

Coronavirus and mental wellbeing supporting primary-aged children

This brief guide has been produced to support parents in helping children aged between 4 and 11 with their mental wellbeing. Involving children in your plans for maintaining good health is essential.

Following the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) and helping your child or children to connect with others, be active, keep learning, give or support others and take notice of their environment can make a big difference. [Our guidance](#) shows you how you can do this whilst following the latest Government guidelines. Also see [Children's Society](#) for more ideas on this.

Helping children and young people cope with stress

There are some key points you can consider about how to support your child or young person, including:

Listen and acknowledge: Children and young people may respond to stress in different ways. Signs may be emotional (for example, they may be upset, distressed, anxious, angry or agitated), behavioural (for example, they may become more clingy or more withdrawn, or they may wet the bed), or physical (for example, they may experience stomach aches).

Look out for any changes in their behaviour. Children and young people may feel less anxious if they are able to express and communicate their

feelings in a safe and supportive environment. Children and young people who communicate differently to their peers may rely on you to interpret their feelings. Listen to them, acknowledge their concern and give them extra love and attention if they need it.

Children may feel sad, angry, or afraid. Peers may share false information but parents or carers can correct the misinformation. Older children may focus on details of the situation and want to talk about it all the time, or not want to talk about it at all. They may have trouble concentrating. Cornwall Council has a [dedicated page about Coronavirus](#) which includes guides in easy read, which may help you explain to your child or children about the virus. Be as truthful as possible - not avoiding the 'scary topic' but engaging in a way that is appropriate for them. See overleaf for suggestions.



[Children's guide to the coronavirus](#)

The Children's guide aims to answer questions, tell children how to stay safe and protect other people and how to make the best of their time at home.

[Coronavirus – A book for children](#)

This is an Illustrated book about the coronavirus. This is freely available on Amazon. Guide to the Coronavirus

[Unicef 8 top tips](#)

Unicef provide information on how to talk to your child about Covid-19. This includes 8 top tips to help comfort and protect children

[Mencap](#)

Provide an easy read guide and information about Coronavirus

[Little Puddins](#)

Provides stories and information to support children with autism

Arm yourself with the facts

Children will ask questions, and it will help if you are able to pass on information that is factual as best as you can. It can be very hard to know whether or not social media posts are true, so try not to rely on updates from there. For this reason, try to stay up-to-date on what's happening by using the [Government website](#), See below for age-appropriate news site recommendations. Also, the [NHS common questions](#) about the virus can also be useful if you are worried about symptoms someone has in your family.

Talk with your children

If your child is concerned about the coronavirus, acknowledge that is OK and normal. Listen to their concerns and talk with them about them, in a thoughtful and age appropriate way. Reassure them by being armed with the facts - let them know that you are following guidance and keeping them safe. Let them know that the events will pass, and that you are there for them. Attend to their concerns but help them keep them in perspective.

Play with your children

It is important to talk and play with your children. Find ways of having fun together as well as learning together. There are many ways of doing this - playing board games; cooking together; exercising together; doing art and crafts together; having a family walk together.

Self-Care

Now more than ever, it's important that we look after our physical and mental health. In this case, self-care is about the things you can do to help look after your child's health. It can be helpful to have some suggestions for what these might be in case you're stuck for ideas. Think about some activities that can help your children when they are feeling overwhelmed, like breathing techniques, writing down how they feel or playing music or dancing. It's up to you to decide what helps. If it works, keep doing it. If it doesn't, stop and try something else.

Wellbeing Apps

There are now many apps available to help improve your child's general wellbeing, from meditation techniques to family-based games designed to help kids practise understanding their feelings: www.internetmatters.org/resources/wellbeing-apps-guide-for-kids

Stick to a normal routine

With so much uncertainty, sticking to a routine can really help maintain a sense of normality. Now that lots of children are staying home from school, it's even more important to try to forge a new kind of normal. You might want to add extra activities into your day that make you feel calm but try to keep to your regular daily schedule as much as possible. [Public Health England](#) have provided some specific advice to support children with their mental wellbeing.

