

IIMHL Leadership Briefing LIX

English COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan: Our plan to prevent, mitigate and respond to the mental health impacts of the pandemic during 2021 to 2022

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Introduction

The COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action was published by the Department of Health and Social Care at the end of March 2021. The plan sets out an ambitious, cross-government, whole-person approach for England to promote positive mental health and supporting people living with mental illness to recover and live well.

While this plan sets out what government will do in the coming year, it is also a call to action for the whole of society, for local communities, families and for individuals, who can take simple steps to look after their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around them – and can reach out for support, including from mental health services when necessary.

[www.gov.uk – Department of Social Care and Cabinet Office:](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-recovery-action-plan) [COVID-19 mental health and wellbeing recovery action plan](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-recovery-action-plan)

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COVID-19 has affected all our lives and our livelihoods in profound ways over the last year. The nation has come together to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe, but there has been a cost. The virus itself, and the necessary measures to contain its spread, have triggered feelings of worry, distress or loneliness for many of us.

In the plan it is acknowledged that some people's mental health has taken a harder, longer-lasting hit during the pandemic. Groups who had the highest risk of mental ill-health before COVID, including those living with pre-existing conditions, seem to have been worst affected. The mental health impacts of the pandemic have also been felt keenly by those directly affected by the virus – people who have been bereaved, people who have survived an acute illness, people living with long COVID, and our amazing frontline and key workers.

Yet despite these challenges, the plan describes how the wide-ranging effects of the pandemic have also presented a unique opportunity to come together across government and focus on supporting the nation's mental health.

The plan for 2021 to 2022 sets out an ambitious cross-government, whole-person approach to promote good mental health and support people living with mental illness to recover and live well. It builds on collaboration during the pandemic across government departments, health and care organisations, local government, and voluntary, community and private sector organisations to prevent and mitigate some of the most pressing impacts of COVID-19 on the nation's mental health and wellbeing and support people who are struggling.

While this plan sets out what government will do in the coming year, it is also a call to action for the whole of society, for local communities, families and for individuals, who can take simple steps to look after their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of those around them, and can reach out for support, including from mental health services when necessary. The government has stated that it wants this plan to be delivered with the same spirit of ambition, creativity, compassion and collective effort that has characterised the nation's response to the pandemic's threat.

The plan recognises that this is only the beginning and that there is much more work to do. It emphasises the need to continue to work with a wide-ranging coalition of national government departments, local councils, businesses, charities and experts by experience over the next year to identify where we need to focus and go further, together.

While the majority of this action plan applies to England only, mental health remains a UK-wide priority and all four nations are taking steps to address the mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/973936/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-recovery-action-plan.pdf