

**Covid recovery:**  
Supporting young  
people's mental health



# Why is supporting mental health in young people important?

Realise has created this guide to help employers, parents and carers to support mental health in young people. It explains how to support young people, what Realise are able to offer our apprentices, signs to look out for if your child or apprentice is struggling with their mental wellbeing, and advice on where to get help and support.

Mental health issues affect nearly every one of us at some time in our lives. With the recent pandemic there has been a rise in the numbers of young people who are struggling with their mental health.

The impact of the pandemic has pushed many of us, through no fault of our own, to spend much more time alone or with the intensity of living much more closely with family members. With many young people this has taken its toll.

During lockdown many young people who were put in a position where they had to study at home did not have the right resources, equipment, internet connection or even somewhere to work. They also did not have the communication with others that they really needed at this time.

Mind, a mental health charity, carried out extensive research and the findings were published in July 2021 that detail the ongoing impact of the pandemic on mental health. The findings revealed that more than two-thirds of parents are very concerned about the long-term impact of coronavirus on their child's mental health and many young people have expressed they are finding it hard to cope.

The report details how young people who struggle with their mental health were more likely to be using negative coping strategies, like self-harm, than adults. Isolation and loneliness have made people's mental health worse – with young people particularly badly affected and that 68% of young people with mental health problems say it has got worse since the first national lockdown and 18% experienced mental health distress for the first time during the pandemic.

Furthermore, 48% of young people have rarely or not felt close to people recently, and 44% rarely feel optimistic, or don't feel optimistic, about the future.

## One young person said:

*"Recently my anxiety has spiked so much that I can't even do mundane tasks like using a printer without shaking. I can't sit in a class, I find difficult without shaking, I can't speak in front of a class without shaking."*

As well as the pandemic some learners have had other issues to cope with at the same time which has caused added pressure to their mental health.

- Homelessness
- Bereavement
- Drug and alcohol issues
- Sexual harassment
- Peer on peer abuse (including cyberbullying)
- Historical abuse
- Domestic abuse (there has been an increase in this too during lockdown)
- Relationship issues

## Warning signs to be aware of?

It's important to be aware of the warning signs that might be an indicator that a young person could be struggling with their mental health. You may notice certain changes in their appearance, their demeanour, their attitude, commitment to their job and communication with others, either within the family unit, their peer group or at work.

### Signs to look out for that they may be struggling with mental ill health

- They are worried about their mental health
- They have difficulty sleeping
- Feeling sad
- Hallucinating
- Anxious
- Guilt
- Hearing voices
- Shaking
- Feeling stressed
- Depressed
- Angry
- Low self-esteem
- Low mood
- Mood swings
- Negative thinking
- Withdrawn
- They stop communicating with friends, family & colleagues
- Racing thoughts
- Weight loss or weight gain
- Irritable
- Don't want to get up in the morning

Clearly some of the above when being experienced alone or even two or three at a time may not mean they are experiencing mental health issues. For example, most young people can be irritable and have trouble getting up in the morning. However, coupled with more serious signs they may need some support.

### Tips to support mental health in young people

- Listen to them, let them talk about what they are feeling
- Encourage communication with others
- Make sure they are not spending too much time alone
- Encourage them to look after themselves. Self-care is really important, encourage breaks, going for a walk, reading a book or any activity they enjoy
- Reassure that they are not alone and there is support for them
- Direct them to see their GP as soon as possible, if necessary, support them in making the call. The GP is always the first port of call for anyone experiencing mental health issues. They can advise whether there are other NHS support services available, like counselling. They may feel it's appropriate to start medication.



### Encourage them to:

- Arrange a day out with friends that they have not seen for a while
- Try switching off the TV to talk or play a game with friends or family
- Have lunch with a friend or colleague
- Visit a friend or family member who needs support or company
- Volunteer at a local school, hospital or community group, find out how to volunteer on the GOV.UK website
- Make the most of technology to stay in touch with friends and family. Video-chat apps like Skype, WhatsApp and FaceTime are useful, especially if you live far apart

## What support is available from Realise?

Realise have introduced an app for our learners to reach out to get support or raise any mental health concerns, the app is called Tootoot. Each learner is given a login to our safeguarding and wellbeing support system where they can communicate directly with our safeguarding team. The team is made up of Realise safeguarding deputies who are trained mental health first aiders and skilled at finding the right local support for each learner.

Sometimes learners don't want to contact the team directly but if they speak to their main contact or their employer, then they can contact us directly on their behalf.

There are also some links to safeguarding and wellbeing support on our website in case support is needed out of hours.

[Welfare support - Realise \(realisetraining.com\)](https://realisetraining.com)



# Where to get help and support for young people outside of Realise?

For further support with mental health, we recommend an appointment with a GP as the first step. There's a range of resources available online to support with mental health in young people. We've put together a list of some of them, here:

- <https://www.headstogether.org.uk/>

and for those self-isolating:

- <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/looking-after-your-mental-health-while-self-isolating/>
- <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/coronavirus-and-mental-health>
- <https://hubofhope.co.uk/> - this website has support for many different wellbeing issues and will show you the support available when you add their postcode
- [5 steps to mental wellbeing - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Further support:

- [The Mix has more advice about looking after yourself online](#) when it comes to stress or worries from social media, as well as a whole section to help you with your sleep.
- You can check out the [Anna Freud Centre for information about exercise as mental self-care](#) if DJ Malik got your attention.
- [Childline's Calm Zone](#) has a load of ideas to help you chill out, de-stress and embrace the calm.
- [Association for Young People's Health - An independent voice for young people's health. \(youngpeopleshealth.org.uk\)](http://youngpeopleshealth.org.uk)

## Coronavirus advice

Get advice about coronavirus and looking after your mental wellbeing:

- [Every Mind Matters: how to look after your mental wellbeing while staying at home](#)
- [Mind: Coronavirus and your wellbeing](#)



**Covid Recovery Guide  
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