

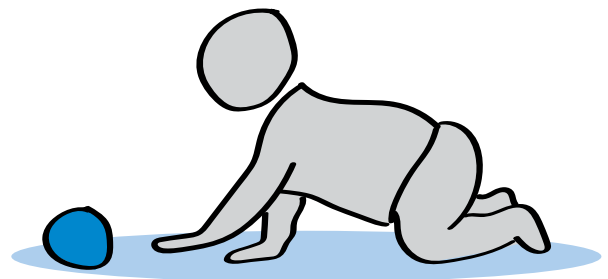
Coronavirus and mental wellbeing – supporting very young children (aged under 5)

This brief guide has been produced to support parents in helping children aged under 5 with their mental wellbeing due to the Coronavirus outbreak, when parents are being asked to stay at home and, as many schools and early years providers have closed, a large number of children are at home with their parents.

Caring for young children during the Coronavirus outbreak

Very young children may not understand or be able to process the current coronavirus situation, but they do pick up on the emotional atmosphere in the home. If parents/carers or other family members are concerned, worried, distressed, or simply rather confused and lost in the lack of regular routines, young children pick this up. They may then become worried or distressed themselves and may regress to earlier patterns of behaviour. These may include; becoming more distressed; wanting to remain close to parents; they may have toileting accidents or get upset at bedtime; they may become worried about being separated from parents/carers; they may also have difficulty in sleeping or have tantrums.

These are signs of increased distress, and requires parents/ carers to offer reassurance, patience, comfort, hugs, and extra time playing and reading stories.



Look out for any changes in 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.

Talking about Coronavirus with your child

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 below for suggestions.

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

Children's Commissioner 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.

[Guide to the Coronavirus](#)

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

[Information about Coronavirus](#)

[Mencap provide easy read information about the coronavirus.](#)

[What is the Coronavirus?](#)

Little Puddins Autism Educator
Coronavirus social story for children with autism.

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. 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. This might involve taking part in online activity sessions, like virtual zoo tours or moving to music sessions to replace visits out you might usually have and to help give some focus and structure to your day.

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. There are also useful contacts and forums to connect with via [their web page](#), which is updated weekly. 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/

NHS 24/7 helpline

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 053 3800**. 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** or email: earlyhelphub@cornwall.gov.uk and ask for a Thriving Together referral. Consultation and therapeutic support is available.

Start Now provides information on how to look after your emotional wellbeing

www.startnowcornwall.org.uk/coronavirus

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

Your Way have extended opening hours and offer support via The Your Way Live chat (everyday 9am-9pm); Skype – request through live chat; Telephone – **01872 222447**; Text – request through live chat through www.your-way.org.uk/coronavirus

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

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

Information for parents and carers: www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/coronavirus-advice-support-children-families-parents

MindEd

Safe and reliable advice about children and young people's mental health, created by experts and parents together. www.mindedforfamilies.org.uk/young-people

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.

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