

Supporting citizens in North Yorkshire through Covid-19

Finalised communications bank

In this document, we set out a range of communications underpinned by behavioural science to:

1. Support the wellbeing of NYCC staff as they adjust to working from home.
2. Mobilise North Yorkshire residents to support their local community.

These communications build on an initial set of 20 draft messages which NYCC provided feedback on in early May 2020. The messages use techniques from the behavioural science, wellbeing, and social capital literatures. We explain these theories and the process for message development in more detail in a separate report which will follow shortly.

Please note that all quotes, statistics, policies and links highlighted in **yellow** are not genuine, and are used only to illustrate how they might be implemented within a given message. BIT will work with NYCC over the coming weeks to finalise the messages so that they are ready to send.

1. Supporting the wellbeing of NYCC staff

Messages are split into four categories:

- **Supporting healthy thinking patterns** to help staff overcome the challenges that working from home during these difficult times brings.
- **Encouraging positive behaviours** to improve staff wellbeing.
- **Supporting parents** as they balance childcare with working from home.
- **Easing the transition back into the office:** providing guidance and reassurance for staff.

Number	Behavioural science/wellbeing concept used	Message
Supporting healthy thinking patterns		
1	Evoking gratitude can boost motivation and resilience.	"I wouldn't be able to do my job without the support of my colleagues. I'm so grateful for them every day." - [staff member at NYCC]

		Think about how your colleagues have supported you this week. Why not send them a quick message to say thank you?
2	Teaching staff simple mindfulness techniques can support mental wellbeing.	<p>We are living through extraordinary times. If you're feeling overwhelmed, take a moment to breathe in deeply through your nose for 3 seconds, hold for 2 seconds, then out through your mouth for 4 seconds.</p> <p>Here's another breathing exercise we like! http://bit.ly/2q0YVvP</p>
3		<p>Taking regular breaks from your laptop is important.</p> <p>The next time you have a break between meetings, stand outside for a few minutes and try this simple exercise:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it. 2. Breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. 3. Breathe in gently and regularly. See if you can count from 1 to 5 as you breath in, and again as you breath out 4. Keep doing this for 3 to 5 minutes.
4	Growth mindsets can improve resilience.	<p>Thank you for your hard work during really challenging times. You might have found some days a struggle - that's completely normal; it takes time to adapt to new situations.</p> <p>Think of the progress you've made since lockdown began - maybe you've put a good routine in place for yourself, maybe you're exercising more now than you did before. These little wins are important, so take time to reflect on them!</p>
5		<p>You've been working from home under lockdown for [number] weeks now. We know it hasn't been easy, and we want to say thank you for the resilience you've shown during these extraordinary times.</p> <p>If you could give one piece of advice to your past self from [number] weeks ago, what would you say?</p>
6		<p>With extra time on our hands, we can feel pressure to be more productive. But the reality is that during these uncertain and stressful times, we're all going to have down days.</p>

		Take care not to put yourself under a lot of pressure and be kind to yourself .
7	Fostering intrinsic motivation (where behaviour is driven by internal rewards such as a sense of accomplishment or desire to do good) can boost motivation.	As a staff member at NYCC, you are serving your local community each day. Although it's sometimes easy to get bogged down in the day-to-day, remember that you are making a difference. Take a moment now to reflect on how the work you're doing is helping people in North Yorkshire.
Encouraging positive behaviours		
8	Implementation intentions (planning prompts) can help staff carry out positive behaviours.	Separating work time and personal time is important for your mental health. Make a plan, for example: I will finish work at __[time]__. When I sign off, I will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tell my colleagues I'm finished for the day <input type="checkbox"/> Close my laptop and put it away (along with my keyboard, mouse etc.) <input type="checkbox"/> Put on some relaxing music!
9		During your lunch break or between meetings, leave your phone by your computer and take 15 minutes for yourself. You could have a cup of tea, take a stroll outside, or read a few pages of a book.
10		<p>"Each day, I try to do 10 minutes of exercise. I normally squeeze it in before work or during my lunch break. It makes all the difference to my energy levels while I'm working from home!" - [staff member at NYCC]</p> <p>It doesn't matter how long you exercise for - getting your heartrate up once a day can make a world of difference. Check out this list of 10-minute workouts from the NHS here - they're suitable for all abilities!</p> <p>What time will you do 10 minutes of exercise tomorrow?</p>
11		<p>Phones have become a lifeline for many of us in the past few months, helping us to work remotely and stay in touch with loved ones. But try to remember that feeling constantly connected can cause anxiety.</p> <p>Set 'phone free' breaks during your day - just 15 minutes as you eat your lunch could make the</p>

