



HM Government



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# Our plan for mental health and wellbeing

How we are going to help people affected by COVID-19



# Introduction



The government has written a plan for **mental health** and **wellbeing**.

**Mental health** is the way you feel in your mind and the thoughts you have.



**Wellbeing** means feeling happy and healthy in your mind and body.



Different government departments have come together to agree to this plan.



People's mental health and wellbeing has been affected by **COVID-19**.

**COVID-19** is a new illness that has spread around the world.



We have all had to do things differently to stay safe from COVID-19. It has been difficult for everyone.

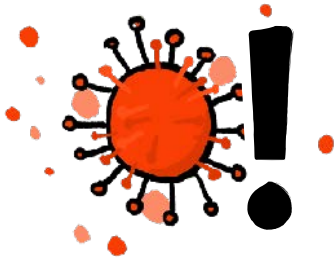


This is our plan to help people cope and have good mental health and wellbeing.



We have also written a report about how we are working to prevent people taking their own lives. You can read it with this report.

# Why we have written this plan



## COVID-19

COVID-19 has affected everyone.



People have had to stay at home and not see family and friends.



Many shops and businesses have had to close.



Many people have been very ill with COVID-19. Some people have even died or know someone who has died.

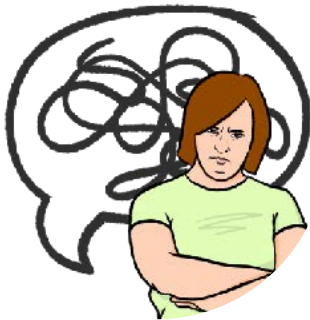


All of these things can affect your mental health and wellbeing.

## What we know



Lots of people have said that their mental health and wellbeing is worse because of COVID-19.



Some people have had bad moods, felt worried or not been able to sleep.



Other people have needed help for more serious mental problems.



Even as things start to get better, you might still feel scared or worried.



It is important that everybody works together to improve mental health.

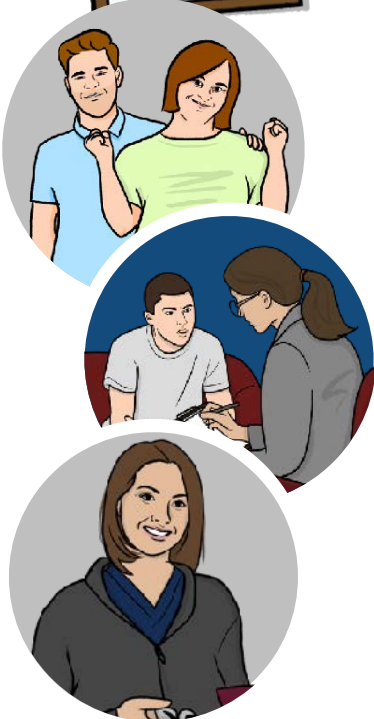




## What we want to achieve

As things get better after COVID-19, we want to:

- help everyone to look after their mental health and wellbeing
- deal with the things that cause mental health problems, before they get worse
- support services to look after people who need special help.



We want all parts of the government to work together to improve mental health and wellbeing.



We want to make changes to health and care in England, based on what we have learnt from COVID-19.



We will also work with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. They also have their own plans.

# Supporting people



## Individual people

We want to help people to look after their own mental health and wellbeing.



Doing simple things like sleeping better, getting more exercise or coping with difficult thoughts can really help.



We also are working so that people don't have bad attitudes towards people with a mental health problems.



We would like people to use things like:

- The NHS website: **[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**
- Every Mind Matters - this is an NHS website with helpful information and advice about mental health and wellbeing:



**[www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/)**



- A mind plan - this is a guide for you to look after your own mental health and wellbeing.

