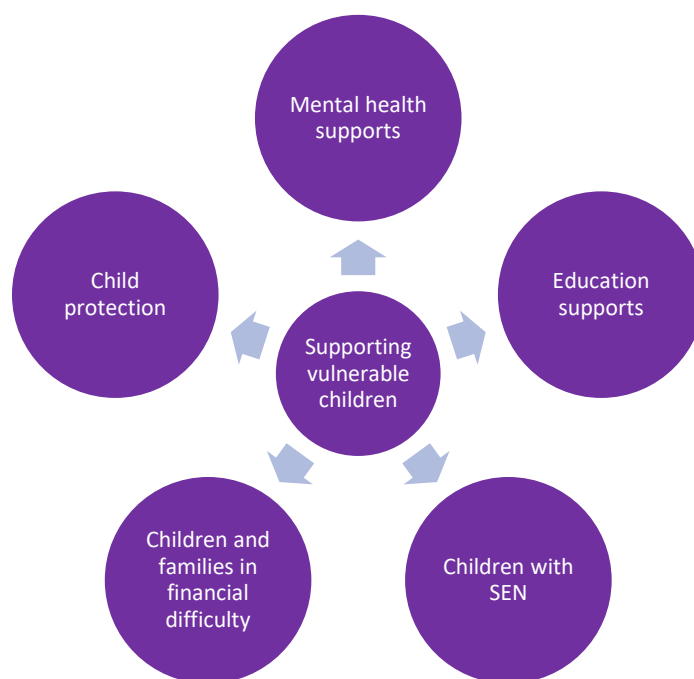


Supporting the vulnerable in our society during Covid-19 crisis



Minding our Mental Health

In the face of such uncertainty, it's not surprising that many of us are living with a heightened sense of anxiety, or even fear. In our modern, fast-paced society we have become accustomed to accessing information with a simple flick of a switch and in the era of social media, we often discover answers and suggested solutions to problems relatively easily online.

However, the current Covid-19 situation which is evolving day by day makes us feel powerless as there is no "quick fix" solution. Restrictions imposed upon us mean that we are separated from loved ones, confined to small spaces and all of this impacts on our mental health.

Therefore, it is important that we make sure that we do not neglect our mental and emotional wellbeing. The following resources are all aimed at promoting positive mental health among children and young people.

Face-to-face services are limited at present because of the coronavirus outbreak, but many groups and organisations are providing online and phone services.

Childline (ISPCC)

Ireland's 24-hour national listening service for young people up to the age of 18.

Freephone 1800 666 666 any time.

Text 50101 from 10am to 4pm every day.

Chat online at www.childline.ie anytime

Barnardos

Barnardos has quickly adapted to the current Covid-19 pandemic to continue to support children and their families. There are lots of fun activities listed on their website to keep children engaged, and suggested activities that families can do together. It is important to remain positive and engage with our children every day in a positive way.

www.barnardos.ie

Jigsaw

Mental health support and advice to young people aged 12 to 25 years old and parents or concerned adults.

Freephone 1800 544729 from 1pm to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Text CALL ME to 086 180 3880 with your preferred day and time for a call.

help@jigsaw.ie - replies 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

Visit www.jigsaw.ie or jigsawonline.ie

For parents and other family members

It is also important that parents take care of themselves during this time. You will also see our Wellbeing for Parents section below, providing parents with tips on how to check in and be kind to themselves.

Samaritans

Emotional support to anyone in distress or struggling to cope.

Freephone 116 123 every day 24 hours a day

jo@samaritans.ie

Pieta House

Telephone and text-based support counselling for people who are struggling.

Freephone 1800 247 247 every day 24 hours a day

Text HELP to 51444 - standard message rates apply

Visit www.pieta.ie

Aware

Information and support to anyone over 18. Issues relating to mood or the mood of a friend or family member, who is presenting as depressed.

Freephone support line 1800 80 48 48 10am to 10pm every day

supportmail@aware.ie

Visit www.aware.ie

GROW Mental Health Recovery

Information line 1890 474 474

Six-week guide on coping with COVID19, consisting of podcasts, practical resources and information.

Visit www.grow.ie

info@grow.ie

SpunOut.ie

Articles and information for young people on many different topics including mental health.

Text SPUNOUT to 086 1800 280 to talk to a trained volunteer - standard message rates may apply.

Visit www.spunout.ie

Mobile apps

The mobile apps listed below (available on App Store or Google Play) can help manage anxiety. They have been approved for listing by the HSE Mental Health Group (but are not supplied by the HSE and the HSE is not liable for their use).

Mindshift (by Anxiety Canada)

MindShift CBT teaches about anxiety, helping users to engage in healthy thinking and to take action. Users check in each day to track their anxiety and work with tools in the app.

Headspace

Headspace is a well-known mobile app that teaches meditation and easy to use mindfulness skills. Map your journey and track your progress and 'buddy up' with friends and motivate each other.

Clear Fear

For teenage mental health charity Stem4. The app uses CBT to focus on learning to reduce the physical responses to threat by learning to breathe, relax and be mindful.



Educational supports

Access to school buildings for teachers

This week saw the introduction of Phase One measures in line with Government guidelines affording teachers access to their school buildings for the first time since the enforced school closure. Schools are demonstrating great innovation in adapting to support remote teaching and learning during these challenging times. Access to schools is an important development which will augment and support the crucial work of teachers. Whilst such access, at this juncture, should be minimal and only in circumstances where the work cannot be done remotely, teachers have welcomed this flexibility to assist with the continuity of education.

Government guidance on access to school buildings can be accessed here <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/National-Emergencies-Public-Health-Issues/guidance-for-access-to-schools.pdf>

School Meals Programme

The Government issued updated guidance in late March to help schools operate the School Meals Programme during the Covid-19 closure. Schools have continued to arrange a weekly pack of provisions and have been collaborating with local community support networks in this regard. Building on the cooperative engagement on school meals provision, the Department of Education and Skills is working with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Tusla Education Support Service to ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are adequately supported exploring other innovative means of reaching vulnerable pupils and their families at this time, as greater flexibility will be possible with the gradual easing of restrictions.

A list of champions is available online on The Wheel's website. The Community Outreach Map at <https://www.wheel.ie/covid-19-community-outreach#champions> provides a list of contacts by county of Local Authority Contacts. There is also a list by county, with contact details of local Community Champions.

An Post have also agreed to facilitate delivery of non-perishable food packets and they currently operate a number of distribution centres across the country for the delivery of school meals programme. This service may assist schools with delivery of learning packages at this time, and schools are encouraged to make contact with the GPO if they would like to explore this option. (While there are limits for each distribution centre, anecdotally it is understood that they are not all operating at capacity).

<https://www.anpost.com/Covid-19>

The Department of Education and Skills have made reference to support available in Dublin and Galway from The Civil Defence and Boston Scientific respectively.

National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) provide a wealth of resources on their website (in English and as Gaeilge) for all levels. Materials are specifically targeting children with Special Educational Needs with input from Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists.

<https://ncse.ie/online-resources-for-parents>

“Help my Kid Learn” website

Activities and resources for children from birth to twelve years are available on the “Help my kid learn” website.

<http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie/activities>

Promoting speech and language skills

There are activity ideas in play, reading, writing, counting and speech.

Downloadable games and worksheets for supporting children and young people with their speech, language and communication skills.

<https://www.speakingofspeech.com/material/view-materials>

Explaining Coronavirus to younger children

The HSE website has also compiled a list of useful resources, with explanations of the coronavirus pitched at children. This includes posters on hand-washing and what to expect if visiting a test centre, hoping to allay fears they may have.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/>

Supporting Children with Autism - AsIAM

As I Am has a host of invaluable online resources to help with the massive changes in routine for children with autism for whom structure and timetable is so important. Their website content is updated regularly to adapt to this new situation as the needs of the community evolve and change.

www.asiam.ie

Middletown Centre for Autism

Middletown Centre for Autism designs and delivers training programmes cognisant of the needs of Parents and Education Professionals. In order to provide support during the suspension of our face to face delivery Middletown is offering a series of twice weekly live webinars. These sessions will feature members of Middletown Centre's own multi-disciplinary team and international speakers on a series of themes.

www.middletownautism.com

Supporting adults with literacy difficulties – National Adult Literacy Association (NALA)

Many people have felt overwhelmed by the amount of information around Covid-19 but for the one in six adults with literacy and numeracy difficulties in Ireland, it is an especially difficult time. The prospect of home-schooling for these parents will be a catalyst for anxiety. **National Adult Literacy Association (NALA)** have free phone and online support as follows:

Help for people with literacy, numeracy or digital skills needs

Help for parents with their kids learning

Help for people with understanding health information

Help for tutors who need teaching resources

(Freephone 1800 202065 or Text LEARN to 50050)

ADHD Ireland

Support and information for young people and adults with ADHD and their carers and families.

Phone 01 874 8349 from 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday

Visit www.adhdireland.ie

info@adhdireland.ie

Inclusion Ireland

The National Association for People with an Intellectual Disability. Easy-read guides on coronavirus. These include one about good mental health for people with intellectual disabilities.