		world of difference. When will you have your 'phone free' break?
12	Using a trusted messenger can increase engagement with messages.	<p>"Checking emails in the evening can be unproductive and stressful, and stops me from recharging. I prefer to tackle them the next day when I'm feeling refreshed" - [trusted senior messenger]</p> <p>We all recognise the importance of a healthy work-life balance, but some of us can feel guilty for switching off in the evenings. Try to set boundaries around your work hours this week.</p>
13		<p>"We know the difference we make to people's lives in North Yorkshire through our work at the council, and that can sometimes make it hard to switch off from work. Self-care is critical if we want to be able to give the best of ourselves." [trusted senior messenger]</p> <p>This period is challenging for us all. Try to think of one small thing you could do this evening to switch off from work.</p>
14	Breaking goals down into manageable 'chunks' can make them easier to achieve.	<p>There is a lot to digest at the moment, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed. You can take care of yourself by limiting the time you spend following the news:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid checking the news before you go to sleep. • Try to allocate a specific time during the day to read the news (e.g. only watch the news and PM broadcast at 5pm each day).
15		<p>While we're working from home, it's easy to spend the whole day looking at a screen. Try the following steps to take care of your eyes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. • Blink regularly to give your eyes a rest. • Use a larger font size where possible. <p>You can see more tips here!</p>
16	Storytelling can build a sense of community amongst staff.	<p>"It's the small things I miss about being in the office - hearing about my colleagues' weekends or having a laugh together. My team has started having weekly catch up calls where we're not allowed to talk about work - they're really helping me to feel connected!" - [staff member at NYCC]</p> <p>How are you staying connected with your colleagues? Share your stories here! [link to online</p>

		form]
17		<p>[Moment of happiness or funny story from staff member]</p> <p>During difficult times, moments of joy are even more important.</p> <p>Can you think of something that made you laugh or smile this week? Why not spread the joy and share it with a colleague?</p>
18		<p>"There have been plenty of ups and downs over the past few weeks. Getting out for a walk every day has helped me to clear my head and get some perspective" - [staff member at NYCC]</p> <p>If you've had difficult days over the past few weeks, you're not alone. Here are some other evidence-based tips on how to stay mentally healthy. https://bit.ly/2y2kkeV</p> <p>How have you been taking care of yourself over the past few weeks? Why not share your ideas with colleagues here! [link to online form]</p>
19	Substituting one behaviour for another can help staff to build healthy habits.	<p>Three months ago, many NYCC staff spent at least an hour commuting every day.</p> <p>Today, take the time you would have spent traveling home from work to do something kind for yourself. You could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Phone a loved one ● Do a 10-minute self care yoga video ● Take a solo walk - try leaving your phone at home to really disconnect
20	Public commitments can help us to follow through with intended behaviour changes.	<p>During times of uncertainty, finding a routine can help us feel more in control. While your daily schedule has likely changed, try to create new rituals. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have a quiet cup of tea each day before you open your laptop for work. ● Try out a new recipe for dinner every Wednesday. ● Call a loved one on Sunday mornings. <p>We are more likely to follow through with our goals when we share them publicly. Share how you're going to practice self-care this week with a friend or colleague!</p>
Supporting parents		