You can make your own mind plan by answering a few easy questions on this NHS website:

**[www.nhs.uk/your-mind-plan-quiz](http://www.nhs.uk/your-mind-plan-quiz)**

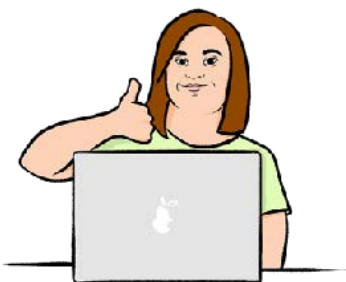


- The Hub of Hope database to find help near where you live, including NHS helplines and the Samaritans:

**[www.hubofhope.co.uk](http://www.hubofhope.co.uk)**



Exercise is important for mental health. To help you get active, you can look at:



- Everybody Active Every Day:

**[www.gov.uk/government/publications/everybody-active-every-day-a-framework-to-embed-physical-activity-into-daily-life](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/everybody-active-every-day-a-framework-to-embed-physical-activity-into-daily-life)**



- The Better Health campaign:  
**[www.nhs.uk/better-health/](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/)**



# Communities



**Communities** are groups of people living together in the same place.

Communities can help and support each other to have good mental health.



We have written some useful information to help communities here:

**[www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-centred-public-health-taking-a-whole-system-approach](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-centred-public-health-taking-a-whole-system-approach)**



## Local councils

Local councils should bring communities together and help their most **vulnerable** people.



**Vulnerable** means you need some support to stay safe and well.



We will give more money to local councils to improve their mental health services.

We have provided extra money to councils and charities to continue their good work during COVID-19.



## Volunteers

**Volunteers** are people who do work without getting paid for it.



Volunteers have been very important during COVID-19 to support people's mental health.

Volunteers have also noticed that their own mental health and wellbeing improved during their work.



## Public services

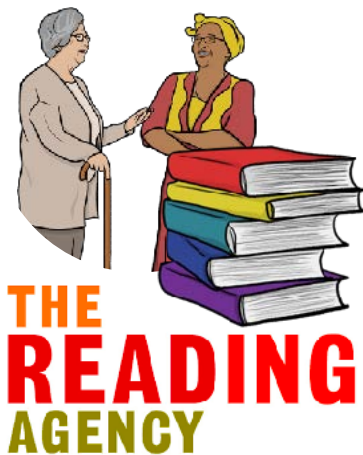
We are giving training about mental health and wellbeing to our frontline staff and volunteers.



We are working with the police to make sure they improve the way they deal with people with mental health problems.



We are helping Sport England to make sure people can play more sport, especially children and young people.



We will support libraries to bring people together and help to stop people feeling lonely.

The Reading Agency has made some reading lists of books about mental health and wellbeing that will be available in libraries.



The lists are:

- Reading Well for mental health:  
**[www.reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/mental-health](http://www.reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/mental-health)**
- Reading Well for young people:  
**[www.reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/young-people-mental-health](http://www.reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/young-people-mental-health)**





- Reading Well for children:  
[www.reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/children](http://www.reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/children)

## Children and young people



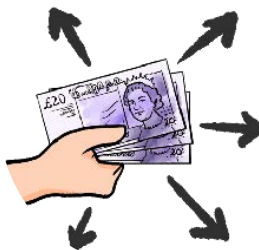
There have been lots of changes for children and young people during COVID-19.



The ways they learn and see other people have been different, and things have kept changing.



This has made lots of them feel more stressed, lonely and worried.



We will give more money to support children and young people's mental health, especially in schools and colleges.



Getting all children back to school is very important for their mental health.



We have given Dr. Alex George the job of Youth Mental Health Ambassador, to look after mental health and wellbeing in schools, colleges and universities.

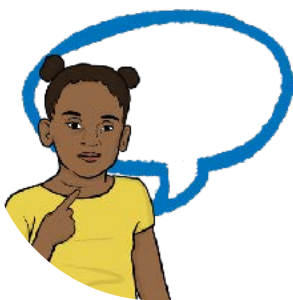


It is important to teach young people to look after their mental health.



We will help children and young people to do this with things like Every Mind Matters:

**[www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/)**



We will keep asking young people and charities what they think before we make decisions.



## **Families and early years**

Midwives and health visiting teams are important to support the mental health of parents and children.





Children need good home surroundings and parenting to help their mental health and wellbeing.



We are giving more money to support young children with special needs and disabilities.



We are giving more support to new mothers and babies from **ethnic minorities** and poor areas.

**Ethnic minorities** are particular races of people. There are fewer of them in the country than other people.



Families should be able to get support when they need it. We are making a new National Centre for Family Hubs to help with this.



