

guide to



crisis services

The Mind guide to crisis services

This booklet explains what mental health crisis services are available, how they can help, and how and when to access them. It also provides guidance on how you can plan for a crisis.

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Please note: if you're feeling in extreme crisis right now and you think you may act on suicidal feelings, or you have seriously harmed yourself:

- **go to any hospital A&E department** and ask for help (if you need to, you can call 999 and ask for an ambulance)
- **contact the Samaritans** on 08457 90 90 90 (they're there to listen).

What is a mental health crisis?

A mental health crisis is when you feel your mental health is at breaking point. For example, you might be experiencing:

- suicidal feelings or self-harming behaviour
- extreme anxiety or panic attacks
- psychotic episodes (such as delusions, hallucinations, paranoia or hearing voices)
- hypomania or mania
- other behaviour that feels out of control, and is likely to endanger yourself or others

You may have already been diagnosed with a mental health problem, such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder or depression, or you might be going through your first episode of a diagnosable mental health problem.

Even if what you're going through isn't related to a specific diagnosis, experiencing emotions or behaviours that are painful or hard to manage can still make you feel like you're in crisis. When you're feeling like this, you may need to access crisis services to help you resolve the situation, or to support you until it has passed.

How do I know if I'm in crisis?

Everyone experiences a crisis in their own way. You might feel that your mental health has been steadily deteriorating for some time, or perhaps something's happened in your life that's shaken your stability. You might have a good idea what's likely to trigger a crisis for you, or you might not know what's causing your feelings.

But whatever your situation, if you start to feel unable to cope, or to keep yourself safe, it's important to ask for help.

What are crisis services?

A crisis service is any service that is available at short notice to help you resolve a mental health crisis, or to support you while it is happening. These services can be provided by the public sector (NHS or social services) or the voluntary sector (charities or not-for-profit organisations).

[My] crisis team have been there to listen to me when I've needed them.

What crisis services could help me?

There are lots of different ways you can access help when you're experiencing a crisis. In this booklet you'll find more information about the following services:

- **Accident & Emergency (A&E)** (emergency support) – for when you need immediate medical help – especially if you think you might act on suicidal thoughts, or you've harmed yourself and need urgent medical attention (see pp.7–8).
- **Emergency GP appointments** (emergency support) – For when you need urgent support for your mental health, but there's no immediate danger to your safety or the safety of others (see pp.8–10).
- **Listening services** (telephone support) – For when you need to talk to someone right away about how you're feeling (see pp.12–13).
- **Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment (CRHT) team** – For when you need urgent support, and you're already in contact with your local mental health services (see pp.15–18).
- **Crisis houses** – For when you need more intensive support than can be offered to you at home, but it's either not appropriate or not possible for you to go to hospital (see pp.18–20 and pp.34–35).
- **Hospital admission** – For when you need ongoing, intensive support and it's not possible to provide it in the community (see pp.21–25).

- **Day services and online support** – For when you need extra, ongoing support at home to help you manage a time of crisis (see pp.26–27).
- **Information services** (telephone support) – For when you need information or advice to help you understand your options and plan your next steps (see pp.13–15).

I have been under the care of crisis team, hospitalised, day care [...] Once I'm under [the crisis team's care] they are supportive, professional and in my case have always made good decisions, like when I need medication changes or [to go into] hospital.

Will I always get the crisis care I want?

While we know that excellent crisis services do exist, not all the options listed above are available consistently across the UK. Unfortunately, you might find that services in your area aren't always able to provide the best possible care to support you.

We know how frustrating and difficult it can be to cope with services that don't provide the exact help you need, exactly when you need it. That's why we're campaigning to improve crisis care across the country.

You can read more about our by searching the campaigning pages on our website, and find out about the different ways you can take action with Mind.

[For me] the crisis team were a waste of time, but A&E can be helpful dependent upon what nurse I see. My GP is fantastic!

Where should I go in a serious emergency?

For all serious medical emergencies (including mental health emergencies), your options for getting face-to-face medical help quickly are:

- Accident & Emergency (A&E)
- Emergency GP appointments

Accident & Emergency (A&E)

Accident & Emergency (A&E) departments are where the most serious and urgent medical emergencies are treated. If you're experiencing a mental health emergency, it's absolutely vital to take it as seriously as you would if you had a physical health emergency.

Most of the guys at my local crisis team are brilliant. Even when they've already seen me in A&E three times that week it still feels as important.

When should I use this service?

When you feel unable to keep yourself safe and you need immediate help – especially if you think you are at risk of acting on suicidal thoughts, or you have seriously harmed yourself and need medical attention.

How can it help me?

If your A&E has a psychiatric liaison team, they can:

- make an initial assessment of your mental health needs (sometimes called a psychiatric evaluation)
- keep you safe for the short-term

- prescribe medication to you help cope with some symptoms you may be experiencing right now
- put you in contact with other crisis services, such as your local crisis resolution and home treatment (CRHT) team, if appropriate

If there is no psychiatric liaison team, the A&E staff can call a local on-call mental health service to assess you, such as the CRHT team, though they may take a while to arrive. Based on this assessment the care team will decide whether you can go home (sometimes being supported by the local CRHT team), or if you need to be admitted to hospital.

