Beths Grammar School - Career and Apprenticeship Information

There is now information on Summer Schools 2021 on our Super Curriculum page. Please take a look to see if there is anything there that interests you.

Beths Grammar School - Super Curriculum



Apprenticeship Information Event Monday 8 February 2021

What is an apprenticeship?

What can I study as an apprentice?

How do I find and apply for apprenticeships?

If you're thinking about starting an apprenticeship, our online Apprenticeship Information Event can help answer questions you may have.

Find out more about apprenticeships, current opportunities, local apprenticeship training providers and more on our website.

The event includes workshops specially tailored for young people, parents and carers and employers.

During the workshop, send in your questions and have them answered live 'on air' after the presentation.

Who is the event for?

- Young people (anyone in year 11 or above)
- · Parents and carers
- Local businesses

How do I sign up?

- 1. From Monday 1 February go to www.bexley.gov.uk/apprenticeshipevent
- Register for one of the live online workshops
- 3. Join us on Monday 8 February for your workshop







How to support your child's wellbeing during lockdown



We recognise that lockdowns and all they entail are not easy for anyone but there is an added pressure on parents as they find themselves overseeing their child's, or children's, learning at home.

To try and help we've put together the top 10 tips for parents to support their child's wellbeing during this time.

Please remember, however, if you have any concerns at all your child's subject teachers, Form Tutor and Head of Year are all available during school hours via email (click here to find their email addresses on our website).

Top 10 Tips for supporting your child's wellbeing during lockdown....

- 1. Establish a realistic routine following the normal school day is ideal
- Timetable in regular "brain breaks" using the timer on your child's phone (see overleaf for ideas)
- 3. Spend part of the day outdoors, if possible
- 4. Always do some physical activity during the day (try <u>Joe Wicks</u> or <u>Sport England</u>)
- 5. Drink plenty of water and eat healthy food
- 6. Outside of learning time do activities you know your child enjoys (i.e. baking, learning a new skill, board/card games)
- 7. Don't feel pressurised by us communicate with us
- 8. Consider their exposure to "Covid" news and social media
- 9. Access free home learning resources to supplement what is being sent home by us (i.e. BBC Bitesize etc)
- 10. Build in achievable and appropriate rewards



How to support your child's wellbeing during lockdown



Conversation starters...

Staying connected to others during a lockdown is very important so it's worth thinking about the right time to start a conversation about feelings or specific worries. It's important for you and your child to feel relaxed so try talking whilst doing an activity together, such as walking or baking.

"What makes you feel happy/sad/angry?"

"What sort of things do you worry about?"

"What are the worst/best things about being in lockdown?"

Signs to look out for...

Your child may need extra support if they are:

- Avoiding contacting friends or school work
- Anxious, upset or finding it hard to manage their emotions
- Having increasing trouble sleeping and eating
- Appearing low in mood, withdrawn, irritable or tearful
- Sharing worried or negative thoughts about themselves or their future

If you notice any of the above please contact the school counsellors for further advice at counselling@beths.bexley.sch.uk

Don't forget you're important too! This is a tough time for everyone so we all need to prioritise our own needs and wellbeing. You can't expect to support another's wellbeing unless yours is good so please reach out for extra support if needed. Try Mind or the NHS for more information.

Ideas for short "brain break" activities:

- Exercise, dance/sing to favourite song, walk, run
- Listen to music, read, colour in, draw
- Try mindfulness (<u>Headspace</u>) or yoga (<u>Cosmic Kids Yoga</u>)
- Cards, board games, jigsaw puzzles
- Tell jokes, recall favourite memories or plan exciting family outings for after lockdown
- Facetime a friend or family member
- Watch favourite TV shows or film clips the funnier the better!

Useful links and resources for parents:

Check out the wellbeing pages for both parents and students on our school website:

Beths Wellbeing pages

The following organisations also have lots of help and advice for parents:

Partnership for Children Public Health

Anna Freud

BBC Bitesize Parents' Toolkit

Place to Be

Youngminds

We are currently living through unusual and exceptional times and it may be that you, or a member of your family, are experiencing difficulties and need some form of support. Below is a list of a variety of helplines, which may be able to help:

Samaritans – 116 123

<u>SANEline</u> – http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/helpline_or 0300 304 7000. SANEline is a national out-of-hours mental health helpline offering specialist emotional support, guidance and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and car-

ers. We are open every day of the year from 4.30pm to 10.30pm

<u>CALM (Campaign Againt Living Miserably)</u> – 0800 58 58 58 or https://www.thecalmzone.net/ Anyone can hit crisis point. We run a free and confidential helpline and webchat – 7 hours a day, 7 days a week for anyone who needs to talk about life's problems. We support those bereaved by suicide, through the Support After Suicide Partnership (SASP).

<u>Drinkline – The National Alcohol Helpline</u> - 0300 123 1110 or https://www.wellaware.org.uk/organisation/drinkline-the-national-alcohol-helpline/

Confidential advice and information on all aspects of alcohol. Calls are free.

Drinkline offers the following services:

- * Information and self-help materials
- * Help to callers worried about their own drinking
- * Support to the family and friends of people who are drinking
- * Advice to callers on where to go for help

Talk to Frank – 0300 1236600 or https://www.talktofrank.com/

Targeted confidential advice for young people around all legal and illicit substances.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline – https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk/ or 0808 2000 247

CRUSE Bereavement Care – https://www.cruse.org.uk/ or 0808 808 1677

Cruse offers telephone, email and website support. We have a Freephone national helpline and local services, and a website (hopeagain.org.uk) specifically for children and young people. Our services are provided by our network of 5,000 trained volunteers and are confidential and free. Cruse also provides training and consultancy for external organisations and for those who may encounter bereaved people in the course of their work.

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