We are providing training on parenting skills and family relationships to parents with alcohol problems.



## School age children

Schools are very important for the mental health of children.



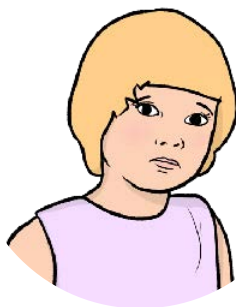
We have provided schools with the training and knowledge to support children, young people, teachers and parents.

We have given money for extra teaching to help children catch up with the learning they have missed during COVID-19.



We have also given money to schools to help them to support the mental health of **disadvantaged** pupils.

**Disadvantaged** means not having the same chances in life as other people.



## Vulnerable children

We know that things have been worse for vulnerable children during COVID-19, so we have been doing more to help.



We have kept schools open for vulnerable children.



Care and health services have stayed open and in contact with vulnerable children.



We need to look after the mental health and futures of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).



## **Children and young people in the secure estate**

The children and young people's secure estate means the places where children and young people are held because they have broken the law or because they need to be kept safe.



Children and young people in the secure estate can have lots of physical and mental health problems.



We have provided training for children and staff to help during COVID-19.



We are working to improve things in the secure estate and will soon open our first Secure School.

## Outside of education



It is important to think about children's mental health and wellbeing when they are not in school.



We are helping disadvantaged children to take part in activities during the school holidays.



The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme will help children:

- take part in activities which help their wellbeing



- eat healthy food in the school holidays



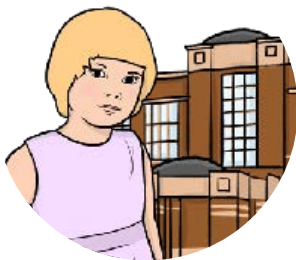
- be more active in the school holidays



- be safe and not be alone



- know more about staying healthy and eating well



- join in more at school and with other services.



## Young people

COVID-19 has been difficult for the mental health of young people going to university or starting a job.



We are trying to support them with things like the NHS Long Term Plan:  
**[www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-implementation-plan-2019-20-2023-24/](https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-mental-health-implementation-plan-2019-20-2023-24/)**



# Inequalities



Some people have struggled more during the pandemic than others.

## **People with serious mental illnesses**



Good mental health is very difficult for people with serious mental illnesses.

Dealing with so many changes during COVID-19 has been hard.



We also know that this group is more at risk of poor physical health and early death.

We will carry on supporting these people.



## **Women**

Women's mental health has suffered more from COVID-19.



We need the healthcare system to listen to women more, so we are writing the first Women's Health Strategy for England.



To do this, we are collecting information and views about women's mental health.



## Bereavement

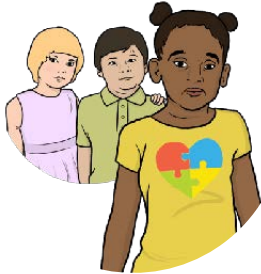
**Bereavement** means that someone close to you has died.



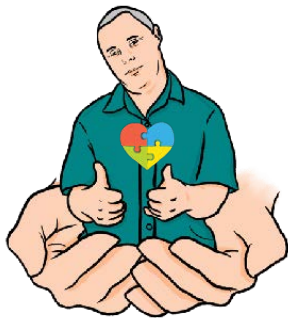
Bereavement has been even more difficult during COVID-19, with people not being able to see family or go to funerals.

We have provided more support for families coping with bereavement and will keep doing this.

## People with a learning disability and people with autism



**Autism** is a type of disability. People with autism may have difficulties with things like communication, being with other people, or how they think and feel about things.



We have tried to make sure COVID-19 has not affected people with learning disabilities and autistic people or learning disabilities more than other people.



We are spending more money to help people with learning disabilities and autism



We will carry on providing services and collecting information to help people look after their mental health.



Both our new Autism Strategy and our new National Strategy for Disabled People are coming soon.



## Ethnic minorities

More people from ethnic minorities have died from COVID-19 than from other groups.



We are trying to find out why this has happened.



People from ethnic minorities have also suffered more with mental health and wellbeing.



We think this is because things have not been equal for them for a long time.