21	Focusing on short, simple activities can help parents to overcome limited bandwidth .	This weekend, try planning a dinner party with your children! Together, you could plan a menu, make place cards, and decorate the table. They'll love the opportunity to get creative.
22		This Sunday afternoon, why not sit down with your children and make a schedule for the week. Think about when you'll go out for walks, when you'll do chores, when you'll call loved ones. It's important to schedule in fun activities that you can look forward to together!
23		Next time you're on a walk with your children, why not do a wildlife hunt? You could try to identify birds and plants, and keep a list of what you've seen!
24	Giving a small set of options with clear next steps can help to overcome choice overload .	Working with young children at home can be difficult. We want to do all we can to support you. Have you spoken to your manager about how you could benefit from our flexible working policy? You could: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start and end your working day earlier or later • Consider 'condensed hours' (e.g. a 40-hour working week over 4 days) • Split your working day into two chunks (e.g. 7am-11am, then 2pm-6pm) • Request unpaid leave to make childcare more manageable (e.g. one day of unpaid leave per week for the next two months) <p>Why not schedule a meeting with your line manager to discuss options?</p>
25	Creating a sense of community through storytelling amongst parents can build resilience.	This week, we're thinking of all the parents at NYCC who are balancing working from home with childcare. Thank you for doing your job in really challenging circumstances. If there was one piece of advice you could give to another parent in a similar situation, what would it be? Submit your ideas here and we'll share them with other NYCC parents on the intranet next week.
Easing the transition back to the office		
26	Evoking reciprocity can encourage positive behaviours.	If someone on your team thought they might have coronavirus, what would you want them to do? Stay at home, or take a risk and come into the office?

		If you or someone in your household has symptoms of coronavirus, please stay at home.
27	Implementation intentions (planning prompts) can make people more likely to follow through with a behaviour.	<p>From [date], you will be able to work in the office again if you wish. The government has advised that workers avoid taking public transport where possible. Take some time this week to think about how you might travel to and from work.</p> <p>For example, you could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cycle - do you need to get your bike serviced? ● Walk - which route will you take?
28		<p>We want to support behaviours that will keep you and your colleagues safe. Please don't come into the office if there is even a small chance that you or someone in your household has coronavirus.</p> <p>If you or someone in your household develops symptoms, you should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Email your line manager to let them know that you can't come into the office. 2. Request sick leave if necessary. 3. Follow NHS guidelines on how to take care of yourself and those in your household.
29	Breaking goals down into manageable 'chunks' can make them easier to achieve.	<p>As some staff return to the office, let's try to maintain some of the good practices we learned while working from home.</p> <p>Many of our colleagues will continue working from home (e.g. if they are shielding or living with someone who is shielding). Support them by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Setting up a Skype calendar event for all meetings. ● Waiting until all attendees have dialled in before starting a meeting. ● Keeping up the virtual coffee breaks!
30	Using a trusted messenger can increase engagement with messages.	<p>"As the number of coronavirus infections decreases and government guidance changes, my top priority is to keep you safe.</p> <p>I've been working with HR and office managers to develop procedures so that you can return to work with as little anxiety as possible:</p> <p>[list of NYCC return-to-work policies]"</p> <p>- [Senior staff member/team leader at NYCC]</p>

31	People are more likely to engage in a behaviour when they believe it is in line with the behaviour of the majority, i.e. the social norm .	In a recent survey, 63% of NYCC staff said that they would like to come back into the office for at least one day per week once restrictions are eased.
32	Staff will be more likely to take the default option when it comes to returning to the office.	From [date] , staff will have the option of coming back into the office to work if they wish. If you would like to return to the office for work, please email your line manager and let them know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What date you would like to return to the office. • How many days per week you would like to work in the office.

2. Mobilising community spirit in North Yorkshire

Messages are split into three categories:

- **Promoting invisible acts of kindness** by people living in North Yorkshire.
- **Increasing volunteer sign-ups** through the NYCC portal.
- **Sustaining volunteer engagement** both during and after the crisis.

