Most families have experienced upheaval in their daily lives during the pandemic. With children and young people now back at school or college, the new Public Health England (PHE) Better Health – Every Mind Matters campaign provides NHS-endorsed tips and advice to help children and young people's mental wellbeing, and equip parents and carers with the knowledge to support them.

Research reveals that the COVID-19 outbreak has caused an increase in anxiety in young people. [1]

What's more, over two-fifths (41%) of children and young people said they were more lonely than before lockdown and more than a third said they were more worried (38%), more sad (37%) or more stressed (34%). [2]

New PHE survey data found that two-thirds of parents say their children's behaviour has changed since the start of the pandemic (69%) and when asked their top 3 worries around COVID-19, over half (52%) said the mental wellbeing of their children topped the list of their biggest worries.[3]

As we adapt to a new normal many parents and carers anticipate their children will experience new stresses. This includes facing the challenges of catching up with missed education, starting new schools or colleges and building relationships with friends again.

Nearly a quarter of parents surveyed say that not knowing what action to take has prevented them supporting their children's mental wellbeing (22%), and more than a third (38%) want more advice on how to support their mental wellbeing when returning to school. [3]

The new advice available on the Every Mind Matters website has been developed in partnership with leading children and young people's mental health charities, including Young Minds, The Mix, Place2Be and The Anna Freud Centre. It is designed to help parents and carers spot the signs that children may be struggling with their mental health and support them, and also provides advice that can help maintain good mental wellbeing. The site also provides tools to help young people build resilience and equips them to look after their mental wellbeing.

To engage parents and carers, a powerful short film has been created featuring a number of celebrity parents including Davina McCall, Marvin Humes, Sean Fletcher, Katie Piper and Edith Bowman, reading extracts from bestselling author Charlie Mackesy's book, 'The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse'. The emotive extracts all touch upon mental health and aim to encourage parents to visit Every Mind Matters.

NHS's Top 5 Tips for supporting children and young people's mental wellbeing as they go back out into the world (please view all tips on Every Mind Matters website):

1. Be there to listen
   Ask the children and young people you look after how they are doing regularly so they get used to speaking about their feelings.
2. Stay involved in their life
   Show interest in their life and the things that are important to them.
3. Support positive routines
   Be a positive role model and support positive behaviours including regular bedtime routines, healthy eating and getting active.
4. Encourage their interests
   Being active, creative, learning things and being a part of a team are all good for mental health. Support children and young people to explore their interests.
5. Take what they say seriously
   Help the children and young people you look after feel valued in what they say and help them work through difficult emotions.

The website also encourages parents to complete a personal 'Mind Plan', a quick and free interactive tool offering adults tailored mental wellbeing advice. More than 2.4 million 'Mind Plans' have been completed since launch in October 2019.

Dr Yvonne Doyle, Medical Director and Director of Health Protection at Public Health England, said:

Parents' and carers' relationships with their children are special and we want to give them the support they need. Being there to listen and encouraging them to explain how they feel can make a real difference to how children and young people cope with life's challenges. It can also help them develop effective skills to cope with their emotions.

Nadine Dorries, Minister for Mental Health, said:

The effects of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health have been challenging and it is vital we continue to do all we can to protect them and prevent long-term effects.

Young people should feel encouraged to speak up, look out for each other, and ask for help. This campaign and these resources are a great way to access support and help parents to understand steps they can take to care even more for their children's mental health and wellbeing.

Professor Prathiba Chitsabesan, NHS England Associate National Clinical Director for Children and Young People's Mental Health, said:

As young people go back to class, it's understandable that while many will be excited to get back, some may also have concerns and anxieties about the new academic year,

following the uncertainty and upheaval of COVID, which is why this important campaign is offering practical tips to help kids cope.

Parents, carers, teachers and students should also be reassured that the NHS has been and will continue to be there for everyone with concerns about their mental health, whether through 24/7 crisis support lines, video and phone consultations, or face to face appointments.

Emma Thomas, Chief Executive of YoungMinds, said:

The coronavirus pandemic has had a huge impact of the lives of children and young people across the country and many have struggled with social isolation, anxiety and fears about what the future holds.

We know how important it is for young people to get early support for their mental health when problems first start to emerge. This is a welcome and much-needed campaign, and we hope that it will provide young people with the resources to support their mental health and to seek help if they need it. We also hope that it will ensure parents and carers have the tools to support their children's wellbeing and help them adjust in the coming months.

Davina McCall, TV presenter, said:

Children have missed out on so much during lockdown and like lots of other parents, I've wanted to support mine as much as I possibly can. As we're starting to go back to normality and there's still lots of uncertainty for our kids, it's important we're there for them through their ups and downs – communication is so important. For anyone that's concerned or worried, or just want some tips on how to support them, please search Every Mind Matters.

The new Better Health – Every Mind Matters campaign will be supported through social media, radio and press activity, helping to reach audiences including parents and carers of children and young people (aged 5 to 18) and young people (aged 13 to 18).

Search Every Mind Matters for expert tips and advice to support children and young people with their mental wellbeing.

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