

Get on the air to care #GOTA2C

Amateur radio use in the UK has seen a 'significant' rise during the Coronavirus lockdown as people seek new ways of staying connected. The national body that represents users – the Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB) – has said many people who formerly enjoyed the hobby are also returning to it. Many operators provide emergency radio communications in support of the statutory services.

The RSGB defines amateur radio as a 'technical hobby for people who want to learn about, use and experiment with wireless communications'.

Steve Thomas, RSGB General Manager, says the organisation has experienced a threefold increase in the number of people asking to sit licensing exams since social distancing rules came into place. There are currently about 75,000 licensed users in the UK.

Unprecedented partnership

The RSGB has teamed up with the NHS in an unprecedented partnership to launch a new campaign called 'get on the air to care'. The campaign is scheduled to run between May and July 2020.

Paul Devlin from the NHS Emergency Care Improvement Support Team co-founded the campaign, along with Steve Thomas and Heather Parsons from the RSGB. The campaign aims to support the emotional health and wellbeing of 75,000 licensed UK radio amateurs, just some of the three million worldwide.

Paul was responsible for creating the health service's radio communications station GB1NHS. The NHS is the



only government level organisation to routinely use amateur radio to help improve the lives of communities globally.

Paul says, "Now, more than ever, we need to optimise all modes of communication to help reduce loneliness and isolation within communities. Amateur radio provides a wonderful, unprecedented opportunity to help make this a reality."

"Radio operators are simply encouraged to get on the air, reach out to fellow enthusiasts and ask how they are doing. They can share their photos, video clips and news with the RSGB via comms@rsgb.org.uk and on social media using the hashtag #GOTA2C."

Steve Thomas explains that, "Radio amateurs can show their support for the NHS by adding /NHS to the end of their call signs." An amateur radio call sign, issued by the Government Office for Communication (Ofcom), is a series of letters and numbers unique to each radio

operator and allows enthusiasts to identify each other and establish which country they are in. This is thanks to Ofcom for endorsing the 'get on the air to care campaign'.

GB1NHS, the UK's National Health Service radio communications station will be on the air as part of this campaign.

The 'get on the air to care' web page can be found at rsgb.org/gota2c. It includes the campaign launch video, club involvement and media coverage.

With thanks to Vanessa Pearce, BBC News, for sharing her content.

rsgb.org/gota2c
youtu.be/4yKbNL4e9Y

For further information about amateur radio or the #GOTA2C campaign please contact comms@rsgb.org.uk.

For further information about GB1NHS please contact paul.devlin@nhs.net

Reference: Coronavirus: How amateur radio is connecting people during lockdown – Vanessa Pearce, BBC News, 5 May 2020.



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