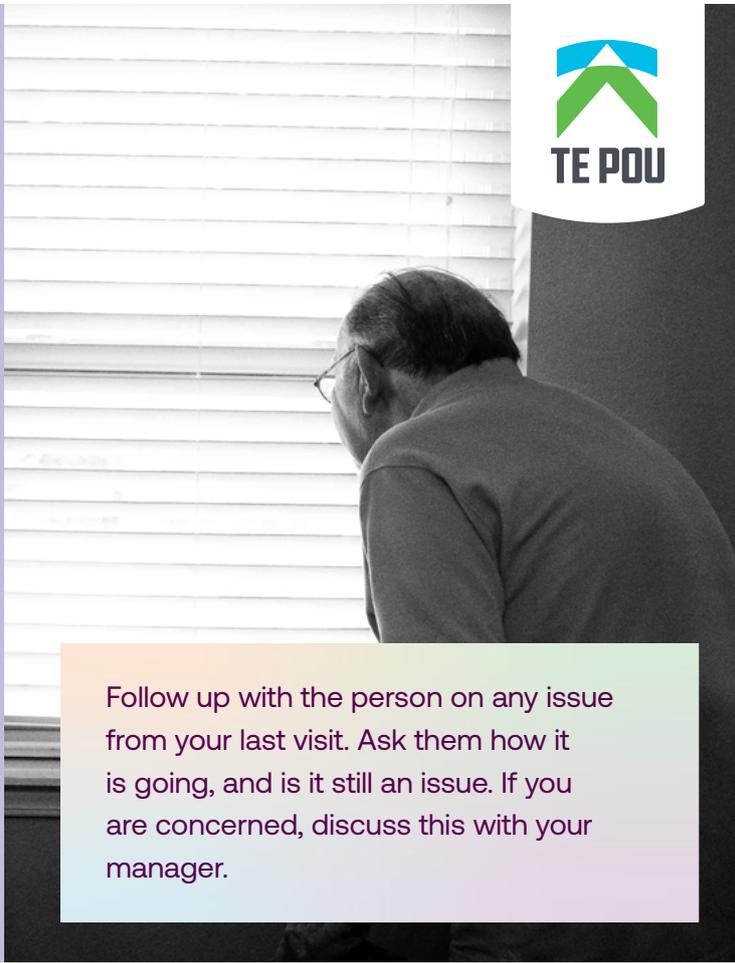


Supporting older people during the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 restrictions and physical distancing measures can have an impact on older people's wellbeing. This resource provides practical tips for the support workforce to use to support older people in their own homes.



Follow up with the person on any issue from your last visit. Ask them how it is going, and is it still an issue. If you are concerned, discuss this with your manager.



Mental wellbeing - Taha hinengaro

- › Ask people how they have been and how they've been managing with physical distancing. Ask what has been working well for them.
- › Acknowledge what is happening with COVID-19 and that it is OK if this is affecting them. Give the person time to express how they feel without rushing them.
- › Don't simply reassure the person everything will be alright and not to worry.
- › Do reassure people that things will get better. Share helpful resources and facts from [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz).
- › Ask people how they feel overall. Allow them to talk about being sad, lonely, down or worried.
- › Remind people they are not a burden to those who care for them. Talk about their value as parents, grandparents, friends and community members.
- › Few people get to be older without having survived some hardships and distress. Ask about what has happened in the past and what they did to get through those times.
- › Limit casual chat about COVID-19. If needed, talk about other things that are of interest to the person.
- › If people are worried, suggest they limit watching the news to once a day. Suggest reliable information sources, such as the [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) or Ministry of Health website: [health.govt.nz](https://www.health.govt.nz).



Social wellbeing - Taha whānau

- › Where someone is living with whānau or partners, ask how they are getting on and how they're being kind to each other. Is everyone getting enough private time? This can be as simple as half an hour alone reading in a bedroom or sitting outside by themselves.
- › When needed, help the person learn how to use their phone, tablet or computer to stay in touch with whānau, friends and faith institutions. Show them how to make and respond to calls.
- › You may need to connect them to seniornet.co.nz for support, and install WhatsApp on phones and/or Zoom on computers. You may have to learn how to do this yourself first – WhatsApp and Zoom provide useful guides.
- › Stay in touch by phone or text between visits. Take these chances to get to know more about each other.



Physical wellbeing - Taha tinana

- › Remind the person how to keep safe – regular handwashing and maintaining physical distancing, ie keeping two metres away from those outside your bubble.
- › Remind people that GPs and pharmacies are still open and not overloaded. If they feel unwell, remind them to phone their GP. If unsure, ring Healthline – phone **0800 611 116**.
- › Offer to pick up prescriptions at the pharmacy or organise delivery if needed.
- › Help the person find supplies and groceries online (such as delivereat.co.nz). Show them how to make and pay for orders.
- › Suggest some simple meal ideas for people living alone: eggs on toast, baked potatoes, salads, sandwiches and stir fry meals.
- › Encourage people to be as active as possible – even a short walk to the letterbox and back a few times a day is helpful. Taking the opportunity to smile and wave at passers-by also lifts everyone's spirits.
- › If someone seems to be using more alcohol, cannabis or medication than usual, ask them: "Some people seem to be drinking/smoking/using medication more at the moment, are you drinking/smoking more?" Make practical suggestions about safer use, such as remembering to eat before having a drink, delaying the first drink by an hour, or trying to sleep before using cannabis or sleeping pills.
- › Ask about how people are sleeping. If their sleep patterns are different from normal and a concern, suggest they stick to regular times to go to bed and get up. Also suggest if not asleep within 10-15 minutes to get out of bed and read (not to watch TV), and only go back to bed when tired. Remember to ask how it is going next time you talk.



