COVID-19: impact on mental health

August 2020

**Title:** MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND COVID-19. PREPARING FOR THE RISING TIDE

NHS Reset | NHS Confederation | August 2020

Covid-19 has and will continue to have huge implications for mental health providers and the individuals they support. During the peak of the crisis, there was a 30-40 per cent reduction in mental health referrals. Since the lift in lockdown restrictions, providers anecdotally report that referrals are rising to above pre-COVID-19 levels. They are seeing patients with more significant needs; a higher proportion of patients are accessing services for the first time; and there are increased Mental Health Act presentations.

This report from the NHS Reset campaign considers what mental health services need to prepare for the expected surge in demand. It also highlights how the health and care system can 'reset' the way care and support are planned and delivered.

Full report: [Mental health services and Covid-19. Preparing for the rising tide](https://www.nhsconfed.org/-/media/Confederation/Files/Publications/Documents/Report_Mental-health-services-NHS-Reset_FNL.pdf)

**Title**: THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM? HOW PRIMARY CARE NETWORKS AND MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDERS CAN PREPARE FOR RISING DEMAND FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

NHS Confederation 4th August 2020

In June 2020, the NHS Confederation’s Mental Health Network and PCN Network convened senior leaders to discuss how both sectors can work together to prepare for the expected increase in demand for mental health support following the COVID-19 outbreak.

This briefing sets out where opportunities may lie and possible approaches mental health providers and primary care networks (PCNs) may wish to take over the coming months to improve partnership working.

Key points:

* The impact of the pandemic on the nation’s mental health has seen an increase in demand for both common mental disorders and more serious mental illnesses. Improving integration between primary and secondary mental health services at this time is vital.
* PCN and mental health leaders share the view that the health and care system can best meet the demand by taking steps in four key areas: building up relationships at all levels between mental health providers and PCNs; making best use of existing and new PCN workforce; improving links between NHS and third sector organisations; and sharing the innovative and effective approaches that local areas are already implementing.
* The new Community Mental Health Framework expects formal links to be made between PCNs and mental health providers. Where strong and trusting links have been formed, referral routes can be flexible, and step-down and preventative support are improved.
* Local areas are using innovative approaches to overcoming workforce challenges, but there is more to do to spread good practice and embed dedicated mental health support throughout primary care.
* Many areas have reported challenges in supporting the mental health of children and young people in primary care and we expect this group to be particularly affected by the impact COVID-19. A bespoke approach for children and young people will be needed.

Full report: [The calm before the storm? How primary care networks and mental health providers can prepare for rising demand for mental health services](https://www.nhsconfed.org/-/media/Confederation/Files/Publications/Documents/The-calm-before-the-storm_FNL.pdf)

**Title:** Early impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health care and on people with mental health conditions

Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology | 17th August 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has many potential impacts on people with mental health conditions and on mental health care, including direct consequences of infection, effects of infection control measures and subsequent societal changes.

This paper aimed to map early impacts of the pandemic on people with pre-existing mental health conditions and services they use, and to identify individual and service-level strategies adopted to manage these.

Full document: [Early impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health care and on people with mental health conditions: framework synthesis of international experiences and responses](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s00127-020-01924-7.pdf)

**TITLE:**  CORONAVIRUS AND DEPRESSION IN ADULTS, GREAT BRITAIN

Office for National Statistics | updated 18th August 2020

A new statistical release from the ONS, provides an insight into the mental health of adults during the coronavirus pandemic. Revisiting this same group of adults before and during the pandemic provides a unique insight into how their symptoms of depression have changed over time.

#### **Main points**

* Almost one in five adults (19.2%) were likely to be experiencing some form of depression during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in June 2020; this had almost doubled from around 1 in 10 (9.7%) before the pandemic (July 2019 to March 2020).
* One in eight adults (12.9%) developed moderate to severe depressive symptoms during the pandemic, while a further 6.2% of the population continued to experience this level of depressive symptoms; around 1 in 25 adults (3.5%) saw an improvement over this period.
* Adults who were aged 16 to 39 years old, female, unable to afford an unexpected expense, or disabled were the most likely to experience some form of depression during the pandemic.
* Feeling stressed or anxious was the most common way adults experiencing some form of depression felt their well-being was being affected, with 84.9% stating this.
* Over two in five (42.2%) adults experiencing some form of depression during the pandemic said their relationships were being affected, compared with one in five (20.7%) adults with no or mild depressive symptoms.

