

## Healthwatch Bexley Talks Men's Health Week 2021

Historically men are less likely to talk about their health and may suffer in silence.

*'If something is wrong a man will just brush it off and hope it goes away' - Bexley resident*

Sometimes we find that keeping our worries to ourselves is easier than saying them out loud. Covid-19 may have made it harder to communicate, but Healthwatch Bexley has found some Bexley men who were willing to tell us about their positive experiences during the pandemic.

The CAN DO Challenge encourages men to take a positive mental wellbeing action every day for the five days of Men's Health Week

### The CAN DO Challenge...

There are five days of the week and five ways to wellbeing. You see where we're going with this?

#connect #beactive #notice #discover #offer

When we **CONNECT**, keep **ACTIVE**, **NOTICE** stuff, **DISCOVER** more and **OFFER** to others, we **CAN DO** a lot to improve our own wellbeing.

Try a different way to wellbeing each day of the week.

**Better mental health? We CAN DO it.**

**MEN'S  
HEALTH  
WEEK**  
2021



#menshealthweek #CANDOchallenge [menshealthforum.org.uk/mhw](https://menshealthforum.org.uk/mhw)

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### The Five Ways to Wellbeing #ConnectMonday

Connecting with others, whether it be friends, family, neighbours or colleagues, can have a positive effect on our health. When we feel connected with what is around us we feel more motivated and upbeat. Covid-19 made it hard to connect with our community so maybe now we can start to rebuild those connections. During lockdown many residents connected with their neighbours and those who may have been more isolated and lonely than usual. There are lots of opportunities in Bexley to connect with others.

Contact us on 078337 52390 for more information



### **Lockdown Isolation** - Alex, 36

*“When the first lockdown was announced, I had to work harder and longer to cover sickness and those who were shielding. Due to my wife being medium risk she was advised to restrict the amount of time she left our house, being a key worker, she was told to only leave for work.”*

*“As time went on, days got long and stressful, we would “treat” ourselves often. This would be due to a combination of stress, tiredness and quiet honestly, laziness.”*

*“It was strange, other than colleagues and each other, the delivery staff were really our only point of contact with the outside world. One specific delivery guy even became a regular “visitor” as he was not only delivering food, but also delivering online purchases.”*

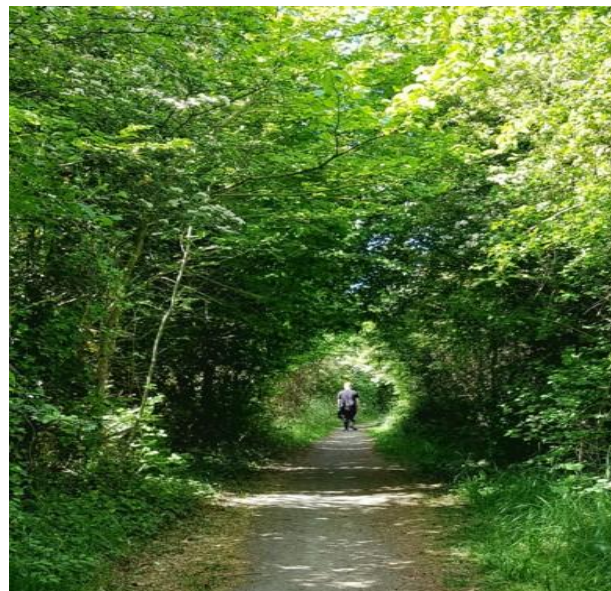
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## **The Five Ways to Wellbeing #BeActiveTuesday**

We can look after our mental and physical health by being more active. This could include walks for different ages and abilities, online exercise classes or classes for mindfulness and wellbeing.

### **David, 36**

*“During lockdown I started to walk along my nearby Thames Path. After noticing physical changes, this walk became a regular thing. It has beautiful spots, it is peaceful, and it allows me to listen to my extensive audiobook collection. It has helped me lose weight and I now feel more body positive”*



## The Five Ways to Wellbeing #TakeNoticeWednesday

Reengage with your body this week and get to know what is normal for you. It will become easier to notice if something is wrong in the future. You could take an hour away from your phone today. Instead, step outside and take notice of what is around you. Take some time for self-care or join a community DIY project.



**Blake, 28yrs**

*“This pandemic has reminded me to appreciate the little things in life, like how beautiful nature can be.”*

*‘Reconnecting with nature helps me unwind and de-stress’*

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## The Five Ways to Wellbeing #KeepLearningThursday

**“I think it is important to learn new skills and lockdown gave some of us time to do that. I know people who have taken up cooking, DIY, and one friend has used his time as a key worker to study for a promotion.” - Bexley resident**

**Daniel, 41yrs**

*“I’ve always been interested in cooking, I love watching TV shows and YouTube videos. I was abroad when Covid first started to become a serious thing, by the time we returned to England people were scrambling for all manner of produce in the shops.”*

*“I’d always done the cooking in our relatively new marriage but being stuck indoors made me realise how much I’d just recycle the same few recipes every week, sausage and mash, spaghetti Bolognese... coupled with that, one of the luxuries we afforded ourselves was eating out on a regular basis, something we could no longer do.”*



*“I had a handful of dishes I knew from experience, most of which were learned from what I ate growing up. So at the start, I tried to recreate things that I liked*



*at home. My wife is the brains in this relationship so she left me to 'foster' in the kitchen and was always grateful for meals I am sure couldn't have been that nice. The more I persevered, the better my dishes were - something I documented on Facebook as a daily Coronavirus Cookalong."*

*"I experimented with cooking following instructions from YouTube. My cookbook collection increased - from Tapas, Chinese, French cuisine and Escoffier. I also now have a fully stocked larder of ingredients from across the world."*

