

# An introduction to Mental Health and Wellbeing

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Mental health is at the well being end of the health and safety spectrum and is often forgotten in favour of the more physical aspects of good health such as making sure our buildings and the materials and equipment we work with are safe.

Mental wellbeing is just as important as physical health. COVID has tested the mental wellbeing of the most resilient. With this latest national lockdown and the depressing news of escalating infections and deaths on a backdrop of January blues, we thought this was a good time for a webinar focused around building our own resilience and recognising the warning signs in others.



## What is mental health versus mental health conditions?

Mental health encompasses our emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing, and perhaps also our spiritual wellbeing and our sense of purpose in the world. We all have mental health, just like we all have physical health.

Mental health conditions encompass a wide range of disorders that affect our mood, thinking and behaviour. Examples of mental health disorders include depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders and addictive behaviours.

## Mental health conditions are commonplace

1 in 6 people in the past week experienced a common mental health disorder.

1 in 4 people experience mental health issues each year. Depression and anxiety are the two most prevalent mental health disorders.

Most people who experience a mental health condition recover or can live with and manage their condition, especially if they get help early on.

## Taking care of staff and volunteers' mental health

Work-related stress can aggravate pre-existing mental health conditions, and problems at work can bring on symptoms or make their effects worse. Whether work is causing the health issue or aggravating it, **employers have a legal responsibility** to help their employees as detailed in the Health & Safety Executive's guide: [Mental Health Conditions, Work and the Work Place](#) (link in Additional Resources).

## Disability discrimination

Under the **Equality Act 2010** a disability means a physical or a mental condition which has a substantial and long-term impact on the person's ability to do everyday activities.

The Equality Act also covers individuals if they have had a disability in the past. For example, suppose a volunteer has had a mental health condition in the past, which lasted for over 12 months, but has since recovered. In that case, they are still protected from discrimination because of their past disability.

# Making reasonable adjustments for volunteers and staff

Under the Equality Act 2010, employers and organisations are responsible for making sure that disabled people can access jobs, education and services as easily as non-disabled people. This is known as the 'duty to make reasonable adjustments'. What is 'reasonable' will depend on the circumstances, the nature of the disability, and the employer's resources.

Employers should make reasonable adjustments for staff who have disabilities under the Equality Act 2010.

## Training for mental health first aiders

Mental health first aiders are trained in understanding common mental health illnesses and promoting mental health awareness. These skills help them to be confident in spotting signs of mental ill health and supporting positive wellbeing.

Some organisations appoint mental health first aiders in the same way as they do physical first aiders. Although not a legal requirement, appointing mental health first aiders is recognised as best practice.

There are short training courses available from St John Ambulance for people who are interested in becoming mental health first aiders.

## Signals that someone may be struggling with their mental health

It is helpful for employers to have some awareness of common signs that someone may be struggling with their mental health.

Indications someone might be struggling with their mental health:

- Eating or sleeping too much or too little
- Pulling away from people and usual activities
- Having low or no energy
- Working too much or too little
- Feeling numb or like nothing matters
- Having unexplained aches and pains
- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Smoking, drinking or using drugs more than usual
- Feeling unusually confused or unable to focus
- Forgetful, on edge, angry, upset, worried, or scared
- Yelling or fighting with family and friends
- Being unable to cope with stress / overwhelmed easily
- Unable to perform daily tasks like showering
- Intrusive memories of difficult events

It is important to remember that someone who appears to be happy and confident may still struggle immensely on the inside. Mental health conditions are not always visible!

When someone discloses they have a diagnosed mental health condition, they may or may not be struggling; they may have excellent support for their situation.

Even if we are knowledgeable about specific mental health conditions, it is essential to remember that each person experiences their disorder individually. We should always receive the person in front of us, rather than what we might presume about their diagnosed condition.



# How to signpost others to professional support

There are many forms of professional support available:

- Recommend they talk to their GP
- They can self-refer to access NHS talking therapy known as (IAPT) services
- Private therapy is an option for those who can afford it
- Some congregation members might have access to employee assistance (EAP) programmes which often include free counselling sessions
- Some charities offer access to free therapy, such as Free Christian Counselling
- The Catholic Mental Health Project website
- Mental health helplines for urgent support

## Christian-centred support for mental health

### **Catholic Mental Health Project**

The Catholic Mental Health Project is a resource for Catholic priests and diocesan staff, recommended at the Bishop's conference. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales established a Mental Health Project in response to concerns raised during "Listening 2004: My Family My Church".



