



ear of intense pressure on mental health services.

Nik Shuliahin

Parishes and dioceses have offered support to those in need in often innovative ways. Mental health support is regularly cited by Anglicans as a priority for action.

In Liverpool, St Cuthbert's Church in Croxteth Park, runs [A Place 2 Be](#), which helps those in the community deal with mental health issues.

Revd Laura Leatherbarrow, who has a background in the NHS, 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."

In London, Stepping Stones, which supports people living with mental ill health, is run by [Emmanuel Church in Forest Gate](#), east London, in partnership with East London Foundation Trust.

The project provided laptops and internet data to help participants stay in touch from home during the pandemic.



Emma Simpson

Others are focussing particularly on the mental health needs of children and young people.

In Kent, churches have come together to provide counselling services in schools. [The Weald Family Hub](#) has funded the provision of subsidised mental health counselling in 13 schools by covering 50 per cent of the costs matched by each school.

In the Diocese of Manchester, a large-scale project has been supporting children and young peoples' mental health.

The [Mental Wellbeing Youth Worker](#), Amy Sixsmith, provides mental health support, training, and resources.

To date, the project has provided 23 training sessions with an estimated 250 teachers, clergy and youth workers trained in mental health first aid skills.

The theme of this year's Awareness Week is 'Nature.' Churchyards in England are estimated to be equivalent in their combined size to a [national park](#).

Parishes have used their outdoor spaces in innovative ways to support those struggling with poor mental health. One urban churchyard has been playing host to a local NHS's trauma support services.



Amid Covid-19 restrictions, [St Paul's Woodland Garden in Camden Square](#) has provided a space for outdoor therapy sessions.

The Traumatic Stress Clinic (TSC) at the Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust worked with the church and Green City Projects to make the plan a reality.

Speaking last October, Dr Livia Ottisova, a Clinical Psychologist at the TSC said: “The garden was the perfect setting for our work as it is safe, welcoming, and contained.

"It offers the ideal backdrop for the challenging work of processing traumatic memories by providing a richness of soothing, lush sensory stimuli from the present.”

This year’s Mental Health Awareness Week runs from 10-16 May 2021.

More information:

- The Church of England has [published mental health resources](#) including details of services and organisations which offer help and support.

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