



# West Sussex Mediation Service Newsletter

## Editorial

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2020



### External Edition

*Published for the  
Funders and  
Supporters of the  
West Sussex  
Mediation Service.*

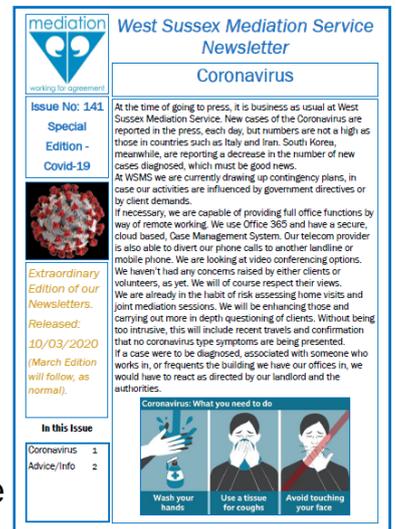
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You may well have seen our Special Edition Newsletter, issued on 11th March as a consequence to the current Coronavirus pandemic, but a lot has changed in just a week. Everyone is facing rather scary times with jobs and finances under strain as well as their health being at risk. No-one knows, as yet, how long this is going to continue for. Those who have pooh-poohed the situation may now be eating their words and finally

understanding the gravity of the situation. This is not like anything we have experienced in a lifetime. The words 'Social Isolation' do not fit well with the workings of a charity like ours, who like to encourage communication and bringing individuals, groups and families together. Maybe people will be able to set aside their differences for the good of their local communities. On the other hand, families will be experiencing long periods together and neighbours likely to be seeing more of each other. One positive is that the weather should start improving allowing more time outdoors. None of us will currently be able to seek respite by taking to a sun lounger on a sunny beach in the mediterranean, with a cocktail in hand. We are certainly going to need some of that past 'wartime spirit'. There are good signs already, as there are a number of Facebook groups starting up to provide help and support to the elderly and more vulnerable.

In the rest of this newsletter we will set out how our small charity is reacting to the current situation. If we are honest, the future of our charity may be in jeopardy. (Nick - Co-ordinator)



# STAY SAFE

## News

**Office Function** – we intend to continue to provide a service, to the best of our ability, in the circumstances. Following Government guidelines, we intend to do as much home working as possible. We have purchased an additional laptop for one of our caseworkers to use at home.

We are also going to take advantage of a free two month trial of ‘Unified Communications’ through our telecom provider, Keytech Networks. As our phone system is VOIP based, it will enable us to access our phone lines remotely on a PC, tablet or mobile device from anywhere. We can carry out audio or video calls/conferences and do instant messaging and screen/file sharing.

See this video if you are interested in discovering what we will be capable of doing:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hlqG6zOGSPU>

The better the broadband signal, the better the quality will be. It will come to the stage where the office will be closed and moved ‘virtually’. If movements permit, we may do the occasional trip to collect post and gather documents/files and stationery supplies.

We also have the benefit of cloud based systems, including Office 365 and our Case Management System (Mediation4All–Protocol IT).

**Video Conferencing** – we are busy training/refreshing ourselves on the use of video conferencing technology, alongside our telecoms package. Skype used to be popular but seems to have been taken over by the likes of **Zoom** which is quite easy to use. Basic use of Zoom is free, but meetings of more than two people is limited to 40 minutes, without subscription.



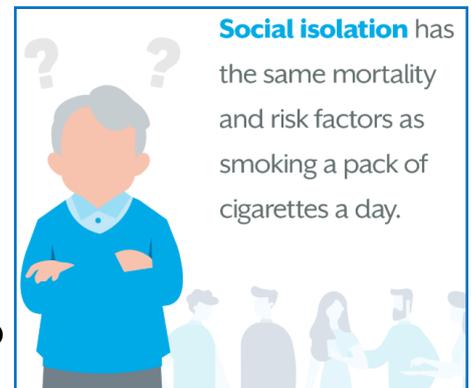
We are encouraging all our volunteers, who are willing, to take a look at some of the very useful training videos/webinars that Zoom offers. They can download the App and experiment by calling our ‘office’. People can be invited to join a conversation by sending an easy link by email. It would mean that we could offer some form of continued service. We could conduct ‘home visits’ by telephone (or conference calls) and joint mediations by conference calling.

