

In the wake of the COVID pandemic, the nation is facing a mental health crisis, with the young, the poor, and those with pre-existing mental health problems most affected.

The impact of this is already being felt in parishes across the country, clergy are uncertain how to respond, and NHS resources are being stretched as never before.

But help is at hand from two organisations that have resources to offer in support of a Christian response to the challenges that this crisis presents.

The Sanctuary Course is an 8-week small group resource to support churches develop mental health awareness. Ready to use and of high quality, the course creates safe spaces to open up conversations. Each session is accompanied by a film that features the story of a Christian with lived experience of a mental health challenge, along with the insights of church leaders, theologians, and mental health professionals. Free to download from Sanctuary Mental Health Ministries at: <https://sanctuarymentalhealth.org/uk>

If you would like to explore options further for your church, please contact Mary Byrne at <mailto:ukcomms@sanctuarymentalhealth.org> or Corin Pilling (UK Director) at corin@sanctuarymentalhealth.org (Tel: 07595333695)

Renew Wellbeing helps churches to provide café style spaces of welcome and inclusion, in collaboration with local mental health teams, to support mental wellbeing.

The approach is one of affirming that 'It's OK not to be OK' and emphasises, prayer, presence, and partnership. Renew Wellbeing is ecumenical and 65 parishes within the Church of England already have an established centre or are in the process of planning to set one up. Further information, including a brief introductory video, and information on how to take things further, is available at: <https://www.renewwellbeing.org.uk/>

If you would like to book an online introductory session, or book training, or explore options further for your church, please contact Mandy Halloway (Administrator) at <mailto:mandy@renewwellbeing.org.uk> or Ruth Rice (Director) on 07811297462.

Between them, these two Christian organisations provide an accessible route for your parish to become better informed and practically responsive to the mental health challenges that we all face.

Mental health needs are closely related to spiritual needs, and it is often impossible to separate the two. Sanctuary and Renew Wellbeing offer a collaborative approach, supportive of mutual understanding and collaboration between mental health professionals and churches.