How can I access this service?

You can:

- Take yourself directly there (if it's too far to walk you could take public transport, call a taxi, or ask a friend to give you a lift).
- Call 999 if you need an ambulance.

Remember: A&E can be a difficult place to be in. If you can, ask a friend or family member to go along with you for some extra support. You might have to wait a while before a doctor can see you, so it can be helpful to have someone waiting with you.

I did take myself to the crisis team at A&E and got some help, [although I was] left to sit on my own for 2 hours. [After waiting] I was put in touch with the right people – they came to see me while I was there and I had a psych evaluation.

Emergency GP appointments

Your local GP surgery should be able to offer you an appointment to see a doctor quickly in an emergency.

When should I use this service?

When you need urgent support for your mental health, but you feel able to keep yourself safe for a short while until your appointment.

Remember: If you don't feel you need to go to A&E, but you need medical help or advice fast and can't wait for an emergency GP appointment, you can call NHS 111 (in England) or NHS Direct (in Wales).

How can it help me?

An emergency doctor at your regular GP practice can:

- access your medical notes, so you shouldn't need to explain your medical history from scratch
- make referrals if you both decide that you need more support right now to help you deal with the crisis you're going through – for example to a CRHT team or potentially for hospital admission
- provide information and advice, for example about any other local services which you could access yourself
- prescribe or adjust medication, which might help you cope with some symptoms you're experiencing.

An emergency appointment is likely to be with the next available doctor, so depending on the size of your GP practice, you might not be able to see your regular GP in an emergency. But it's a good idea to make a follow-up appointment with your regular GP for as soon as possible after seeing an emergency GP, so they can:

- help you put into practice self-management techniques that have worked for you in the past
- plan to see you more regularly while you're feeling in crisis, so they can adjust your treatment if anything changes

Also, if your regular GP is someone you have a good relationship with, you might find it very reassuring in a crisis to have an appointment to see them as well.

If it wasn't for my GP insisting on continuing to see me once a month and actually saying that she enjoys seeing me, I would not still be here.

Even if you don't feel in crisis, but you feel your mental health is deteriorating, it's a good idea to talk to your GP as soon as you can; they may be able to help you find support and treatment before it becomes a more serious problem.

(See our booklet *The Mind guide to seeking help for a mental health problem* for more information about how to talk to your GP, and how to get the most out of a GP appointment.)

How can I access this service?

You should contact your surgery directly. All surgeries operate their own booking systems with their own rules.

If you need to speak to a GP after the surgery closes, most surgeries should be able to direct you to an out-of-hours services (either via their answering machine message or on their website), although this might be run by a different service.

What support can I get over the phone?

Using telephone services can be a good way to get help in a time of crisis, particularly as they can often provide out-of-hours support. Talking to an adviser on the phone can help you make sense of your situation and work out possible solutions.

Things to consider when using telephone services

Before contacting a telephone support service, it might be useful to ask yourself the following questions:

- **What can I do if I can't get through straight away?** Some lines might be busy when you first call, or aren't available 24 hours a day, so it's worth planning how you will handle this. For example, you could keep trying, call back at a quieter time, or try another service in the meantime.
- **Will everything I tell the adviser be confidential?** If you're worried about sharing sensitive information you can ask the adviser to explain their confidentiality policy at the beginning of your call. Many services have policies in place to keep you safe if you tell the adviser you have attempted or are planning to attempt suicide.
- **What will the call cost?** Some telephone services might charge different rates depending on whether you call from a landline or a mobile, and what your phone package includes. If you're worried about the possible cost you can ask the adviser to explain the rates at the beginning of the call, or research them on the service's website before dialling.
- **Can I access this service another way?** If you don't feel up to talking on the phone, some telephone services also offer support via email or text message. If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have difficulty speaking, you could consider using the Next Generation Text Service (NGTS) Typetalk/Text Relay app on your mobile device or computer.
- **Do I need a translator?** Some services can arrange a translation service if English isn't your first language, or if you use British Sign Language (BSL). If you ask about translation when you make the call, the adviser will let you know if a translation service is available, and if it costs anything to use.

I saw the number of a charity crisis line (similar to Samaritans), phoned and someone listened and had time [for me], which actually helped me.

Listening and emotional support services

Listening services can help you talk through your emotions and give you confidential, non-judgemental support. With many listening services, the person you speak to will let you talk through your problems for as long as you need.

When can they help?

If you're really struggling with difficult feelings right now and need to talk to someone immediately, but you aren't ready or able to access emergency support.

Who can I call?