Home schooling

Now that schools in England are closed to all but the vulnerable children and children of keyworkers, parents and carers are tasked with keeping children educated and entertained at home. Two teachers who also run an activity business have these [five top tips](#) on how to keep your kids engaged, learning, healthy and happy while schools are closed because of coronavirus.

You can't pour from an empty cup

The current Covid outbreak situation is new to us all and being at home all day every day is a new situation for many of us too. Whilst looking after your children is an important focus, it's also important to remember to put plans in place to take care of yourself. Having good mental health helps us relax more, achieve more and enjoy our lives more. The NHS [Every Mind Matters](#) website has expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing. Also see the [Cornwall Council website](#) for more information about the Five Ways to Wellbeing. There are also many [NHS assessed apps](#) to support wellbeing.

Sources of support

There is a range of support available to help maintain your child's mental wellbeing.

Together For Families

Together for Families provides support for parents and carers as well as young people. As well as providing useful contacts and forums to connect with, [their web page](#) is updated weekly to provide relevant content to help you with your children. The Cornwall Council web site also has information about how to start a conversation with children.

www.cornwall.gov.uk/education-and-learning/coronavirus-advice-for-children-and-families/emotional-resilience-and-mental-health/emotional-resilience-for-parents-and-carers/how-to-start-conversations-about-mental-health/

Your Way

Quality youth services in Cornwall for and with young people aged 10 and over. Offering support digitally during the Coronavirus outbreak, and includes a live chat option <https://your-way.org.uk/>

Start Now Cornwall

Start Now is a partnership programme to develop resilience and mental well-being in young people. Information about the 5 Ways to Wellbeing, alongside how and where to access help for young people aged 10 – 16:

www.startnowcornwall.org.uk

Headstart Kernow provide a range of sources of information and advice about supporting the emotional wellbeing of children and young people: www.headstartkernow.org.uk/sec-sch-support/covid-19

Kooth

Kooth provides free, safe and anonymous online counselling support and advice for 11-19 year olds in Cornwall: www.kooth.com

The Wave Project

Cornwall surf therapy charity who have produced some weekly activity books, full of games and ideas. New books online each week. Their wellbeing guide is full of practical tips and resources that may help you cope during isolation by staying positive and mentally well - www.waveproject.co.uk

The Family Information Service provide information, advice and support that is available to families and professionals working alongside them. You can contact them on **0800 587 8191** or **01872 323 535**; email: fis@cornwall.gov.uk www.supportincornwall.org.uk/kb5/cornwall/directory/home.page

To talk to someone about your mental wellbeing you can call the 24/7 NHS mental health telephone support, advice and triage help line - **0800 038 5300**. Support is available to anyone, regardless of age, all day every day. If you or someone you know feels they need to access urgent mental health support, they will listen to you and assess how best to help.

Early Help Hub

Identifies the most appropriate Early Help service for a child or young person from pre-birth up to 18, or 25 where young people have special educational needs or a disability www.cornwall.gov.uk/earlyhelphub

Call: **01872 322277**

email: earlyhelphub@cornwall.gov.uk

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

For specialist mental health support for parents/carers and under-fives please contact the early help hub: Call: **01872 322277** for a referral to Thriving Together for consultation advice and therapeutic support. Email: earlyhelphub@cornwall.gov.uk 5-11 years referrals continue to be received via these Early Hub contact details.

Kernow Young Carers

Support children and young people who have caring responsibilities for a family member who may be affected by ill health, disability, mental ill health or substance misuse. During the coronavirus outbreak families are still receiving 1:1 support via phone, and they are considering options for virtual groups kernowyoungcarers@actionforchildren.org.uk Call: **01872 321486**

Wild Young Parents help support the most vulnerable young families through this crisis. Offices are currently closed but you can contact them on hello@wildproject.org.uk or Instagram/Facebook: [wildyoungparentsproject](https://www.instagram.com/wildyoungparentsproject) www.wildproject.org.uk

Childline

Help and advice about a wide range of issues for children and young people up to the age of 19, talk to a counsellor online, send an email or post on the message boards. Call: **0800 1111**

www.childline.org.uk Information for parents and carers:

NSPCC

Provides advice and support for children, young people, parents and carers. Call the helpline on **0800 800 5000** or email: help@nspcc.org.uk

See their webpage: www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-support-children-families-parents

Young Minds

UK Charity for children and young people's mental health. Their website offers training, resources and support www.youngminds.org.uk
Call the Parents Helpline: **0800 802 5544**

Every Mind Matters

The [NHS One You](#) campaign has produced a guide to Coronavirus, recognising that the outbreak may cause you to feel anxious, stressed, worried, sad, helpless, overwhelmed, confused or angry. It's important to remember it is OK to feel this way and that everyone reacts differently to different events.