*"As the Covid restrictions lessened I found myself dissecting meals I had paid for, sending back dishes on the basis I now realised how simple they were for people to prepare. I must admit, it's ruined eating out for me on occasion - but I am able to appreciate a good meal I have prepared - sourced with good ingredients and cooked with care."*

*"I have struggled historically with problems pertaining to my mental health. Something I dare say Covid has exacerbated in many people. I find the logic and uniformity of cooking incredibly soothing. I would now go so far as to say it is my favourite pastime."*

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## The Five Ways to Wellbeing #GiveFriday

Smile at a passer-by when you go for your walk this week

Say hello to the Barrister next time you buy your coffee in the morning  
Give time to help out a friend, family member or your local community. Why not enquire about volunteering with Healthwatch Bexley? Volunteers play a vital role in helping people have their say on health and social care. Volunteering with Healthwatch Bexley can help you develop skills, gain experience and make a difference to your community.

If you are interested in volunteering with us then please take a look at our website for more information.

[www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk/volunteer](http://www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk/volunteer)



### **Nigel, 72 - Litter Picking Volunteer, Bexley**

*"I found that during the last year I have put on weight and found it hard to lose. That's partly due to not being as active as I would normally be, due to my wife being shielded. I am also more aware of the health benefits of keeping active. What I find is that litter picking helps me to get out and about without having to meet*

*lots of people, and at the same time get some exercise, and help to clear up the streets. That gives me the satisfaction of a job well done, reducing the stress of seeing the mess all over the place.”*

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**Covid-19 happened when we least suspected it. But for some, it was the least of their concerns. Meet a retired gentleman from Bexley who was diagnosed with Prostate Cancer in 2020 ...**

*“3 years ago, I was watching Breakfast TV and Bill Turnbull was talking about his problems with his prostate. After listening to what his symptoms were prior to cancer I decided to act because I had similar symptoms.”*

*“I contacted my GP in Sidcup to book me in for an examination, which I had done, and the results came out as an enlarged prostate. From that, I had 2 years of consultancy at the hospital. Throughout this time, I had 6 monthly PSA blood tests to see if I had any signs of cancer. My PSA stayed above the NHS guidelines and I was recommended for an MRI scan. This all happened in 2020 throughout Covid. The good news for me was that because of Covid people were cancelling their appointment’s and I was accepting them which speed up my waiting time for all the tests.”*

*“I had my MRI scan in the first part of Covid, I then had my biopsy in May. 2 months later my results came back and I was diagnosed with prostate cancer, this was done over the phone due to Covid.’*

*‘This was a big shock to me and my wife and my family at this time. It must have been a week or so to come to accept that news”*

*“In October 2020 I had my operation, which was a full removal of the prostate, which was done at Medway hospital and released home on the 13th October.”*

*“The aftercare service has been brilliant from Darrent Valley Urology team. I’m just an email or phone call away and receive a response within an hour. Also, Bexley Care service has been great with all my Physio after my operation, which is still ongoing at the present time.”*

*“The only trouble I had was with Bexley Medical Management team refusing me some equipment that I required after my operation, which because of their actions set me back a month on my recovery, and also knocked me back in my mental capacity, I later found out this seemed to be a monetary funding issue which isn’t good for the patient.”*

*“Everything is now going in the right direction, and it’s been amazing when you start talking to people, that they also have had some sort of problem with their prostate.”*

## Also meet Nigel whose loneliness has shaped the last year

*"It's been a long period of loneliness and self-isolation due to COVID to protect a vulnerable person I live with. I also suffered a very severe ankle joint injury (complex bone fracture) last year--from which I have been slowly recovering."*

*"It has not been easy, but somehow I have endured. I do hope the COVID vaccination programme is successful and I can move forward reconnecting socially, enhancing my mental health and well-being; and as recovery from my injury permits, exercising."*

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## Dave, a Bexley worker, gave us his insights into his physical and mental health right now

**What are the current priorities regarding your health?**

*"I'm 56 soon and I'm very lucky that I have always had the determination to keep myself physically fit that I sincerely believe massively aids mental well-being. I exercise pretty much every day if I'm not playing golf and I'm more than happy to talk about what that means for my life & well-being. I believe that exercise keeps you physically and mentally fit plus helps you with weight & health problems. I think that men's health week is important as men are quite reticent about talking about health issues."*

**What about people around you, do they talk?**

*"I think forums for men to discuss things between them are going to hugely assist. Sometimes, men don't feel comfortable talking to their families/partners/doctors as they are embarrassed or like all us men, we just like to ignore things. However, in my humble opinion, when men get together and start to talk, and it will require a few "leaders" to be open and honest, you will find that others will join in. Some may take longer than others but it's all part of a process to make people feel completely comfortable about talking about themselves, their worries, their health."*

*"Some may feel that a Zoom call might not be a place to talk openly as face-to-face interaction is more personal. Now that we can go out, and if all are vaccinated and feel comfortable, there's nothing to stop a group from meeting at a coffee shop or community centre. I think that once people feel confident that it is Chatham House Rules, i.e. everything we discuss stays in the room, we will get much more buy in"*

### How have you coped with lockdowns during Covid-19?

*"For me, I'm lucky that I have a positive disposition. I used lockdowns as an excuse to start projects at home and take a positive from it. I guess as a person I'm a bit of a leader and organiser so I had quite a few zoom calls every week to catch up with different groups of friends. I think, for some of them, this was really important as they wouldn't have spoken to anyone otherwise."*

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Healthwatch Bexley



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## Contact Us

The Healthwatch team continue to work remotely however, you can still contact us via phone on 078337 52390

By email on [info@healthwatchbexley.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchbexley.co.uk)

Or contact us through our website [www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk/](http://www.healthwatchbexley.co.uk/)