We are working with the NHS and Public Health England to make health and care more equal for ethnic minorities.



We are translating information from Every Mind Matters and Help Us to Help You into other languages.



We need to make things more equal in mental health services.

Our Patient and Carers Race Equality Framework (PCREF) will show organisations how to improve things for patients from ethnic minorities.



## **Survivors of domestic abuse and sexual abuse**

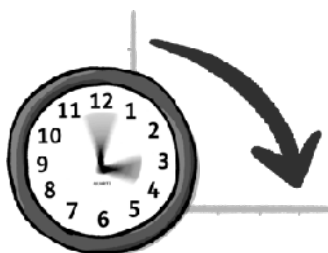
**Domestic abuse** is when you are harmed by a family member or someone you live with.



**Sexual abuse** is anything sexual that you have not agreed to.



We have given money to support services to help survivors of domestic or sexual abuse.



We will also give more money to support community services to reduce the amount of time people need to wait for help.





We will make sure survivors of sexual violence are given mental health support when they need it.

## People affected by substance misuse and addictions



**Substance misuse** means taking drugs or drinking too much alcohol.



**Addiction** is an urge to do something that is hard to control or stop. If you use cigarettes, alcohol or drugs, you can become addicted to them.



Drugs and alcohol is a way for some people to cope with difficult feelings. But it can also cause mental health problems.



We are worried about the number of deaths going up caused by alcohol and drugs.



We have found that local services and the NHS don't always help people with their drug and alcohol problems.



The NHS Long Term Plan will improve this, as well as access to mental health services.



## People in prison

People in prison have not been able to mix and do as much while we have been trying to stop COVID-19 spreading.



We know that this could affect their mental health and wellbeing.



To help with this, we have provided:

- activities they can do in their cells
- extra support for vulnerable prisoners
- video calling for friends and family
- laptop computers to use in some cells
- telephones in cells.



We will provide people leaving prison with somewhere to live for 12 weeks if they would be homeless otherwise.



We are doing many other things to support prisoners' wellbeing, including a new plan for older prisoners called the 'Older Offenders Strategy'.



## Refugees and asylum seekers

**Refugees** are people who have had to leave their country because it wasn't safe.



An **asylum seeker** is someone who has left their own country and asks to live in a new country.



Refugees and asylum seekers may have mental health problems because of what has happened to them in the past.

What has happened during COVID-19 may have made this worse.



The Refugee Council and Mental Health Forum will continue to support refugees and asylum seekers arriving in the UK.



## People with long COVID

**Long COVID** is when people take more than 12 weeks to recover from COVID-19. This happens to 1 in 10 people.



Long COVID can affect mental as well as physical health.

The NHS has plans to help with long COVID including the website Your COVID Recovery:

**[www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk](http://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk)**



We are paying for research into the effects of long COVID on physical and mental health.



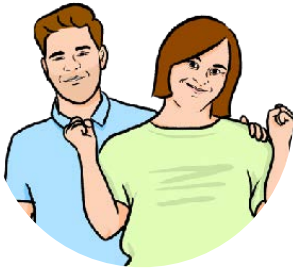
## NHS staff

NHS staff have worked very hard to help us all during COVID-19.

It is important that they get time off and support with their mental health.



We have and continue to provide health and wellbeing support for staff which has already been used 750 thousand times.



## Social care staff

**Social care** is support you need to look after yourself.



Social care staff have also worked very hard during COVID-19 to give care to our most vulnerable people.



It is important for them to have someone to talk to when things are difficult.



We have provided helplines, guidance, help with bereavement and other support for better mental health.

## Other key and frontline workers



**Key and frontline workers** are people that have had to keep working during COVID-19 to keep the country going.



We have provided mental health and wellbeing support for teachers, prison staff and other key workers.



# Dealing with the causes of mental health problems



It is important that all parts of the government work together to support people's mental health.

We can try and stop the causes of mental health problems.



## Helping with money and jobs

Not having enough money can cause mental health problems.



This happened to many people during COVID-19.

To help stop this happening, we have:

- helped businesses pay their staff's wages
- given money to people who are self-employed - this is when you work for yourself, not for a company





- given lots more people benefits - this is money given to you by the government to help you live your life



- let people have a break from paying back their mortgage - this is money you borrow to buy your house.