Number	BI concept used	Message
Promoting invisible acts of kindness		
1	Embedding behaviours into our daily routine can make us more likely to maintain them.	When you go out on a walk or run, why not drop a note through your neighbours' doors offering to pick up groceries or medicine? Not sure what to write? Check out this template - or print it out if you have a printer! https://bit.ly/2RKKERT
2		The next time you go to the supermarket, why not pick up some extra items to donate to your local food bank? Every tin of beans, pack of cereal, or chocolate bar helps. You can find where your nearest foodbank is here: https://bit.ly/2XDoViu
3	Breaking goals down into manageable 'chunks' can make them easier to achieve, and helps to combat ' choice overload '.	It's easy to feel helpless during these difficult times. But each one of us has the power to make a difference to people around us through small acts of kindness.

		<p>This week, try to do one extra act of kindness. Here are some ideas!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone someone you know who is self-isolating to check if they're ok. • Drop a note through your neighbour's door to say you're thinking of them/offer help. • Donate to your local food bank (you can find your nearest one here: https://bit.ly/2XDoViu)
4	<p>Evoking reciprocity can make people more likely to perform altruistic behaviours.</p>	<p>Can you think of a time when you were having a bad day and a small act of kindness made it better? Maybe someone in the street smiled at you or a friend gave you a surprise phone call.</p> <p>Seemingly small acts can make a huge difference, especially during these difficult times. What small act of kindness can you do for someone today?</p>
5		<p>Think of all the frontline workers who risk their health to keep our communities going: bin collectors, police officers, supermarket staff.</p> <p>Next time you see any frontline worker, remember to thank them for all they are doing during this crisis. You might not think it's much but it will make the world of difference.</p>
6		<p>"Being a nurse is difficult at the best of times but especially so during this pandemic. I don't know what I would do without the support of my neighbours. It's the little things like when Jim next door offers to pick up shopping for me at the end of a busy week." - Hiba, nurse at Scarborough General Hospital</p> <p>We are so grateful to our incredible frontline workers for helping to overcome the crisis we're in. But it wouldn't be possible for them to do their jobs without the support of their friends, family, and community. Each act of kindness you do helps to build their resilience. Thank you.</p>
7	<p>Quotes from beneficiaries of volunteering increases the salience of people in need, emphasising the need for volunteers.</p>	<p>"When I tested positive for coronavirus, I had no idea how I would get food as I self-isolated. Then my neighbour, Anna, called to say she could pick up whatever I needed. I honestly don't know what I would have done without her." - Hamzah, North Stanley</p> <p>During these difficult times, it's stories like Hamzah's that keep our spirits up. All across North Yorkshire, communities are coming together like never before. Can you think of someone like</p>

		Hamzah who could use a helping hand? Reach out to them today.
8	Network nudges can help positive behaviours to spread more rapidly.	This week, phone one friend or family member to check in on how they're doing. Nominate five other friends to do the same, either directly or on social media. Remember to hashtag #SaltOfTheEarth!
9	Highlighting the personal benefits of performing kind acts could help readers to overcome the immediate costs.	Research shows that small acts of kindness for others can help us to feel happy and fulfilled. By helping others, we're helping ourselves! What's one act of kindness could you do today for someone in your community?
Increasing volunteer sign ups		
10	Evoking reciprocity can make people more likely to perform altruistic behaviours.	If you were a vulnerable elderly person, what kind of support would you need from your community right now? You can give this support to others - sign up here: https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T
11		Think of key workers you know (nurses, supermarket staff, teachers, doctors, carers, police officers) - they are doing incredible work helping our community to get through this crisis. You can do your bit too - sign up here: https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T
12	Supporting self-efficacy (people's belief that they are capable of making a difference) can encourage them to engage in a behaviour.	It's normal to feel a bit helpless during these uncertain times. But you don't need special skills to make a difference in your local community - simple actions like telephoning someone who might be isolating by themselves can be more helpful than you know. You can help - click here to find out how: https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T
13	People are more likely to engage in a behaviour when they believe it is in line with the behaviour of the majority, i.e. the social norm .	Be part of the movement in North Yorkshire to fight Covid-19. Volunteer numbers in North Yorkshire have tripled since March. Sign up today to make a difference: https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T
14	Network nudges can help	Can you think of any friends or family who might

