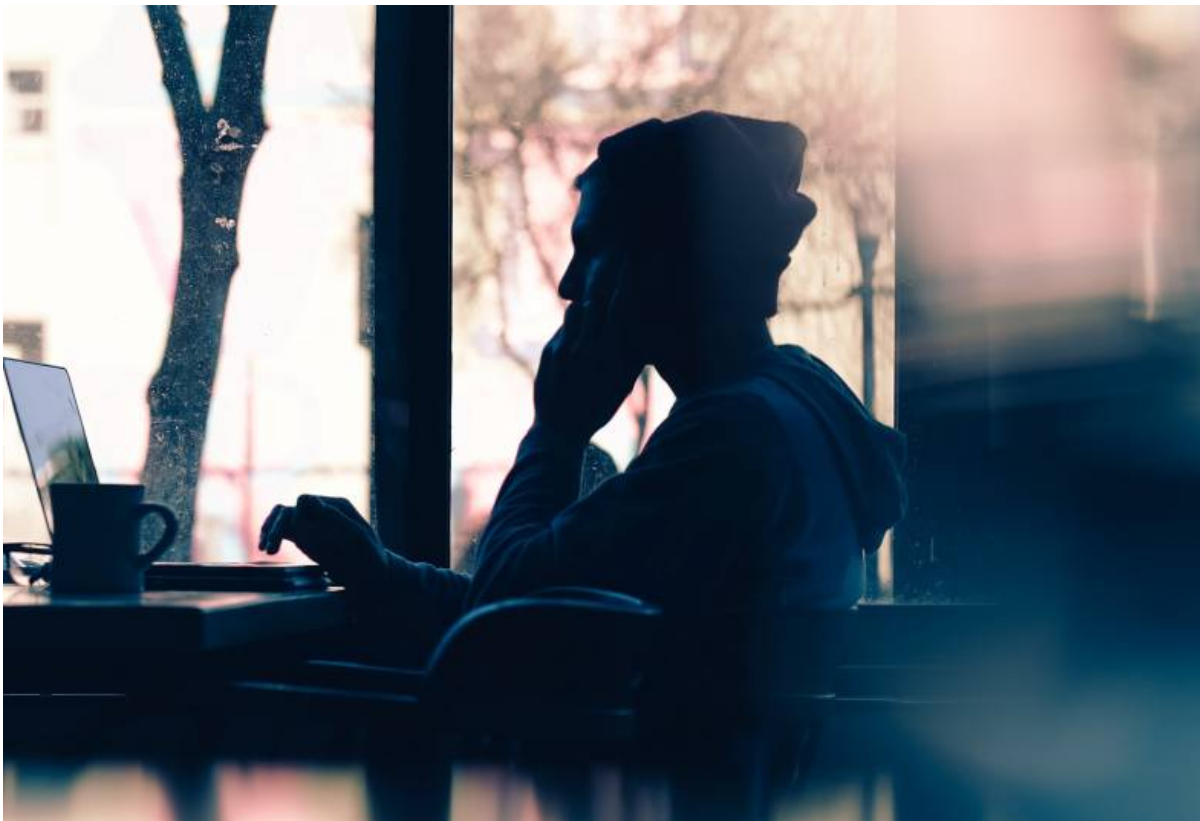




as reports of mental health issues rise during the Covid-19 pandemic.

St Cuthbert's Church in Croxteth Park, Liverpool, has seen an increasing demand for what it offers to those with mental health problems.

Speaking ahead of World Mental Health Day 2020, the vicar, the Revd Laura Leatherbarrow, said: "There's a feeling across the board of people who have never suffered with mental health issues before are now getting anxious – or getting back depression or being diagnosed with depression for the first time.



well as older."

With a background in the NHS, Revd Leatherbarrow runs A Place 2 Be, which helps those in her community deal with mental health issues.

She described it as: "A place people can come to have a chat and we have mental health first aiders present. We serve food, and have games, and even karaoke."

The local NHS also socially prescribes patients to A Place 2 Be and to the church's pastoral support team.

She explained: "Doctors want to be able to help their patients without necessarily sticking them on anti-depressants straight away.

"Currently we have more time than GPs have – they're on seven minutes with their patients or something but we can sit down for 45 minutes



Because of physical distancing measures, Revd Leatherbarrow has changed the way the church approaches tackling mental health issues.

Running a Canadian online course called The Sanctuary, which currently provides its resources for free, helps teach mental health resilience.

The church serves the local urban estate but online assistance has meant it has reach across the region.

"This is about spreading it across the deanery – people who have been on it have found it really helpful and have had their eyes opened to what people in faith communities could do for these mental health problems," she added.

Previously, Revd Leatherbarrow established The Sanctuary in a different parish. This innovative project run from St Ambrose Church - and with the assistance of the mental health charity Mind - provided one-on-one support to people who came once a week to the group.

Operating from the vestry, every Wednesday a full-time counsellor was available for the community – seeing 40 people regularly and sometimes 75 people a week.



Igor Ovsyannykov

For those wanting to bring similar projects to their parish Revd Leatherbarrow adds: "Just do it."

Simple things like a tea and chat can be immeasurably helpful Revd Leatherbarrow explains: "People underestimate listening and the impact of what sitting down with a cup of tea can do.

"It doesn't have to cost [money]," she said. "We're not counsellors but we can hear people's stories journey with them in true companionship - which is walking with them to see their point of view, listen and offer them hospitality and action - and we can offer them that without costing a single penny. If you're inspired to do this – just do it."

- The Church of England has seen an increased focus on supporting youth mental health.
- Manchester Diocese have employed a **Mental Wellbeing Youth Worker since 2018** and has found the provision to be warmly received.
- The Church of England has published **mental health resources** including details of services and organisations which offer help and support.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/stories-and-features/covid-having-profound-effect-church-taking-mental-health-issues>