Full detail: [Coronavirus and depression in adults, Great Britain](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/coronavirusanddepressioninadultsgreatbritain/june2020)

**TITLE**: HOW HAS COVID-19 AND ASSOCIATED LOCKDOWN MEASURES AFFECTED LONELINESS IN THE UK?

What Works Centre for Wellbeing | 26th August 2020

This briefing highlights findings from the Covid Social Study, as part of ongoing data analysis work with University College London. This study has surveyed over 70,000 people since March 2020, asking different questions about their experiences and wellbeing over the past few months, including asking people about loneliness.

The study found that:

* People who felt most lonely prior to Covid in the UK now have even higher levels of loneliness. This increase began as physical distancing and lockdown measures were introduced in the UK, in March 2020.
* Adults most at risk of being lonely, and increasingly so over this period, have one or more of the following characteristics: they are young, living alone, on low incomes, out of work and, or with a mental health condition.
* The impact on wellbeing from people at risk of loneliness is likely to be compounded by other economic and social impacts experienced by the same people, such as those experiencing job losses and health anxieties.

Full detail: [How has Covid-19 and associated lockdown measures affected loneliness in the UK?](https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/COVID-LONELINESS-2020.pdf)

**Title**: EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON ANXIETY, DEPRESSION AND OTHER MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES: A WORLDWIDE SCOPE REVIEW

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic has spread across the world and, along with it, a considerable degree of fear and uncertainties that impact on various aspects of societal life, including on people’s Mental Health (MH). Understanding how the COVID-19 pandemic affects MH can help to implement interventions and adequate public policies, providing more effective responses to mitigate its effects.

Objectives: To summarize the scientific evidence on the possible influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on MH, critically evaluating the methods and scientific validity of the studies found, in addition to summarizing the recommendations on strategic measures to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on MH.

Methodology: The current scoping review was conducted from a screening of 465 articles on COVID-19 and MH outcomes, based on the main database of scientific references on health, assessed throughout PubMed.

Result: Of the 43 papers selected for summary and critical analysis 77% (n=33) indicated a relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and anxiety symptoms, 56% (n=26)with depression or depressive symptoms, seven with changes in sleep pattern and seven with obsessive behaviours or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. In addition to studies that showed an influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), psychological distress, stress and fear. Most of the studies were carried out in China, and primarily evaluated the presence of anxiety and depression, through scales and questionnaires. Health professionals and the elderly were cited among the most affected population groups.

Conclusions: Most studies presented significant methodological limits. Investments in new research, with controlled studies, including representative and randomized samples, and longitudinal follow-up, are necessary, to further explore the relationships between the COVID-19 pandemic and people's MH and long-term effects. Pending such studies, given the effects (during and after) of previous epidemics on MH, government measures need to be implemented to reduce the potential catastrophic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on MH, and the burden that will remain after the pandemic. The timely identification of psychological distress and the identification of MH needs among populations, facilitate the development of targeted psychological interventions, in addition to the organization of health services and systems, during the pandemic.

Full document: [Effects of COVID-19 on Anxiety, Depression and Other Mental Health Issues: A worldwide scope review.](https://assets.researchsquare.com/files/rs-58186/v1/534f549a-b8c0-431c-a9f7-98b2f93a8d95.pdf)

**Title**: IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND INITIAL PERIOD OF LOCKDOWN ON THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF ADULTS IN THE UK

BJPsych Open | 17th August 2020

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health and wellbeing were assessed in a convenience sample of 600 UK adults, using a cross-sectional design. Recruited over 2 weeks during the initial phase of lockdown, participants completed an online survey that included COVID-19-related questions, the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale, the World Health Organization (Five) Well-Being Index and the Oxford Capabilities Questionnaire for Mental Health.

Self-isolating before lockdown, increased feelings of isolation since lockdown and having COVID-19-related livelihood concerns were associated with poorer mental health, well-being and quality of life.

Perceiving increased kindness, community connectedness and being an essential worker were associated with better mental health and well-being outcomes.

Full document: [Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and initial period of lockdown on the mental health and well-being of adults in the UK](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7431844/pdf/S2056472420000794a.pdf)

**Title:** Mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: Effects of stay-at-home policies, social distancing behavior, and social resources

Psychiatry Research | Volume 293, November 2020

Social distancing is the most visible public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but its implications for mental health are unknown.

In a nationwide online sample of 435 U.S. adults, conducted in March 2020 as the pandemic accelerated and states implemented stay-at-home orders, we examined whether stay-at-home orders and individuals’ personal distancing behavior were associated with symptoms of depression, generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), intrusive thoughts, insomnia, and acute stress.