We have provided many other services and plans to help people with money and look after their mental health.



## Help for employers

Your **employer** is the company or person that you work for.



When people are off work with mental health problems, it costs employers money.



It is important that employers help their staff with mental health and wellbeing.



We will help employers with training and advice.

We have also given more support to people with mental health problems to help them stay in work.



When people have been unable to work, we have helped them with extra pay, so they still have enough money.

## Housing



Good and affordable housing is important to support good mental health.



We are changing the rules about housing for councils. This will make it easier for councils to improve housing.



Many **rough sleepers** have mental health problems.

**Rough sleepers** are people who sleep on the street because they don't have anywhere to live.



To help with this we will:

- provide more homes
- make sure mental health services can support rough sleepers
- give rough sleepers more help with drug and alcohol problems
- give more money to help rough sleepers who also have other problems.



## Using nature to help with mental health

Spending time in nature can improve your mood, make you feel more relaxed and reduce stress.



Nature will be the theme of Mental Health Awareness Week on 10-16 May.



We are making sure more people can spend time in nature, especially:

- people with a disability



- people from ethnic minorities
- people from poorer areas
- children and young people
- older people.



We are also looking at nature as a way of treating mental illness.

## Loneliness



COVID-19 has made more people feel lonely. Loneliness can make mental health problems worse.

Many people have phoned the Samaritans and said they felt lonely.



We have given money to organisations that help to deal with loneliness.





We have improved our Let's Talk Loneliness campaign to change the way people think about loneliness.



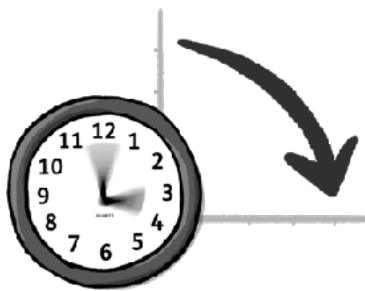
We will continue to work with organisations and provide information on how to deal with loneliness.

# Better support services



We know we will need to help people with the effects of COVID-19 for years to come.

This year, we will give the NHS around an extra £500 million towards mental health services.



This extra money will help the NHS to:

- reduce waiting times, so that mental health services are available to people when they need them
- support more people with their mental health



- train staff and bring in new staff to work in mental health care.

## Learning from the way we have delivered services during COVID-19



Mental health services have stayed open by making changes, like doing some things online.



This has been good for some groups, like students having video appointments while away at university.



Video appointments are not possible for everyone, so we will always offer face-to-face support.



We provided 24 hour a day helplines which have been very useful, and we will continue with this.



More health organisations have been working together to help people, and this will continue.

## Making mental health services bigger and better



We will carry on making sure more people have access to mental health services.



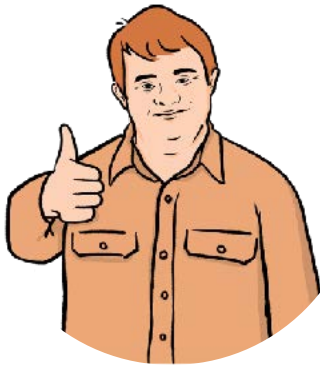
People will be able to have more choice about their treatment.



The NHS will have special support for groups most affected by COVID-19, like:

- young adults
- children and young people
- people in prison





- people with learning difficulties or autism



- people with **dementia**.

**Dementia** is a disease in the brain. It affects your memory and behaviour.



The NHS is making sure all staff are ready to help people with mental health problems caused by COVID-19.



# How we will make sure the plan is working



We will continue to collect information on how COVID-19 is affecting mental health.



We will collect information about **suicide** and **self-harm** so we can work to reduce them.

**Suicide** is when you kill yourself on purpose because you are finding life too difficult.



**Self-harm** is when you hurt yourself on purpose as a way to cope with difficult feelings.



We will look at how many people are using mental health services.

We will make sure our services are good quality.



We have asked the NHS to keep checking our plans and to let us know what we should change.



We will stick to the plan and use it as a first step for working together more across government.

# For more information



If you need more information please go to:

**[www.gov.uk/dhsc](http://www.gov.uk/dhsc)**