The aims of the Bishops' Mental Health Project are to:

- Offer support and resources to local Catholic communities as they respond to those facing mental health challenges
- Identify and highlight good practice in pastoral care for those with mental health needs, their families and carers
- Develop a network of those within the Catholic community in England and Wales for locally-based mental health support

### **Free Christian Counselling**

The Association of Christian Counsellors have set up a COVID-19 Crisis Counselling Support Service (CCSS) for Covid-19 Crisis Counselling available to those who are:

- NHS frontline staff
- working in a residential care home
- bereaved during Covid-19

The crisis counselling support service offers up to ten sessions of counselling on a no-fee basis.

## How to support others and tackle stigma in our parishes

We can help people to seek help by:

- Remembering we are not here to diagnose or treat people
- Advocating and raising awareness in our parishes
- Signposting to professional support
- Giving hope and compassion
- Understanding the signs of struggling
- Checking in with people
- Praying for and with others

# Raising awareness of mental health

Initiatives for parishes and communities which can be done remotely

- Coffee & chat days over Zoom to reduce loneliness and isolation
- Sharing videos to raise awareness of mental health disorders, such as this excellent animation from the World Health Organisation "I have a black dog, his name is depression." (see link in Additional Resources)
- Raise awareness:
  - Sermons around mental health awareness
  - Posters with Samaritans helpline and for domestic abuse helplines
  - Helplines in newsletters, and include articles on mental health awareness
  - Participate in mental health awareness month – MAY
  - Men's' health month which includes mental health – NOVEMBER
- Healthy 'challenges' for self-care activities like walking and meditation practices.



## What to say, what not to say

### What to say

- Offer to listen - "I might not have the answers, but I'm here to listen. You can talk to me whenever you need to."
- Offer support - "I can see that you're going through a tough time, what can I do?"
- Acknowledge the bad - "I'm sorry you're going through this." "That sounds tough."
- Allow them to be as they are - "It's okay not to be okay."

### What not to say

- Should-ing - "You shouldn't let it bother you."
- Ordering someone to feel differently - "Cheer up, pull yourself together."
- Ordering someone to look differently - "Can you put on a smile for today?"
- Judging and labelling - "You're too sensitive."
- Guilting - "You're the only one who is being miserable."
- Always and Never - "You always overreact."
- Minimising feelings - "It's not that bad."
- Comparison - "My situation was worse than yours is."
- Toxic positivity - "Don't worry; be happy." "You'll be fine." "Just be positive."

## Taking care of ourselves so we can take care of others

When we help others, we can reach a point of burnout, feel run down, and feel anxious from the weight of responsibilities to so many others on our shoulders.

We must take care of ourselves in the best way possible, which means prioritising our mental health.

## Taking care of our mental health

We have to look after our mind just as much as we have to take care of our body, and like our physical health, there are lifestyle changes that make a difference to our mental health:

- A phone call with a friend
- Being outside in nature
- Creating moments of enjoyment

- Prayer and worship
- Gratitude
- Breathing exercises
- Limit reading or watching the news
- Avoid misinformation
- Recognise how we're feeling
- Labelling how we're feeling "I feel angry and afraid."
- Exercise (or moving your body)
- Have a routine
- Journal or writing
- Creative expression, painting, writing poems
- Focus on what we can control
- Keeping a mood diary or wellness diary
- Using the NHS mood self-assessment tool which includes the depression index and anxiety index (Link in Third Party Resources)

## Organisations for further resources about mental health (Links in

Additional Resources)

- **Mind**
- **Mental Health UK**
- **Rethink Mental Health**
- **Samaritans**
- **NHS**

## Specific mental health disorders charities

- **Anxiety UK**
- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder UK**

## Organisations which help employers with mental health awareness

- **T (<https://timetochange.org/>)ime to Change**
- **St John Ambulance** Mental Health First Aid Course
- **MHFA England** Mental Health First Aid Course
- **Mental Health at Work** Mental Health First Aid Course

## Urgent support and crisis helplines

### **Mental health critical support and suicide helplines**

- **The Samaritans:** for urgent mental health support and suicidal thoughts <https://www.samaritans.org> or call 116 123 for their helpline
- **Shout Crisis Text line:** for critical mental health support via text messaging. Text "SHOUT" to 85258 to contact the Shout Crisis Text Line, or text "YM" if you're under 19
- **Childline:** for under 19-year-olds, you can also call 0800 1111 to talk to Childline. The number will not appear on your phone bill.