- **Samaritans.** Samaritans are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to listen to anything that is upsetting you, including intrusive thoughts and difficult thoughts of suicide and self-harm. Their national number is 08457 90 90 90, their freephone number is 116 123, or you can email jo@samaritans.org. Samaritans also offer a Welsh Language Line on 0300 123 3011 (from 7pm–11pm only, seven days a week).
- **SANEline.** SANEline offers emotional support and information from 6pm–11pm, 365 days a year. Their national number is 0300 304 7000.
- **CALM.** If you're a man experiencing distressing thoughts and feelings, the Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) is there to support you. They're open from 5pm–midnight, 365 days a year. Their national number is 0800 58 58 58, and they also have a webchat service if you're not comfortable talking on the phone.
- **Nightline.** If you are a student, you can look at the Nightline website to see if your university or college offers a night-time listening service.

Nightline phone operators are all students too.

- **Switchboard, the LGBT+ helpline.** If you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, Switchboard is available from 10am–11pm, 365 days a year, to listen to any problems you're having. Phone operators all identify as LGBT+. Their national number is 0300 330 0630, or you can email chris@switchboard.lgbt.
- **C.A.L.L.** If you live in Wales, you can contact the Community Advice and Listening Line (C.A.L.L). for a confidential listening and support service. Their number is 0800 123 737 or you can text 'help' to 81066.

Once a girl actually answered the phone and kept me talking through my thoughts and suicidal feelings for almost three hours! To her I shall be eternally grateful!

Information, support and advice lines

Mental health information and advice lines can help by providing information and signposting you to sources of further support. Some problem-specific advice lines can offer tailored support to the specific crisis you're experiencing – these usually have phone operators who have some specialist knowledge or experience in the subject.

If you are at risk of suicide or in despair, some helplines offer follow-up calls.

When can they help?

When you're going through a period of crisis with your mental health, but you feel well enough right now to consider what positive steps you could take to get more support.

Remember: information and advice lines generally do not provide listening services. If you're in extreme crisis, you should seek emergency support, or consider using a listening service.

Who can I call?

For general mental health information and support:

- **Mind's Infoline and Legal Line.** For mental health information, Mind's Infoline and Legal Line are both open from 9am–6pm weekdays. You can contact our Infoline on 0800 123 3393, text 86463 or email info@mind.org.uk. You can contact our Legal Line on 0800 466 6463 or email legal@mind.org.uk.
- **NHS 111 / NHS Direct.** If you need medical help or advice fast, but it's not a life-threatening situation, you can call NHS 111 (in England) by dialling 111, or NHS Direct (in Wales) on 0845 46 47.
- **Papyrus HOPEline.** If you're under 35 and struggling with suicidal feelings and self-harm, the Papyrus HOPEline can offer practical advice. They're open weekdays 10am–10pm, weekends 2pm–10pm and bank holidays 2pm–5pm. Their national number is 0800 068 4141, or you can email pat@papyrus-uk.org or text 07786 209 697.
- **Your local NHS Trust** may also offer a crisis phone line, or information and support on what to do in a crisis. Check your local NHS trust's website for more information about their services.

For problem-specific information and support:

- **Anxiety UK** runs a helpline on weekdays between 9.30am–5.30pm, on 08444 775 774.
- **b-eat** run a helpline for people experiencing an eating disorder. The national number is 0845 364 1414 or you can email them at help@b-eat.co.uk.
- **Bipolar UK** has an information and support line open weekdays between 9am–5pm, on 020 7931 6480.
- **Carers UK** offers help and advice on weekdays between 10am–4pm. Their national number is 0808 808 7777 or you can email them at advice@carers.uk.
- **Cruse Bereavement Care** can offer support if you're feeling in crisis

Can I get support from a CRHT team (crisis team)?

after someone you know has died. Their helpline is open on weekdays between 9.30–5pm (and until 8pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings). The national number is 0844 477 9400 or you can email helpline@cruse.org.uk.

- **No Panic** run a helpline for people experiencing anxiety disorders, open 10am–10pm, 365 days a year, on 0844 967 4848.
- **OCD UK** has an advice line open weekdays between 9am–5pm on 0845 120 3778, or you can email them at support@ocduk.org.

If you can't find a helpline here that suits your situation, visit The Helplines Partnership website for a directory of all the helplines available in the UK, including regional helplines, which you can search to find the best telephone support service for you.

Can I call my crisis team?

Some crisis resolution and home treatment (CRHT) teams and community mental health teams (CMHTs) offer telephone support to help you manage mental health crises at home. You can ask your CMHT or CRHT:

- **What sort of telephone support they offer** – for example, can they give you information or advice, or could they support you when you're experiencing suicidal thoughts.
- **How they can offer this support** – for example, if they will call you or if you should call them, how often you can speak to someone and at what time of day.

Can I get support from a CRHT team (crisis team)?

A crisis resolution and home treatment (CRHT) team is a team of mental health professionals who can support you at your home during a crisis. It usually includes a number of mental health professionals, such as a psychiatrist, mental health nurses, social workers and support workers.

Many CRHT teams are often referred to as the **crisis team** for short, although you might find your local crisis service is called something different.

