

New advice to support mental health during coronavirus outbreak

- Public Health England guidance will give helpful tips on how to look after your wellbeing, alongside advice for parents and carers on children's mental health
- Leading mental health charities given £5 million to expand support services
- Plans endorsed by Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge as part of their commitment to mental health

People struggling with their mental health during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak will be offered additional online support and practical guidance to help them cope, Mental Health Minister Nadine Dorries has announced today.

In recognition of the unprecedented challenges which the outbreak and extended periods of self-isolation can pose, Public Health England has published new [online guidance setting out principles to follow to help people to manage their mental health](#) during this difficult time, such as:

- maintaining contact with friends and family via telephone and video calls, or social media
- keeping a regular routine and sleeping pattern
- focusing on a hobby or learning something new

Parents and carers will also benefit from tailored advice on how to support children and young people with stress during the coronavirus outbreak, which includes providing clear information, being aware of their own reactions and creating a new routine.

Today's guidance has been developed in partnership with leading mental health charities and clinically assured by the NHS. It also includes steps that those living with serious mental health problems can take, including seeking support from their mental health teams.

Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge said:

The last few weeks have been anxious and unsettling for everyone. We have to take time to support each other and find ways to look after our mental health. It is great to see the mental health sector working together with the NHS to help people keep on top of their mental well-being. By pulling together and taking simple steps each day, we can all be better prepared for the times ahead.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge have long been advocates for mental health, through their respective patronages and The Royal Foundation's Heads Together campaign. In 2019, Their Royal Highnesses helped to launch Public Health England's mental health platform, Every Mind Matters.

Minister for Mental Health Nadine Dorries said:

When I discovered I had coronavirus I felt anxious and scared.

For those who already suffer with anxiety or other mental health issues this may present new and difficult challenges.

It's imperative that we stay home if we are to beat coronavirus and save lives. I know how important it is that people have support to look after their mental health and this guidance will be of huge value.

The government has also announced a £5 million grant for leading mental health charities, administered by Mind, to fund additional services for people struggling with their mental wellbeing during this time. This could include telephone and online support services for the most isolated and vulnerable in our communities.

Public Health England has updated its world-leading Every Mind Matters platform with specific advice on maintaining good mental wellbeing during the outbreak. People can also complete a 'Mind Plan', a quick and free tool that has already been completed over 1.8 million times.

Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director at Public Health England, said:

During these challenging times, it is natural for all of us to feel worried or anxious, but there are things we can all do to help ourselves and others, to prevent these feelings from becoming more serious.

We should continue to check up on friends, family and neighbours by phone or online and pursue the activities we are able to do from home and in line with guidance. By adopting a new routine, setting goals, eating healthily and maintaining physical activity, we can stay in good mental health today and tomorrow.

The government and NHS England recognise that the mental health impacts of the coronavirus outbreak are significant and are working closely with mental health trusts to ensure those who need them have access to NHS mental health services.

This includes issuing guidance to trusts on staff training, prioritisation of services and how to maximise use of digital and virtual channels to keep delivering support to patients. NHS Mental Health providers are also establishing 24/7 helplines.

Mind will use their existing links with other charities, including grassroots, user-led organisations, to reach vulnerable groups who are at particular risk during this period. This is expected to include older adults,

people with an underlying health condition and anyone experiencing unstable employment and housing conditions.

Paul Farmer, chief executive of Mind and co-ordinating a group of mental health charities, said:

We are facing one of the toughest ever times for our mental wellbeing as a nation. It is absolutely vital that people pull together and do all they can to look after themselves and their loved ones, when we are all facing a huge amount of change and uncertainty. Reaching out to friends and family is critical, as well as paying attention to the impact our physical health can have on our mental health – from diet and exercise to getting enough natural light and a little fresh air.

Charities like Mind have a role to play in helping people cope not only with the initial emergency but coming to terms with how this will affect us well into the future. Whether we have an existing mental health problem or not, we are all going to need extra help to deal with the consequences of this unprecedented set of circumstances.

Claire Murdoch, NHS mental health director, said:

The NHS is stepping up to offer people help when and how they need it, including by phone, facetime, skype or digitally enabled therapy packages and we also have accelerated plans for crisis response service 24/7.

We are determined to respond to people's needs during this challenging time and working with our partners across the health sector and in the community, NHS mental health services will be there through what is undoubtedly one of the greatest healthcare challenges the NHS has ever faced.

Notes to editors: