



Supporting mental health equality through the pandemic

How Centre for Mental Health is working during the coronavirus outbreak to make a difference

The global coronavirus pandemic is not just a physical health emergency. It also has significant impacts on our mental health. At Centre for Mental Health, we are playing our part in responding to the crisis and taking action now to address both the short- and long-term mental health challenges it presents.

Working for equality in mental health is at the heart of everything we do. So our response to coronavirus is centred on reducing inequalities. We want to ensure that everyone's mental health is protected during the crisis, and that those with the greatest risks get the best protection. And we want to ensure that people with mental health difficulties are treated fairly throughout.

Our work to address the pandemic has already started. It comes in three strands, each with a range of actions we are taking to support mental health equality.

1. Supporting people and services

We're sharing essential resources, monitoring and acting on mental health inequalities, and helping people and services across the country to respond to needs as they arise.

2. A platform for lived experience

We're amplifying the voice of lived experience throughout the pandemic, and collating the stories of people across the country about how coronavirus has impacted their mental health.

3. Research and analysis

We're using research evidence to forecast the short- and long-term impact of the pandemic on people's mental health, and publishing briefings on key topics such as collective trauma.

1. Supporting people and services

We are bringing together resources to help people through the crisis and beyond. We have created a dedicated [space on our website](#) with up to date information and advice. We will keep it updated in the next few months and add new resources as they come online.

Centre for Mental Health is leading the mental health inequalities discussion with a mandate from leading national charities. To do this we have brought together a task group of charities to explore inequalities in mental health during both the pandemic and its aftermath. The aim of the group is to identify emerging issues and concerns as they arise in order to make recommendations to government and other national bodies about how they might be prevented or mitigated.

We have also worked with the Association of Mental Health Providers and the NHS Confederation's Mental Health Network to [support voluntary and community organisations](#) to work on an equal footing with NHS and local government bodies locally.

We also host three major national networks: Equally Well, which focuses on physical health inequalities among people living with mental illness, the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition, and the Mental Health Challenge for Local Authorities: a network of more than 100 local authorities with elected member champions for mental health. Through these networks we are supporting local action and sharing innovative approaches to the crisis. We will produce tailored briefings and resources and run webinars with networks to ensure learning is shared quickly and effectively.

We shall be creating a repository of learning over the coming year which will include information about how services have been transformed, the research and policy elements of this will be included to give a complete strategic overview of how the sector responded during Covid 2020.

2. A platform for lived experience

We are launching a major new initiative to publish first person stories about life during the pandemic, [A Year in Our Lives](#). We will be seeking stories from people of all ages and all types of experience to tell us about how their mental health has been affected by coronavirus. Through them, we will build a picture of what it has meant to people living through it.

We are also sharing blogs by people living with mental health difficulties and those working in services. We have already published [blogs covering a range of issues](#) and will continue to share insightful and agenda-setting narratives in the weeks to come.

3. Research and analysis

We are reviewing evidence from previous research to build a picture of the likely effects of the pandemic on the public's mental health. We will be 'forecasting' both the scale and nature of the mental health impacts, both directly from coronavirus itself (for example where people experience trauma and bereavement) and indirectly (for example from losing work or becoming isolated or at risk of illness). We will be sharing evidence over time, as we learn more about the mental health effects of the pandemic and its consequences.

With evidence and research into the mental health impacts of coronavirus now under way internationally, we plan to review the learning as it emerges in order to translate evidence into practical insights to help to inform policies and responses locally and nationally. We will publish briefings on key topics, including the impact of trauma on people of all ages and the most effective responses to it. And we are planning further research, including learning from how the Armed Forces address trauma and how people with long-term physical conditions can be helped most effectively with their mental health during these distressing times.