How can a CRHT team help me?

Your CRHT team can:

- decide if you should be admitted to hospital
- offer you alternative support to treatment in hospital
- offer you home support to help you to leave hospital more quickly

If you don't want to go into hospital, or a hospital place isn't available right away, the CRHT team can:

- assess your needs
- manage the risks of you being at home
- assist with self-help strategies
- visit you frequently
- offer psychological and practical help
- administer medication
- help you learn from your experience, so you can consider how to prevent or manage a crisis in future

You might find that CRHT support can help you manage a crisis at home with friends and family. This may be a preferable option, as research has shown much higher satisfaction rates for CRHT treatment than for hospital inpatient wards.

[My] crisis team have been with me on three separate occasions for two months at a time, sometimes visiting twice a day to keep me out of hospital.

When should I use this service?

When you need urgent support, and you are already in contact with your local mental health services. Your local CRHT team could also give you ongoing support after accessing emergency support during a mental health crisis.

I had a crisis at the GP surgery [...] so I saw the crisis team right quick (within four hours!). Needless to say in these circumstances the crisis service was comparatively brilliant.

How do I access a CRHT team?

There are different ways you can access your local CRHT team, depending on your situation and how your local team works.

- **Direct contact.** Some CRHT teams will let you contact them directly. You can find this information on your local mental health service's website.
- **Referral.** Many CRHT teams can only support people who have been referred to them by another health care professional. For example, you might be referred to a crisis team after visiting A&E or your GP.
- **Care plan.** If you are currently being supported by a community mental health team (CMHT), they should give you details in your care plan about who to contact in a crisis; this is often your local CRHT team.

Your CRHT team should be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, although depending on your local service you might not always be able to get in contact with someone immediately.

[My crisis team] were very supportive but the biggest issue was continuity and staffing. [In my case] there was a lot of 'we will see you tomorrow' and then they would change times at short notice or not come at all.

What can I do if I'm unhappy with my CRHT team?

When you're experiencing a crisis, it can be hard to manage feelings of disappointment and frustration if the help you want just isn't there. Unfortunately, many mental health services are stretched, and can struggle to help everyone in the way they might want.

[My crisis team] visited me every 1–2 days, which was good. However seeing a different person each time was very unhelpful.

But even in this situation there are still things you can do:

- If you are unhappy with how you've been treated, you can complain. Find out more in our legal webpages on *how to complain about health and social care*.
- If you're finding it hard to express yourself or make your voice heard, you could consider finding an advocate. Find out more information in our online booklet *The Mind guide to advocacy*.
- Support Mind's campaign to demand better crisis care across the country. You can read more about our campaign by searching the campaigning pages on our website.

Can I get support at a crisis house?

Crisis houses offer intensive, short-term support so that you can manage and resolve your crisis in a residential setting (rather than hospital).

How could a crisis house help me?

A crisis house might be a good option for you if your home environment isn't a safe place for you to be overnight, or things at home are contributing to your crisis, but it's not suitable for you to be admitted to hospital. There is no single model for a crisis house and you might find

some services described as a 'sanctuary' or 'safe haven'.

Most crisis houses offer:

- overnight accommodation
- a small number of beds
- a home-like environment
- intensive treatment

Sometimes the staff will have experience of mental health crises themselves.

Crisis house, sanctuary or safe haven?

These services can be very similar. The main difference is that services described as crisis houses usually offer overnight accommodation with a bed for you sleep in, whereas services described as sanctuaries or safe havens usually don't. Sanctuaries and safe havens might be open overnight as a supportive place for you to go for several hours during a crisis, but they don't usually provide somewhere for you to sleep or live in.

When should I use this service?

When you need more intensive support than can be offered to you at home, but it's not appropriate for you to be admitted to hospital.

How can I access crisis houses?

Crisis houses can be run by:

- The NHS
- Independent organisations like charities
- The NHS and charities in collaboration

Some crisis houses let you refer yourself, but for most you will need to be referred by a mental health professional. The crisis house staff will also need to assess you before you can be admitted, to make sure it's the right place to help you.

Criteria for admission often include:

- the length of stay you'll need
- what kind of mental health crisis you're experiencing
- your willingness to abide by house rules (this might be about drug use or how you behave towards other residents)
- your background, as some crisis houses are set up to help specific groups (such as women or people also struggling with drug addiction)

Because most crisis houses are run by, or in partnership with, the NHS, they will usually be free of charge. If you find a private crisis house you want to access, remember to check if there are any costs involved.

Crisis house support [was] relatively helpful, and was there 24/7. Unfortunately [where I went] you can only stop 14 days.

How can I find a crisis house near me?

Unfortunately there are a very limited number of crisis houses around England and Wales, and there might not necessarily be a crisis house near you. We've included a list of known crisis houses and sanctuaries at the end of this booklet on page XX.

Could I get crisis care in hospital?

When we're experiencing a mental health crisis, sometimes being in hospital is the best way to keep ourselves safe and make sure we get the level of treatment we need.

