

Children and young peoples' mental health has been supported by a ground-breaking, large-scale project from the Diocese of Manchester.



The first of its kind, the mental health support scheme has been running for two years across the diocese which takes in both the urban centres of Manchester and the rural regions outside of the city.

Amy Sixsmith, who joined the Diocese in February 2018 as a Mental Wellbeing Youth Worker has been providing mental health support, training and resources throughout the Covid-19 lockdown.

Previously the two-day courses were offered in person to teachers, clergy, youth leaders, and occasional face-to-face work with pupils across the 190 Church of England schools in the diocese. Currently, half day online training courses have been offered.

At the beginning of the Covid-19 lockdown resources for coping with bereavement and loss were developed by the diocese.



Susie Mapledoram, the Diocesan Youth Officer, said: "Children and young people are aware of the news and the impact of coronavirus and need space and time to process it like all of us."

"We need to make space to listen to children and young people and understand the pandemic's impact on them."

Now, Amy and Susie are developing resource packs to support schools and clergy as lockdown begins to ease.

While no one knows what the impact of lockdown on children and young people's mental health, Amy is preparing.

"Mental health is massively on teachers' and parents' radar, particularly during this stage of the pandemic and we're seeing it a lot in the media," she said. "Schools are making this their absolute priority.

"As much as schools know education and catching up is important, many actually need to work on staff and pupils' well-being as their priority."

Following Department for Education guidance around mental health support for next term, the Diocese of Manchester is hoping to issue its own resource pack to coincide with the September return of schools.

Susie added that for Church schools mental health awareness is key: "Faith is weaved into our well-being.

"Faith has been really affected by Covid. Some have been strengthened and some have really taken a knock.

"Well-being focus for the first term is so important."



**Notes:**

- The Mental Wellbeing Youth Worker is a three-year fixed-term initiative run by the Diocese of Manchester.
- To this day, the project has provided 23 training sessions with an estimated 250 teachers , clergy and youth workers trained in mental health first aid skills.
- There are 190 Church of England schools, including primary and secondary, in the Diocese of Manchester. The Church is the second biggest provider of education in the country, behind the state.
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