Stay-at-home order status and personal distancing were independently associated with higher symptoms, beyond protective effects of available social resources (social support and social network size).

A subsample of 118 participants who had completed symptom measures earlier in the outbreak (February 2020) showed increases in depression and GAD between February and March, and personal distancing behavior was associated with these increases.

Findings suggest that there are negative mental health correlates of social distancing, which should be addressed in research, policy, and clinical approaches to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Full document: [Mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: Effects of stay-at-home policies, social distancing behavior, and social resources](https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/pii/S0165178120315419?token=B7BEBE9CB4CB060486E507E3A901B0D9CB46C976AB903964CECC2BBB75E1DE98352F60C45ADCE4ADF13B884B58E1BFDA)

**Title**: RECOGNISING AND RESPONDING TO THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

Child and Adolescent Mental Health | Vol. 25, No. 3, 2020, pp. 169–170

The COVID-19 pandemic has been repeatedly described as a ‘perfect storm’ for mental health, and this description is certainly fitting for the mental health of young people, but will this ‘perfect storm’ flood our services?

Full paper: [Debate: Recognising and responding to the mental health needs of young people in the era of COVID-19](https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/camh.12414)

**Title**: EMERGING FROM COVID-19: PRIORITISING THE BURDEN OF LONELINESS IN OLDER PEOPLE

British Journal of General Practice | August 2020; 70 (697): 382

Public health responses to COVID-19 have mandated the social isolation of millions of older people globally. While reducing viral transmission, this has undoubtedly exacerbated the pre-existing pandemic of loneliness among older adults, amplifying the associated burden of physical and mental ill-health. As governments begin to unlock their societies, they now have an opportunity to re-prioritise this longstanding public health emergency.

While those aged over 75 are at increased risk of severe COVID-19 disease and death,older adults are also vulnerable to the health impacts of prolonged isolation. Loneliness is often stigmatised, trivialised, or ignored, despite its strong association with physical and psychological morbidity, and premature mortality. Such marginalisation is particularly prevalent among older adults, representing an increasingly urgent public health issue in the ageing global population.

Full paper: [Emerging from COVID-19: prioritising the burden of loneliness in older people](https://bjgp.org/content/bjgp/70/697/382.2.full.pdf)

**Title**: COVID stress syndrome: Concept, structure, and correlates

Depression and Anxiety | August 2020

Background:Research shows that the COVID Stress Scales have a robust multifactorial structure, representing five correlated facets of COVID-19-related distress: (a) Fear of the dangerousness of COVID-19, which includes fear of coming into contact with fomites potentially contaminated with SARSCoV2, (b) worry about socioeconomic costs of COVID-19 (e.g., worry about personal finances and disruption in the supply chain), (c) xenophobic fears that foreigners are spreading SARSCoV2, (d) traumatic stress symptoms associated with direct or vicarious traumatic exposure to COVID-19 (nightmares, intrusive thoughts, or images related to COVID-19), and (e) COVID-19-related compulsive checking and reassurance seeking. These factors cohere to form a COVID stress syndrome, which we sought to further delineate in the present study.

Methods:A population-representative sample of 6,854 American and Canadian adults completed a self-report survey comprising questions about current mental health and COVID-19-related experiences, distress, and coping.

Results**:**Network analysis revealed that worry about the dangerousness of COVID-19 is the central feature of the syndrome. Latent class analysis indicated that the syndrome is quasi-dimensional, comprising five classes differing in syndrome severity. Sixteen percent of participants were in the most severe class and possibly needing mental health services. Syndrome severity was correlated with preexisting psychopathology and with excessive COVID-19-related avoidance, panic buying, and coping difficulties during self-isolation.

Conclusion:The findings provide new information about the structure and correlates of COVID stress syndrome. Further research is needed to determine whether the syndrome will abate once the pandemic has passed or whether, for some individuals, it becomes a chronic condition.

Full document: [COVID stress syndrome: Concept, structure, and correlates](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/da.23071)

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[TRFT Library & Knowledge Service](https://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/) aim to bring together the latest guidelines, research and news on Covid-19 through our [Covid-19 portal](https://www.trftlibraryknowledge.com/coronavirus.html). For daily updates on Covid-19 visit our '[Latest Health](https://trfthealthweeklydigest.wordpress.com/)' newsfeed, or use the hashtag [#covid19rftlks](https://twitter.com/hashtag/covid19rftlks?src=hashtag_click) to see our latest tweets on Covid-19 research, guidelines and news.

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