A doctor might recommend that you be admitted to hospital if:

- you need to be admitted for a short period for further assessment
- there's a risk to your safety, for example if you are severely self-harming or at risk of acting on suicidal thoughts
- there's a risk of harm to other people
- there isn't a safe way to treat you at home
- you need more intensive support than can be given to you at home

[The crisis team] admitted me to a hospital 20ish miles away [from where I live]. After three weeks in there I was sent home, and they visited every few days for two weeks until I got a CPN (community psychiatric nurse).

How does treatment work in hospital?

Hospital wards should:

- offer appropriate care
- offer treatment and activities
- be safe and secure
- use the minimum amount of restriction necessary to keep you and others safe

The care team should begin your care by creating a **care plan** for you – a written record that outlines your care and treatment. You have a right to be involved in creating your care plan, so the team should consult you about what goes in it.

Your care plan will name one person who will act as your **care coordinator** – this will be one of the mental health professionals involved in your care. Your care coordinator should then work with you to create a care plan for when you leave hospital.

About locked wards

Locked wards are a kind of hospital ward where you can't come and go freely. This is to keep you, and other people, safe.

- The doors may be physically locked, or you might need to get permission to leave the ward.
- Some wards might only be locked at certain times, but others may be locked all the time.
- Some locked wards have access to a secure outdoor space like a garden or courtyard.

On most psychiatric wards there will be a mixture of voluntary patients and others who are sectioned (detained under the Mental Health Act). Health services have an equal duty to keep all these patients safe. Because of this many psychiatric wards are locked, so if you are in hospital by choice you might feel like your freedom is more restricted than you would like.

Is hospital treatment right for me?

Your experience of being treated in hospital can depend on:

- the hospital you go to
- what kind of treatment you receive
- your personal feelings about being in hospital

Some people feel much safer and more secure in hospital than at home, but others find it very difficult.

Potential advantages

- your mental health problem is being properly recognised by mental health professionals, and you're likely to have access to a range of talking treatments and medication that could help you feel better
- there are trained staff around to protect you when you feel like you want to hurt yourself or others, and the environment is designed to minimise your opportunity to act on these kinds of feelings
- you might feel like you're getting a break from the problems you have at home
- it can provide structure in your day and make sure you have people around you

Potential disadvantages

- you can't always decide what you do, so there might be times when you get very bored or have to do activities you don't enjoy
- you don't have all your own comforting things around you, such as your familiar bed from home
- you won't be able to have your family or friends near you whenever you like
- you can't always leave when you want to
- nearly all hospitals have single-sex sleeping accommodation, but some may have mixed facilities during the day, which you might find difficult

Hospital wards aren't all the same. If you're making a decision about going into hospital, or are currently staying in hospital, you might want to think about these aspects of a ward to help you evaluate the quality of the service you're offered:

- **ward size and occupancy rates** – how many in-patients are there at any one time, and how many staff are available to look after you?
- **ward environment** – does the ward feel like a safe and therapeutic space to be in?
- **access to therapy** – what kinds of different therapies are you offered, and how frequently are they provided?
- **patient involvement** – do staff involve you in decisions about your treatment and communicate with you in a way that makes you feel informed and empowered?
- **cultural sensitivity and respect** – do staff show equal respect for all patients regardless of your ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, age etc.? At the same time, do they recognise and show sensitivity for any factors in your social or cultural background which might be impacting on your mental health?

Unfortunately, not everyone's experience of hospital treatment is positive. If you have a really bad experience with your hospital treatment and want to complain, see our legal webpages on *how to complain about health and social care*.

In psychiatric units, [I find] the most successful ones are those that organise activities for the patients, get us involved in our care, and take time out to actually listen to us, to our needs, and even just be someone to listen to us when we're feeling down.

How do I get admitted to hospital?

If you think that a stay in hospital would help you, then you can ask your GP, psychiatrist or other mental health professional to refer you. If you choose to go into hospital, you are considered a voluntary patient (or informal patient).

This means that:

- you should have the right to to come and go from the hospital (within reason)
- you may discharge yourself if you decide to go home

However, unfortunately in many areas there is a shortage of beds available so it might not always be possible for you to be treated in hospital, even if that's what you want.

Could ever I be forced to go to hospital?

If a group of mental health professionals agree that hospital treatment would be in your best interests to keep you or others safe, then they could detain you in hospital under the Mental Health Act (sometimes called being sectioned) – even if you don't want to be there.

There are lots of rules and restrictions about when you could be sectioned – it's a serious process only used when it's an emergency.

(See our legal webpages on *sectioning* for information about the circumstances in which you can be sectioned, and about your rights.)

What happens when I leave hospital?

There are some differences in what happens when you leave hospital depending on whether you are a voluntary patient or have been detained under the Mental Health Act.

- If you are a voluntary patient, see our legal webpages on *community care and aftercare*.
- If you have been detained under the Mental Health Act, see our legal webpages on *sectioning, discharge from hospital, and aftercare under section 117 of the Mental Health Act*.