Visit www.inclusionireland.ie

Enable Ireland

Enable Ireland have produced a range of publications and continue to prepare newsletters and information sheets on issues that are important to parents of people with disabilities, their families and carers as they find themselves being asked to take on many roles in caring for and supporting your families during this pandemic.

www.enableireland.ie/resources/publications

Child Protection

National Education Psychological Service (NEPS)

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Public Health measures in place at this time are challenging students, staff and families, in particular those who may be already vulnerable. Therefore, it is even more important at this time to attend to preventative factors that may mitigate against distress and promote wellbeing. In this regard, we direct schools and parents to the NEPS advice & resources for keeping children and young people well during COVID-19 for suggestions on maintaining student, teacher and parent wellbeing.

The Department of Education and Skills' NEPS psychologists have developed advice and some resources for young people to manage and stay well when schools are closed.

<https://www.education.ie/covid19/wellbeing/>

TUSLA - Child Protection & Welfare

The Child and Family Agency has a primary responsibility to promote the safety and well-being of children. An Garda Síochána also have statutory responsibilities for the safety and welfare of children.

Everyone must be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be suffering from abuse or neglect. This responsibility is particularly relevant for professionals such as teachers, child care workers, health professionals and those working with adults with serious parenting difficulties. It is also an important responsibility for staff and people involved in sports clubs, community activities, youth clubs, religious/faith sector and other organisations catering for children.

National Youth Council of Ireland

The Child Protection Programme is based in the National Youth Council of Ireland and is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to supporting the youth work sector to safeguard children and young people.

The Child Protection Programme is dedicated to supporting the youth work sector to meet their responsibilities in relation to child safeguarding and protection. The Programme supports the sector through the provision of training, resource materials, support and guidance, and advocacy on behalf of the youth work sector

<https://www.youth.ie/programmes/child-protection/>

Families experiencing poverty

St. Vincent De Paul

St. Vincent De Paul work tirelessly across the country to fight poverty in all its forms through the practical assistance to people in need. The organisation offers direct, personal assistance that is non-judgemental and based on the need of the individual or family.

Whilst drop-in facilities and face-to-face support is curtailed, SVP continue to support people to the best of our ability who request our help during this period.

Those seeking assistance from SVP are asked to contact their relevant regional office by telephone or online facilities.

info@svp.ie

Mercy Law Centre

Mercy Law Resource Centre (MLRC) is an independent law centre, registered charity and company limited by guarantee which provides free legal advice and representation to people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in the areas of social housing and related social welfare law. The Centre also seeks to advocate change in laws, policies and attitudes which unduly and adversely impact its client group.

Telephone **01 4537459**

Email info@mercylaw.ie

Food Poverty

Food poverty is an issue that impacts almost 1 in 10 families in Ireland. Due to Covid19 restrictions, access to essential services like breakfast clubs or the school meals programme has changed for families. Community Foundation of Ireland and Bank of Ireland funding, the Children's Rights Alliance established a Food Provision Scheme in collaboration with the Children and Young People's Services Committees that aims to reach young children who do not have access to other supports.

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) have also continued to operate the School Meals Scheme assisting schools with the delivery of food to vulnerable pupils.

Other supports

EPIC – Empowering People in Care

EPIC is committed to continuing to provide our services for children and young people in care and with care experience.

All of EPIC's services are continuing as normal, while strictly observing all Health and Safety restrictions in line with Public Health guidance. EPIC will also continue to respond and adapt to the challenges posed by COVID-19 to ensure that minimise any potential impact on services is minimised.

Information and contact details for EPIC's services and teams are available throughout their website. www.epiconline.ie

Traveller Counselling Service

This service provides online counselling to members of the Traveller community who need support during this time.

Visit www.travellercounselling.ie

Rainbows Ireland

Rainbows is a free, voluntary service for children and young people experiencing loss following bereavement and parental separation.

The Rainbows service is an inclusive service, supporting children and young people experiencing grief and loss resulting from bereavement/parental separation/parental relationship breakdown /divorce.

Phone: **087 3510898**

Email: ask@rainbowsireland.ie or support@rainbowsireland.ie

Barnardos bereavement helpline

Barnardos also provide a children's bereavement helpline service.
Telephone 01 473 2110 10am to 12pm Monday to Thursday.

Children's Rights Alliance

Recognising the anxiety and stress caused to children, young people and their families at this worrying time, the Children's Rights Alliance is working with members and stakeholders to find out how the current public health crisis is impacting children and their families and how best they can find, and advocate for, solutions.

One of the ways by which they are offering support is through their legal information helpline. Due to the increased volume of calls, the opening hours of the helpline have been extended to help families through this time. The helpline operates as follows:

Mondays	10am to 2pm
Wednesdays	2pm to 7pm
Fridays	10am to 12 noon

At a time of great anxiety and uncertainty, a famous quote from Mahatma Gandhi springs to mind '*the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable*'. We must continue do our best to help those in most need.

