

[PHE launches new Psychological First Aid training](#)

From Monday 22 February, people who care for or work with children and young people aged up to 25 who have been affected by COVID-19 (or other emergencies or individual crises) will be able to access a new online [Psychological First Aid \(PFA\) training course](#).

The [COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on children](#), with many reporting that it has made them feel more stressed, lonely and worried.

The online course, developed by Public Health England (PHE), offers training on how to provide practical and emotional support to children and young people affected by emergencies or crisis situations. Children and young people can be very resilient, but crises such as COVID-19 can severely impact their mental health. Getting the right support early on can help prevent problems occurring or worsening.

Those completing the training will be equipped to better identify those children that are in distress and provide support to help them feel safe, connected and able to take steps to help themselves during the pandemic or other crisis situations.

It's available for all frontline workers such as teachers, health and social workers, charity and community volunteers and anyone who cares for or is regularly in contact with children and young people aged up to 25, including parents and caregivers. It's free, takes about 3 hours to complete (split into 3 sessions that the learner can complete at their own pace) and no previous qualifications are required.

On completion, participants will have an understanding of what PFA is, be able to identify who would benefit from support and how best to give help across the different age groups and also for those who might need extra support because of different needs.

Clare Perkins, Director of the Mental Health Programme at PHE, said:

The pandemic has caused significant disruption to all of our daily lives. Children are among the worse impacted, being stuck at home and not able to have the essential social interactions with their friends. Many young people are anxious and worried about their future in these uncertain times.

Children and young people will react to the COVID-19 pandemic in different ways. The PFA training course will help professionals, volunteers, parents and carers better identify the signs of those who are struggling and give them timely effective support that is right for them – helping them feel safe and able to help themselves.

PFA is a globally recognised training programme designed to support people during or in the aftermath of a serious event. PHE has adapted this training for those supporting children and young people with advice from a range of experts, including NHS England, the Department for Education and the British Red Cross and is being made available online by social learning platform, [Future Learn](#).

This new course follows the success of the [PFA training for COVID-19](#) that PHE launched in June 2020 which to date has received over 100,000 sign-ups from frontline workers and volunteers. The UK Public Health Rapid Support Team also launched last week [an adaption of the PFA course for use in African countries affected by COVID-19](#).

Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford said:

This new training module is being introduced at an important time. I know how difficult the pandemic has been for children and young people across the country, and this additional support for those working with them every day – whether they are parents and carers, teachers, health and social care workers, or volunteers – is timely and necessary.

It builds on our commitment to supporting children and young people's mental health now and over the long-term, and the expertise already available like our £8 million Wellbeing for Education Return programme. This includes a webinar for education staff that draws on and complements this Psychological First Aid e-learning. They will both be of enormous value to those who want to help and improve children and young people's mental wellbeing, including teachers.

Minister for Mental Health Nadine Dorries said:

Children and young people have been uniquely challenged by the events of the last year. I remain absolutely committed to supporting them through this pandemic and beyond, ensuring we equip them with the tools and support they need to stay mentally well.

This training will ensure those who work with children and young people – including parents and caregivers – can support their wellbeing by identifying signs of distress and helping them access the support they need.

We know that while children can be very resilient, crises or emergencies can have a huge impact on their mental health and we must continue to ensure they can access the support they need.

Claire Murdoch, NHS Mental Health Director, said:

The pandemic has turned our lives upside down and hit children and young people particularly hard. Working with our partners, we have been doing everything possible to make sure that they are fully supported and this online training will be invaluable in helping people to understand how best to offer the right support at the right time.

It has been a tough year, but the NHS is here for children's mental health, so anyone who is struggling should come forward for the help they need.

Dr Sarah Davidson, Head of Psychosocial and Mental Health, British Red Cross, said:

This resource from PHE enables a thoughtful, developmentally appropriate response to children and young people who have experienced a crisis. Clear and including helpful links to other resources, it will help people to know how to be supportive whilst avoiding further harm.

The course is free for all who care for and work with children and young people aged between 0 and 25. No previous qualifications are required to enrol.

For guidance for the public on the mental health and wellbeing aspects of coronavirus please visit [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and [Every Mind Matters](https://www.everymindmatters.org/).

The PFA course is a training resource to equip people with information to help others. It is not intended as a therapeutic intervention for those who are experiencing distress or crisis. Anyone needing help should visit [NHS 111 website](https://www.nhs.uk), call 111 or contact their GP.

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