What other kinds of support could I get?

If you're going through a crisis but you're not urgently worried for your safety, there are some other sources of support you can access.

Day services

If you're managing a mental health crisis at home, you could be referred to day services. These can include:

- drop-in centres
- acute day hospital services
- one-to-one support
- group support

Not all of these services are set up to help people manage a crisis, but some can do this if you're also getting support from other places to help keep you safe – such as your Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment (CRHT) team.

I once had to have the NHS community mental health team come out to assess me. Their service was good, but the next team I saw were better, and so was the day centre.

How can it help me?

Day services can help you resolve a crisis and learn self-management techniques that may help in the future. They can include:

- counselling
- other therapies such as art therapy
- activities such as gardening or ecotherapy
- opportunities to talk to others
- opportunities to have peace and quiet

The staff tend to have a good knowledge of local services and close links with the local community mental health team (CMHT). You can use day services in combination with care provided by an unpaid carer (such as a family member) and contact with your GP, CMHT or CRHT.

How can I access day services?

You can find day services near you by checking:

- **NHS service finder** – you can search online for NHS services near you, including day centres.
- **Your crisis team, or local CMHT**, if you're in contact with them. They might know of local services you can access.
- **Your local Mind** – many local Minds offer activities and services to support you in looking after your mental health.
- **Rethink Mental Illness' service directory**, available on their website.
- **Crisis houses** – some might let you visit during the day to access their support programmes, even if you're not staying overnight.

Online support

The internet can be a quick and accessible way to get support if you're going through a difficult time, but you don't feel like it's an emergency situation.

Remember: internet support isn't the same as professional help. If you're in extreme crisis and you're worried about keeping yourself safe, you should use an emergency support service.

How can it help me?

You could use the internet to:

- look for health information and learn tips to cope with a crisis
- get peer support
- make friends with people who understand what you're going through

Online support can be useful because you:

- can access it 24-hours a day
- don't have to wait to be seen or get a referral
- don't need a diagnosis to use it
- can try different types of support quickly to find the right one for you
- can use many sites for free
- can access it wherever you are (if you have access to the internet on your phone or other mobile device)

How can I access online support?

Many online support services are run by charities, and you can access them for free online – but you usually have to register an account with your email address. For example:

- Mind's peer support community **Elefriends** is a supportive, moderated space for anyone to get support for their mental health.
- b-eat run **message boards** for people looking for support with an eating disorder.
- Bipolar UK run an **eCommunity** for people experiencing bipolar disorder.
- SANE run **Black Dog Tribe** which is an online support community for people experiencing depression.
- The NHS run an online support site called **Big White Wall**, which offers guided support from trained professionals as well as peer support from

other people experiencing mental health problems. For many areas across the UK the site is free to access, although in some cases you might need a referral from your GP to use the service.

When using the internet to seek support for your mental health it's important to keep yourself safe. See our online booklet *How to stay safe online* for more information.

How can I plan for a crisis?

We can't always predict when we might find ourselves experiencing a crisis – but we can plan for one. This section covers some different ways you can plan in advance for how to look after yourself in a crisis.

Informal planning with friends and family

It might seem obvious, but talking to the people closest to you about how you want to manage a crisis can be a good way to plan for the future, and even prevent a crisis from happening. You don't necessarily need to write anything down for them, although you can do if you both feel it will help you remember what you've agreed.

For example, it could be useful to let them know:

- how they can spot the signs of a crisis
- how you would like them to help you
- who they should contact
- what treatment you would like
- whether you've made an advance statement or decision

You could also discuss whether your friend or family member might be willing to act as your advocate.

Luckily I had fantastic support from friends and family or who knows where I would be now!

Advance statements and decisions

In some situations experiencing a mental health crisis might mean that you become unable to make decisions about your treatment (in legal terms this is called 'losing capacity'). If you're worried that you may lose capacity to make decisions in the future, you can plan for this with:

- **Advance statements.** This includes any written statement you make about what you would like to happen if you lose capacity to make a relevant decision. Advance statements are not legally binding, so health professionals aren't necessarily required to follow them, but they should carry out your wishes wherever possible. Joint crisis plans and crisis cards are both types of advance statement.
- **Advance decisions** (also known as an 'advance directive' or 'living will'). These are a type of advance statement which clearly set out any medical treatments you do **not** want to receive. They are legally binding, so a health professional must comply with your advance decision (except if the type of treatment you have refused relates to your mental health problem and you are currently sectioned under the Mental Health Act).

(For more information on what your rights are if you lose capacity, see our legal webpages on the *Mental Capacity Act*.)

How do they work?

Advance statements can set out your views and preferences on a range of things, such as:

- what treatment you would prefer
- who you would like to be contacted in a crisis

- your spiritual views and requests
- your food preferences

You can write an advance statement yourself, but it might be more likely to be followed if you can write it with a local NHS Trust's advance statement scheme. You can find out if this scheme exists near you from your care coordinator, GP or psychiatrist. Rethink Mental Illness' page on making an advance statement explains the recommended information to include.