	positive behaviours to spread more rapidly.	<p>like to volunteer?</p> <p>Share this message with friends to let them know how they too can make a difference in their community.</p> <p><i>"I've just signed up to volunteer during the coronavirus crisis. I thought you might be interested too - click here to find out more and sign up today! https://bit.ly/2xAUb6T"</i></p>
Sustaining volunteer engagement		
15	Focusing on the positive impact volunteers are having could foster intrinsic motivation .	<p>Thank you for being a part of the incredible movement to fight Covid-19 in North Yorkshire. Volunteers like you have helped thousands of people get food, care and emotional support. It's hard to describe the difference you have made!</p> <p>You can keep making a difference when we're on the other side of this crisis. What kind of volunteering would you like to do in the longer term? You can see different volunteering options here.</p>
16		<p>"Knowing that Alex is always there for a chat when I need it has gotten me through the past couple of months." Sarah, 87, East Stanley</p> <p>Volunteers like you make a huge difference to thousands of people in North Yorkshire - know that they are truly thankful. People like Sarah need support all year round, not just during pandemics. Think about ways to sustain your volunteering efforts when this is all over.</p>
17		<p>It's been [X] weeks since you first signed up to volunteer. Thank you for your commitment! It's hard to put into words how much of a difference you're making.</p> <p>Getting to the other side of this crisis is a marathon, not a sprint. We need volunteers like you to keep doing amazing work to support vulnerable people. Thank you for keeping going.</p>
18		<p>Together, we've achieved so much in North Yorkshire over the past few months:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● [number] people matched with volunteers ● [survey results showing that people feel supported by volunteers] ● etc... <p>We couldn't have done it without you.</p>

19		<p>While there are many reasons we want to go back to the way things were, there are some things that have come from this crisis which we should hold on to.</p> <p>One of these things is you! We are so thankful for your incredible work over the past few months. We needed volunteers like you before coronavirus and we will continue to need you afterwards.</p> <p>Will you continue your journey with us? If so, please add your name to this mailing list: [link]</p>
20		<p>Calling to check on a neighbour or offering to pick up some milk in the shop may not feel like much, but it can make a huge difference. Kindness towards those who are vulnerable is needed everyday, not just in a pandemic.</p> <p>What will you do to help those around you once this is all over?</p>
21	<p>Highlighting the positive emotions and experiences associated with volunteering can foster intrinsic motivation.</p>	<p>We've been overwhelmed by stories about the incredible experiences volunteers have had over the past few months. You've told us about the amazing people you've met, the conversations you've had, and the sense of accomplishment you've felt.</p> <p>What has been the most important volunteering experience you've had during the crisis? Reply to this email to let us know!</p>
22		<p>It's been [X] weeks since you first signed up to volunteer - thank you, you are making the world of difference.</p> <p>Reaching out to others can make us understand ourselves better - what have you learned about yourself as a result of volunteering?</p>
23	<p>Making a public commitment to perform a behaviour makes us more likely to follow through with it.</p>	<p>It's clear that support from volunteers like you will be vital for many months to come as we all get to grips with the 'new normal'.</p> <p>Can we depend on you to keep offering your support? Commit to volunteering a certain amount of your time each week by clicking this link: X</p>
24	<p>Highlighting progress can motivate volunteers to keep going.</p>	<p>Thanks for all your help so far! We have new volunteers joining regularly and they would love to hear your top tips for helping others. Please click here to share what you wish you had known when you first signed up to volunteer.</p>

25	A message of thanks from a trusted messenger could encourage commitment.	“I would like to say thank each and every person who has helped out during this difficult time. I couldn't be prouder of the North Yorkshire community.” [Leader at North Yorkshire County Council]
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