There are some simple things you can do to help you take care of your mental health and wellbeing during times of uncertainty – and doing so will help you think clearly and make sure you are able to look after yourself and those you care about.

Resources to support parenting during COVID-19

Young Minds – How to support your child if they are feeling anxious about Coronavirus.

[How to support your child coronavirus](#)

Young Minds provides 10 top tips when talking to children about the Coronavirus.

[Talking to your child about coronavirus](#)

Special Needs Jungle - has produced this useful article.

[Calming Coronavirus anxiety in children \(and everyone else\)](#)

Anna Freud Centre

This video provides guidance to parents and carers about how to help children and young people manage their mental health and wellbeing during the Coronavirus.

[Supporting parents and carers through disruption](#)

Place2Be

Guide to helping parents answer questions from their primary aged children and to support family wellbeing.

[Coronavirus: Helpful information to answer questions from children](#)

The British Psychological Society

Psychologists from the British Psychological Society have produced guidance for key workers and their children on navigating the emotional effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/psychologists-produce-advice-key-workers-and-their-children

Resources to support learning from home

In addition to the below suggested sources of information, check your child's school website for information about remote learning.

Together for Families

Cornwall's service for children, young people and families. Provides information and resources to support the emotional resilience and mental health of families. [Together for Families](#)

Hungry Little Minds

Government campaign for 0-5 year olds for simple, fun activities. [Hungry Little Minds](#)

Mentally Healthy Schools

A free toolkit with resources and tips to help you address anxiety arising from these challenging times. [Mentally Healthy Schools](#)

ThinkUKnow

Age-related activity packs with simple 15-minute activities you can do with your child to support their online safety at home. [ThinkUknow](#)

UK Safer Internet Centre

Online safety tips, advice and resources to help children and young people stay safe online. [UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

Resources for age-appropriate news information

Access reliable sources of news that is available in an age-appropriate format will help explain what is happening in the world and advise focusing on the news only at certain times of the day to avoid becoming overloaded.

BBC Newsround

Offers daily stories on national, international, sports, entertainment and science news, as well as inspiring stories about children. [BBC Newsround](#)

Twinkl Newsroom

Publishes age-appropriate news items and activities daily, for lower and upper KS2. [Twinkl Newsroom](#)

Other useful resources for families

Institute of Health Visiting

Website with information about parenting generally, and through Coronavirus. [Institute of Health Visiting](#)

Penhaligon's Friends

Cornwall children's bereavement charity, offering advice, guidance and support. [Penhaligon's Friends](#)

Mental Health Safety Plans

A safety plan is for someone to use when they are feeling that their mental health and wellbeing is low, and/or that they are at risk of self-harm or acting on suicidal thoughts – a plan to remind themselves of reasons to live, family and friends they can talk with and things that can make them feel strong.

By having a safety plan, you're making sure that there are strategies you can use to keep yourself safe, which can help you feel more in control when everything feels out of control. Think of your safety plan as your 'mental health first-aid kit'; it includes different things that will help you through a crisis.

Everyone's plan is personal and different, but it can help by walking someone through their steps to keep them safe. For people who self-harm or feel suicidal it's not designed to be their only support, but can help as part of a wider approach to supporting their wellbeing.

More information about how parents can support their children to create a safety plan, alongside signposting to further sources of support, access to free online suicide prevention and general wellbeing training for adults, and Papyrus' children's safety plan can be found on the [Cornwall Council website](#).

Useful links

The **Department for Education** has set up a helpline to answer questions about coronavirus related to education. Phone: **0800 046 8687**
Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Parent Zone advice and information for parents from the experts on digital family life
www.parentzone.org.uk