



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 30 July 2020
PRESS NOTICE**

NHS mental health crisis helplines rolled out across South West

People across the South West now have access to dedicated 24/7 NHS mental health crisis helplines, to ensure that everyone can get the urgent care they need during the global pandemic.

Although part of the existing NHS Long-term Plan, universal coverage has been brought forward to help people cope with the impact of coronavirus.

Mental health teams across the South West have worked hard to accelerate rollout of the service.

Anyone experiencing a mental health crisis can now call their local helpline at any time, while friends and family members can call on behalf of someone they're worried about.

The lines are also open to professionals such as police and paramedics who may come across people experiencing mental ill health.

Anyone can find details of their local helpline through a new, easy-to-use service-finder on the [NHS website](#) – just type in your postcode or home town in the same way you would search for a local GP or pharmacist.

The new helplines are led by mental health professionals who can refer people to local urgent, acute and routine mental health services. This may include phone and video consultations, as well as urgent face-to-face assessments where necessary.

Michael Marsh, Medical Director at NHS England South West, said:

“To anyone who is struggling with their mental health at this difficult time, our message is clear: the NHS is here for you. All of our mental health services for both adults and children are still available, with many offering more flexible options such as video and phone consultations to improve safety for patients and staff alike. If you need support with your mental health, you can still access existing services or speak to your GP about your needs.

“If you find yourself in crisis, you will now be able to find your local helpline number quickly and easily at NHS.uk to get the help and support that you need. However, if you or someone else is in a serious or life-threatening emergency then you should still call 999 or go to A&E – services are still there for those who need them and you will not be wasting anyone's time.”





“Getting the helplines up and running in a matter of weeks, rather than years, was a monumental effort. I have been humbled by the work and commitment of colleagues in mental health services all over the country. They have made huge changes in normally impossible timeframes, in the most collective and supportive spirit. While this means that helplines will be a work in progress in some places, hard-working mental health teams across the NHS are committed to continuously improving these vital services.”

Dr. Amelia Randle, GP Partner at The Park Medical Practice Mendip, said:

“Throughout this pandemic we have seen an increase in the number of patients presenting with mental health related issues as a result of the enforced measures including social distancing, isolation and frequent hand washing.

Whilst these have helped to achieve the goal of reducing coronavirus infections it has resulted in more and more people struggling with problems such as anxiety and depression.

We know people need support and it’s important people speak to their GP or the many available crisis lines to seek the help they need quickly. The 24/7 Crisis line provides another option for children and adults to access the professional care they need during these unsettling times.

There are also some simple things we can all do to prioritise our physical and mental health at this difficult time such as; exercising regularly, eating healthy food and prioritising time for rest and sleep, making time in your day for an activity you enjoy, scheduling regular contact with family and friends and working with your local community to support others.”

Until now, many people didn’t know where to turn in a mental health crisis and most parts of the country didn’t have accessible helplines.

As a result, many people had no choice but to go to A&E or dial 999 if they needed urgent help even if this wasn’t the best option for their circumstances.

This was already an issue before coronavirus, and the NHS was working to address this by rolling out helplines across the country as part of the NHS Long-term Plan.

This included a target to set up helplines for adults by March 2021 and for children and young people by 2024. The new helplines are open to people of all ages.

With the additional challenge of coronavirus affecting people’s mental health as well as concerns about the risk of infection in NHS premises, trusts were asked to rapidly accelerate their plans to set up helplines.

Now that the whole country is covered, patients can directly access appropriate help without having to go through other emergency pathways.



ENDS

Notes

- Further information on supporting mental health and wellbeing for everyone is available at Every Mind Matters <https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters>
- NHS.UK has further information for those experiencing stress and anxiety, including how to self-refer to psychological therapies: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/>
- Anyone already receiving mental health care should continue accessing care and treatment, including taking their medication. They should talk to the mental health team if they have concerns about how best to access services.
- Anyone who thinks they may need to access NHS support for mental health can look for information on NHS.UK, speak to their GP, check their symptoms and get advice and 111 online, or call 111 if they can't get online.
- Anyone in a serious or life-threatening emergency then you should still call 999 or go to A&E.

- This leaflet and poster outline five simple ways in which people can maintain and improve their mental wellbeing. Translations into 11 languages are now available. <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/take-5-steps-wellbeing-english-and-11-translations>

- Local Providers involved in this initiative:
 - Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust
 - Cornwall Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
 - Devon Partnership NHS Trust
 - Dorset Healthcare NHS Trust
 - Gloucestershire Health and Care
 - Somerset NHS Foundation Trust

- If you are interested in filming or interviewing a spokesperson please contact laura.dimnick@nhs.net