Advance decisions can only set out what treatment you would like to refuse if you lose the capacity to make decisions.

You can make an advance decision:

- **orally**, such as by telling a friend, family member, health professional or other professional
- **in writing**, such as by having a note made in your hospital or GP medical notes

However, it is better to have an advance decision written down so that its validity is less likely to be challenged by anyone.

There are some important restrictions on when an advance decision works, and when professionals have to follow it. For more information on this, see our legal webpage on *advance decisions*.

Joint crisis plan (JCP)

A joint crisis plan (JCP) is a type of advance statement that's agreed jointly between you and any mental health professionals involved in your treatment. Having a plan like this can also reduce your chances of being sectioned, as people will know how best to look after you in a crisis.

How does it work?

Someone from your care team will write your crisis plan with you, and you'll have the final say on what's included. You'll also get to decide who receives a copy of your plan. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommends that a joint crisis plan should include:

- information on early warning signs of a crisis
- what support you have to help you manage your crisis at home
- where you'd like to go, if you need to be admitted to hospital
- arrangements for childcare if you're admitted to hospital
- advance treatment statements, including your preferences
- any family members you'd like to be contacted
- contact details for your care team
- information about 24-hour access to services

You could also include:

- details of any medication you take
- psychiatric and physical diagnoses
- allergies

Crisis cards

A crisis card is a small card you can carry in your wallet or pocket which gives key details about how people can help you in a crisis, in case you become unwell while out and about.

How does it work?

Crisis cards are another type of advance statement. They can be very basic and just cover vital information about your diagnosis and who to contact in a crisis, or they can be more complex. It's up to you what you put on your card.

If you have a full advance statement, joint crisis plan or CPA care plan it's also a good idea to mention this on your crisis card, to make sure any health care professionals who treat you are aware of it.

Care planning (care programme approach)

The care programme approach (CPA) is a way to coordinate your care if you have severe mental health problems or a range of different needs. Under the care programme approach, a team of mental health professionals work with you to create a comprehensive care plan for how to look after you. Part of your care plan will include planning for a crisis.

How does it work?

A CPA coordinator will be assigned to manage your care plan – this person is usually a mental health nurse or someone else closely involved with your care, and they will be your first point of contact. Every care plan under the CPA should include a crisis plan which gives clear details of:

- who is responsible for your care and support
- which health care professionals to contact in a crisis
- who you can contact if your care coordinator is not available
- what should be done if your mental health gets worse
- which services have worked well for you in the past
- contact details for someone you respond well to in a crisis, such as a friend or family member you trust
- other options in case your first choice of treatment is not available

Your CPA coordinator should give you a copy of your care plan. If you agree, they will also share a copy of your care plan with people involved in your care. If everyone involved in your care follows your care plan, this should ensure that any crisis is handled in a way that is both acceptable to you and most likely to be effective.

List of crisis houses and sanctuaries

Please note:

- **Mind does not endorse any particular crisis house or sanctuary**, including those listed on this page. We have no knowledge of their services or performance.
 - **This is not an exhaustive list.** You may be able to find other crisis houses or sanctuaries near you.
 - It is your responsibility to decide whether the crisis house or sanctuary you are considering using is appropriate for you, and whether you're comfortable with their rules, attitudes and treatments.
-
- **Bristol Men's Crisis House** – residential crisis house located in **Bristol**, for men only. You can be referred by a health care professional, or you can self-refer by calling 0117 934 9848.
 - **Bristol Sanctuary** – non-residential service located in **Bristol** open 7pm–2am on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. To find out more you can contact them on 0117 9542952.
 - **Coed Arian Community Crisis House** – residential crisis house for residents of **Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan**, run by Welsh mental health charity Gofal with the local health board. A health care professional can refer you to this service.
 - **Dial House** – non-residential service located in **Leeds**, open 6pm–2am on Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. To refer yourself call 0113 260 9328 on the night you wish to request a visit.
 - **Drayton Park Women's Crisis Centre** – residential crisis house located in **London** that accepts self-referrals from women living in Camden and Islington. To find out more you can contact them on 020 7607 2777, or visit the website.
 - **Hastings Sanctuary Service** – sanctuary located in **Hastings** (Sussex), run by the charity Turning Point. This service is for anyone

experiencing a mental health crisis, and they do accept people with drug or alcohol problems. Your CHRT team must refer you to this service.

