

Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people in Kent

A mental health and wellbeing online platform for young people has been extended for all young people across Kent.

As part of the Headstart Kent Programme, the Kooth digital mental health support service has already given one in five young people, aged 10 to 16, easy access to an online community of peers and a team of experienced counsellors.

The service is free and can be accessed at www.kooth.com. It's a place to get advice, information and support 24/7. You can chat to a friendly qualified counsellor Monday to Friday between 12pm and 10pm and Saturday and Sunday between 6pm and 10pm.

Kent County Council's Director of Integrated Children's Services, Stuart Collins, said: "In these unprecedented times it is important for all of us that we continue to focus on the emotional health and well-being of children. I am happy to be able to support the increase in access to safe online support through developing the Kooth offer across Kent in this way."

The NHS Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group's Senior Commissioner for Children and Young People's Services, Sue Mullin, said: "We are pleased to be working with KCC colleagues to support the extension of Kooth. We know that Kooth offers children and young people across Kent a confidential service whether it's accessing articles, joining forums or accessing scheduled times with a counsellor. The feedback from our children and young people has been very positive, and we are pleased that we are now able to provide the opportunity to access Kooth to more children and young people and truly see the impact of jointly commissioning this service."

The service is funded by Headstart Kent on behalf of the National Lottery Community Fund, NHS Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group and Kent County Council's Public Health Grant.

Young people in Kent can also continue to access advice, information and support by:

- Accessing www.moodspark.org.uk or www.kentresiliencehub.org.uk to learn about mental health and find tips and resources to keep emotionally healthy
- Texting ChatHealth for support around physical and mental health on 07520 618850. The number is monitored Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.
- Completing a form for the Children and Young People's Counselling Service at www.kentcht.nhs.uk/forms/school-health-service-referral-form
- Calling the Single Point of Access (SPA) on 0300 123 4496 if you are not sure what help is needed.
- Accessing the Big White Wall if aged 16+ for anonymous support through <https://www.bigwhitewall.com/>

For people of all ages needing mental health support, just text the word "Kent" or "Medway" to 85258. This is a new 24/7 text service provided by SHOUT and the Crisis Text Line as part of the Kent and Medway Release the Pressure campaign.

For more information about how to look after your mental health during the coronavirus pandemic visit www.kent.gov.uk/wellbeing