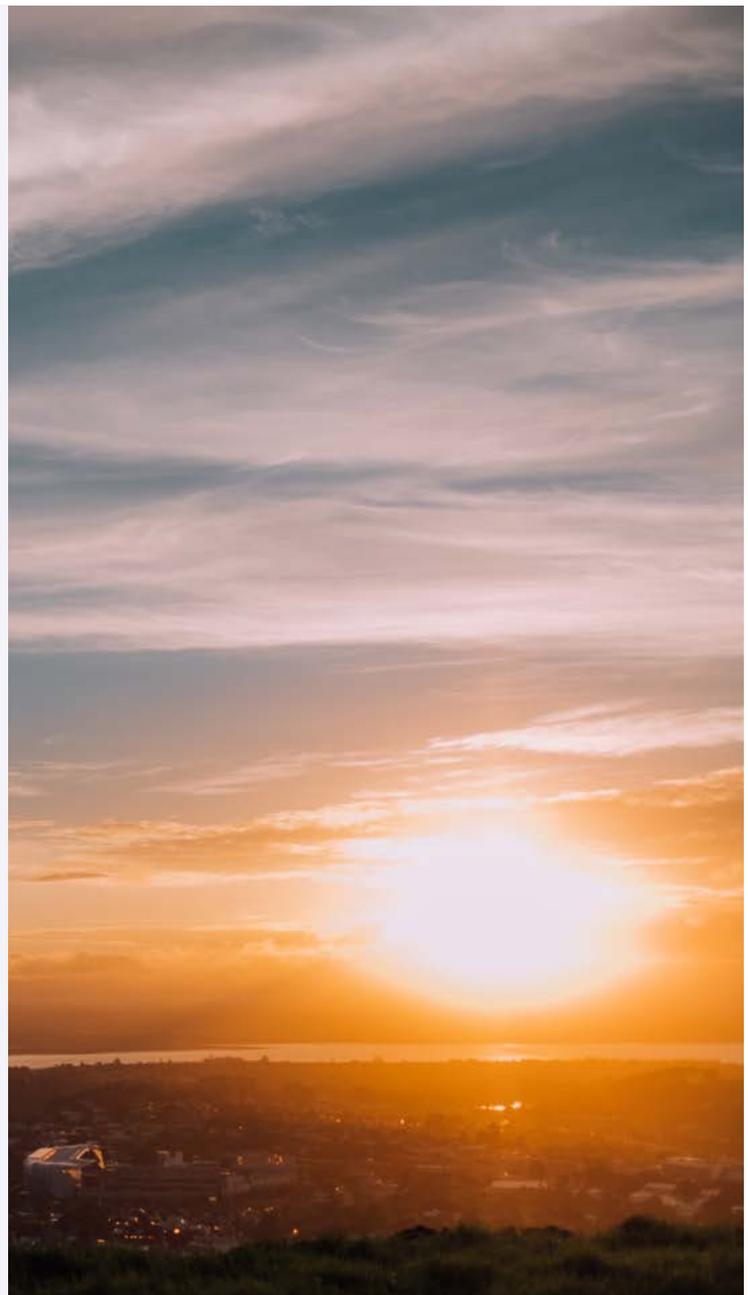
Spiritual wellbeing - Taha wairua

- › Encourage the person to notice the everyday or small things that make life interesting and special, such as nice weather, shapes of the clouds, bird song, and change of season.
- › Support the person to engage with their usual spiritual practices such as online church services, prayer meetings and meditation.
- › Encourage people to use the time to do hobbies they enjoyed in the past or have put off, like going through their photo collection and putting them in order with people's names on them.
- › Talk to the person about their normal routines and what they can stick to, such as wake up times, self-care, calling friends and whānau, laundry, cooking, eating, and drinking enough fluids during the day. Check how people are going with their routines over time.
- › Support people to try new things, like making a meal from a different culture or writing about their whānau history.

Know when and where to get extra help

If the person appears not to be looking after themselves, is unwell, or you are concerned for their wellbeing, talk with your manager. Support is also available through these contacts.

- › When feeling anxious or just needing someone to talk to, call or text **1737**
- › For general issues contact Age Concern or visit www.ageconcern.org.nz
- › When people have no other way to access essential supplies, contact the Civil Defence Emergency Management Group: [covid19.govt.nz/individuals-and-households/shopping/if-you-cant-get-essential-supplies](https://www.govt.nz/individuals-and-households/shopping/if-you-cant-get-essential-supplies)
- › For benefit advice, phone the MSD Senior Services line: **0800 552 002**
- › If worried about a cough or temperature, call the COVID-19 Healthline: **0800 358 5453**.
- › For other health concerns contact a GP or Healthline: **0800 611 116**.





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