### **Domestic abuse helplines (links in Third Party Resources)**

- **Refuge** – Support for women and children experiencing domestic violence and abuse 0808 2000 247
- **The Hide Out** - Women's Aid website to help young people understand domestic abuse, and what to do if it's happening to them

- **Men's Advice Line** – support for men experiencing domestic violence and abuse 0808 801 0327
- **Respect Not Fear** - Website for young people about domestic violence and abusive relationships

#### **Organisations Supporting Children and Young People (links in Third Party Resources)**

- **Papyrus UK** - Prevention of young suicide
- **Mind** - information for young people age 11-18
- **Young Minds** - for children and young people
- **CYPMHS** - NHS Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (formerly CAMHS)

# Links/ Other Resources

## Legislation:

- Equality Act 2010 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>)

## SafetyToolbox Resources:

- Work Related Stress (<https://app.safetytoolbox.co.uk/resources/119>)
- The Law and Disabled Workers (<https://app.safetytoolbox.co.uk/resources/556>)

## Additional Resources:

- Anxiety UK (<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>)
- Association of Christian Counsellors: Covid-19 Crisis Counselling Support Service (<https://www.acc-uk.org/news/hidden-holding-pages/covid-19-banner-page.html>)
- Catholic Mental Health Project (<http://www.catholicmentalhealthproject.org.uk/covid-19>)
- HSE Disability microsite (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/disability/>)
- HSE: Mental Health Conditions, Work and the Workplace (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mental-health.htm>)
- Mens Advice Line (<https://mensadvice.org.uk/>)
- Mental Health UK: Managing your Mental Health (<https://mentalhealth-uk.org/>)
- MHFA England: Mental Health First Aid Course (<https://mhfaengland.org/>)
- Mind.org: Coronavirus and your wellbeing (<https://www.mind.org.uk/coronavirus-we-are-here-for-you/>)
- Mind.org: Information for young people age 11-18 (<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/for-children-and-young-people/>)
- NHS: CYPMHS Children and Young People's Mental Health Services (<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/nhs-services/mental-health-services/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-services-cypmhs/>)
- NHS Mental Health and Wellbeing (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>)
- NHS: Mood Self-Assessment Tool (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mood-self-assessment/>)
- Papyrus UK: Prevention of Young Suicide (<https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>)
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder UK (<https://www.ptsduk.org/>)
- Refuge (<https://www.refuge.org.uk/>)
- Respect Not Fear (<https://respectnotfear.co.uk/>)
- Rethink Mental Health (<https://www.rethink.org/>)
- Samaritans: How we can Help (<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/>)
- St John Ambulance Mental Health First Aid Course (<https://www.sja.org.uk/courses/workplace-mental-health-first-aid/book/adult-mental-health-first-aid-2-days/>)
- The Hide Out (<https://thehideout.org.uk/>)
- Time to Change (<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>)
- World Health Organisation: "I have a black dog, his name is depression" - film (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiCrniLQGYc&feature=youtu.be>)
- Young Minds - Advice for children and young people ([https://youngminds.org.uk/?gclid=CjwKCAiAxp-ABhALEiwAXm6lyYpYHaGIW4FZoaotowFpUepuwZTaDfkbq\\_b\\_zYF6ViFIVlg2NmvGGu66RoCjpUQAvD\\_BwE](https://youngminds.org.uk/?gclid=CjwKCAiAxp-ABhALEiwAXm6lyYpYHaGIW4FZoaotowFpUepuwZTaDfkbq_b_zYF6ViFIVlg2NmvGGu66RoCjpUQAvD_BwE))

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