The office will be supplying a set of guidelines to abide by and we will be getting clients to sign an agreement to mediate by phone/video conference. Not all clients would wish to or have the ability to go online to do so, but some might find it beneficial. There are codes of practice that we can adapt to make the use of such options appropriate and controlled.

## More Info.

**Social isolation** — being able to keep in contact with our existing (and any new clients), by phone or video conferencing, will hopefully be beneficial to their wellbeing, if nothing else. We could be offering conflict coaching guidance at the very least.

The same will likely apply to all our volunteers (not the conflict coaching advice)! We hope to do regular calls to keep in touch with everyone. Anyone is welcome to call us for a natter, as the number of our incoming calls has diminished of late!



**Loss of Income** — we are no longer booking family mediation joint sessions. This will result in the loss of an important source of revenue.

With many employees working remotely from their offices/place of employment, there are unlikely to be workplace mediation enquiries, for some time. We will also be losing income from the hiring out of our meeting room. We are hopeful that our traditional funders will be motivated to continue their funding of our service. We know that they will be tightening their purse strings due to the dramatic economic fallout from the worldwide coronavirus pandemic.

**The future of our Charity** — we currently have an uncertain future. We have reserves which should allow us to operate for a further six months, but we do have some funding secured for our new financial year—1st April 2020 to 31st March 2121.

Grants from Horsham District Council, Crawley Borough Council and the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner are already signed off.

**Staff & Volunteers** — we hope you all manage to keep fit and healthy. If predictions are to be believed, some of us may well contract the virus, but most will suffer mild symptoms and recover without too much drama.

We must all play our part in preventing the virus from spreading, in order to protect the elderly and more vulnerable.

If there is anything we can do to support you, please don't be afraid to contact us. We appreciate all that you do for WSMS.

Our staffing will have to be under review over the next few weeks, in consultation with the Trustees. Meanwhile we are continuing as 'normal'.

# Shopping

You have to be brave to visit the big supermarkets, following the urge of many inconsiderate people to panic buy and be greedy on the quantity of items that they grab - such as hand sanitiser, toilet rolls, pasta, rice and tinned foods.

Shopping online is an option, particularly if you are on 'lockdown', but we are aware that delivery slots are now booking 2-3 weeks ahead. If you do shop online for your groceries or other items to keep you occupied, entertained or for well deserved treats, do think of using Giveasyoulive, to fundraise for us. There couldn't be a more important time to do so - and it cost you nothing.

<https://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/wsms>



**4,400+ retailers!**

moonpig

NOT ON THE HIGH STREET .com

Etsy

JOHN LEWIS & PARTNERS

Boots

HOTEL Chocolat.

Give as you Live®  
Online

**RAISE  
FREE  
FUNDS  
FOR US**

WHEN YOU  
SHOP  
ONLINE

The graphic features a teal background with a white shopping cart icon inside a heart shape at the top. Below this, the text 'Give as you Live® Online' is displayed. The main message 'RAISE FREE FUNDS FOR US' is written in large, bold, white capital letters. At the bottom, it says 'WHEN YOU SHOP ONLINE'. On the left side, there is a vertical list of retailer logos: moonpig, NOT ON THE HIGH STREET .com, Etsy, JOHN LEWIS & PARTNERS, Boots, and HOTEL Chocolat. A teal ribbon banner at the top left corner says '4,400+ retailers!'. Three circular icons are placed between the retailer logos and the main text: a shopping basket, a smartphone with a shopping cart and 'BUY' button, and a wine bottle next to a glass of wine.