- **Link House** - residential crisis house located in **Bristol**, for women only. A health care professional can refer you to this service, or you might be able to refer yourself. To find out more you can contact them on 0117 925 1811 or email enquiries@missinglinkhousing.co.uk
- **Maytree Suicide Respite Centre** – residential crisis house located in London, which accepts self-referrals. To find out more you can contact them on 020 7263 7070, or visit their website.
- **Rethink Mental Illness crisis houses** – the charity Rethink Mental Illness offers a number of crisis houses around the country. You can find a full list by searching the online directory on their website, or alternatively contact their information line on 0300 5000 927.
- **The Safe Haven** – non-residential service located in **Corby** (Northamptonshire), open Saturday–Tuesday evenings, between 6pm–2am. To find out more you can contact them on 01536 461414, or visit their website.
- **Samaritans local branches** – some local branches of the Samaritans around the country offer a drop in service where you can talk to a volunteer about anything that is upsetting you.
- **The Sanctuary** – non-residential service with locations in **Greater Manchester, Wigan & Leigh** and **Bolton**, open every day throughout the year 8pm–6am. Refer yourself by calling:
 - Manchester: 0161 637 0808
 - Wigan & Leigh: 01942 410 522
 - Bolton: 0300 303 0581
- **The Sanctuary Grimsby** – non-residential service located in **Grimsby** (Lincolnshire), open between 8pm–6am. Refer yourself by calling 01472 722 007.

Useful contacts

Note: For details of regional crisis houses and sanctuaries, see pp34–35.

Mind

Mind Infoline: 0300 123 3393
(Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm)
email: info@mind.org.uk
text: 86463
web: mind.org.uk

Details of local Minds, other local services and Mind's Legal Line. Language Line is available for languages other than English.

Big White Wall

web: bigwhitewall.com

Online community for adults experiencing emotional or psychological distress. It is free to use in many areas if you live in the UK, if you're a student, or if you have a referral from your GP.

and family, including a helpline and online community.

C.A.L.L. (Community Advice and Listening Line)

tel: 0800 123 737
web: callhelpline.org.uk

Provides listening services, information and support for people experiencing a mental health problem in Wales.

CALM (Campaign against living miserably)

tel: 0800 58 58 58
web: thecalmzone.net

Provides listening services, information and support for men at risk of suicide.

Carers UK

tel: 0808 808 7777
web: carersuk.org

Charity providing information and support for people caring for someone else, including someone with a mental health problem.

Cruse Bereavement Care

tel: 0844 477 9400
web: cruse.org.uk

Charity providing information and support after someone has died.

Elefriendsweb: elefriends.org.uk

A supportive community which provides online peer support for anyone experiencing a mental health problem.

Helplines Partnershipweb: helplines.org

Directory of helplines available in the UK which you can search to find support suited to you.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)web: nice.org.uk

Produces clinical guidelines on recommended treatments for different conditions.

Next Generation Text Serviceweb: ngts.org.uk

Provides a talk/type relay service for anyone who has difficulty hearing or being understood when speaking over the phone.

NHS 111 / NHS Direct

tel: 111 (England)

tel: 0845 46 47 (Wales)

Non-emergency medical help and advice

NHS Choicesweb: nhs.uk

Provides information on a wide range of health and social care topics. Provides an online search tool to find NHS services near you.

Nightlineweb: nightline.ac.uk

Lists contact information for support and listening services run in universities and colleges across the UK.

Papyrus HOPEline

tel: 0800 068 4141

web: papyrus-uk.org

Provides information and support for anyone under 35 who is struggling with suicidal feelings and self-harm.

Rethink Mental Illnessweb: rethink.org

Provides information and support for people experiencing a mental health problem, including an online directory of local support services.

Samaritans

tel:08457 90 90 90
freephone: 116 123
email: jo@samaritans.org
Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK
Chris PO Box 90 90
Stirling FK8 2SA
web: samaritans.org

24-hour emotional support for anyone struggling to cope.

SANE

tel: 0845 767 8000
web: sane.org.uk

Runs SANEline helpline offering practical information and support. Also runs an online support community called Black Dog Tribe.

Switchboard

tel: 0300 330 0630
web: switchboard.lgbt

LGBT+ helpline. Provides listening services, information and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities across the country.

Mind

We're Mind, the mental health charity for England and Wales. We believe no one should have to face a mental health problem alone. We're here for you. Today. Now. We're on your doorstep, on the end of a phone or online. Whether you're stressed, depressed or in crisis. We'll listen, give you advice, support and fight your corner. And we'll push for a better deal and respect for everyone experiencing a mental health problem.

Mind Infoline: 0300 123 3393 / Text: 86463
info@mind.org.uk
mind.org.uk



Further information

Mind offers a range of mental health information on:

- diagnoses
- treatments
- practical help for wellbeing
- mental health legislation
- where to get help

To read or print Mind's information booklets for free, visit mind.org.uk or contact Mind Infoline on 0300 123 3393 or at info@mind.org.uk

To buy copies of Mind's information booklets, visit mind.org.uk/shop or phone 0844 448 4448 or email publications@mind.org.uk

This information was written by Katherine Dunn

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References available on request
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Support Mind

Providing information costs money. We really value donations, which enable us to get our information to more people who need it.

Just £5 could help another 15 people in need receive essential practical information.

If you would like to support our work with a donation, please contact us on:

tel: 020 8215 2243

email: dons@mind.org.uk

web: mind.org.uk/donate

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