



Crisis services

A guide explaining what mental health crisis services are available, how they can help and when to access them. Also provides guidance on how you can plan for a crisis.

If you require this information in Word document format for compatibility with screen readers, please email: publications@mind.org.uk

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What help could I get in a crisis?

I'm in crisis now and I need urgent help

If you don't feel you can keep yourself safe right now, seek immediate help:

- Go to any [Accident & Emergency \(A&E\) department](#).
- Call 999 and ask for an ambulance to take you to A&E.
- Ask someone else to call 999 for you or take you to A&E.

If you need urgent support but don't want to go to A&E, you could:

- call Samaritans on freephone 116 123 – they're always open and are there to listen
- contact your GP surgery and ask for an [emergency appointment](#)
- contact [NHS 111 \(England\)](#) or [NHS Direct 0845 46 47 \(Wales\)](#)
- contact your local [crisis team](#) (CRHT), if you're under their care
- click the yellow '[I need urgent help](#)' button at the top of this screen for more options.

If you want to help someone else, see our page on [how to help someone else seek help](#), including [how to help someone else in an emergency](#).

What is a mental health crisis?

A mental health crisis is when you feel your mental health is at breaking point, and you need urgent help and support.

For example, you might have feelings or experiences that feel very painful or difficult to manage such as [suicidal feelings](#), [self-harm](#), [panic attacks](#), [flashbacks](#), [hypomania or mania](#), or [psychosis](#) (such as [paranoia](#) or [hearing voices](#)). You might also have other experiences that aren't mentioned here.

Some people feel in crisis as part of ongoing mental health problems, or due to stressful and difficult life experiences such as [abuse](#), [bereavement](#), [addiction](#), [money problems](#) or [housing problems](#). Or there might not be a particular reason.

However you experience a crisis, it's always OK to ask for help.

What help could I get?

Nobody plans to have a crisis, but knowing your options can be useful. Exploring different types of support might be something you feel able to do at less difficult times. (Our page on [planning for a crisis](#) has more suggestions).

There's no wrong order to try things in – different things work for different people at different times. But some types of support might be more suitable for you, or more easily available.

This table shows some types of crisis support:

Emergency GP appointments	<p>Your local GP surgery should offer you an appointment quickly if you need urgent support. You don't need to be registered as a patient already.</p> <p>To find out more, see our pages on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• emergency GP appointments• talking to your GP.
Accident & Emergency (A&E)	<p>A&E departments are open 24 hours a day and anyone can visit them free of charge.</p> <p>To find out more, see our page on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accident & Emergency (A&E).
Helplines & listening services	<p>Helplines provide trained listeners and often have other options for getting in touch, like email, text messaging or web chat.</p> <p>To find out more, see our page on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• helplines & listening services.
Crisis teams (CRHTs)	<p>Crisis teams support people who might otherwise need to go to hospital. They can support you during a crisis if you're already under their care.</p> <p>To find out more, see our page on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• crisis teams (CRHTs).
Treatment in hospital	<p>During a crisis, staying in hospital might be the best way to keep you safe and provide you with the level of treatment you need.</p> <p>To find out more, see our page on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• treatment in hospital.
Crisis houses	<p>Crisis houses offer intensive, short-term support in a residential setting.</p> <p>To find out more, see our page on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• crisis houses.
Day services	<p>Day services can be helpful if you're managing a mental health crisis at home.</p>

To find out more, see our page on:

- [day services](#).

[Read Simon's blog about accessing NHS services in a crisis.](#)

Want to add your story? [Find out more about blogging for us.](#)

What if I can't get the help I need?

Unfortunately, not everyone gets the care, support and respect they need during a crisis. Excellent crisis services do exist, but some services aren't available in all areas or don't provide a good enough standard of care.

"I once waited over 4 hours in the waiting area with a friend in the middle of the night. During my worst crisis I was contained (prevented from leaving) alone in a virtually empty room overnight."

It can be really hard if you don't get the crisis care you need, but it's important to remember that you deserve help and support. Here are some options for you to think about:

- **Explore other options for support.** There may be something you haven't tried yet that could be helpful. (Our pages on [Useful contacts](#) and [facing and overcoming barriers](#) suggest some starting points.)
- **Get to know your rights.** Our [legal pages](#) explain your rights in a range of situations. If you're unhappy with how you've been treated, [you can complain](#).
- **Find an advocate.** An advocate could help you to express yourself and get your voice heard. (Find out more in our pages on [advocacy](#).)
- **Take action with Mind.** We're campaigning for better crisis care across the country. (See our [campaigning page](#) for more information.)

"I once saw a crisis team within a few hours of seeing my GP. They said they couldn't understand what the problem was and therefore couldn't help me, which left me feeling very unsupported."

How can I plan for a possible crisis?

The idea of planning for a mental health crisis can feel difficult. You might not like the idea of planning for something you hope won't happen. But it could help to think about what you could do if you start to feel in crisis in the future, and what kind of support you think you might want.

This section has some suggestions for you to consider. Some people find these ideas useful, but remember that different things work for different people at different times.

Explore ideas for help and support

It could help to explore possible options for support when things are less difficult, so you have information ready for times when you might need it. For example, you could:

- [Talk to your GP](#) – you could ask your GP about options for treatment and support. (For more about talking to your doctor, see our guide to [seeking help for a mental health problem](#).)
- [Find your local Mind](#), and see if they offer support such as [day services](#) to help during a crisis.
- [Find details of helplines and listening services](#), including how to contact them and when they're open. It could help to write these details down.
- Read our information on [types of mental health problems](#), including ideas for self-care in a crisis and organisations that may be able to help.
- Try [peer support](#). Talking to people with similar experiences could help you find out about different services, or give you helpful tips to try.
- [Make a self-care box](#). Some people find it helpful to fill a box with things you find comforting or distracting. This means you can personalise what is helpful for you, and have this ready in advance, as it can be very difficult to come up with ideas when you're feeling in crisis. You could also do this using an app on your phone, such as the [Stay Alive app](#).
- [Find a recovery college](#). Recovery colleges offer courses about mental health and recovery in a supportive environment. You can find local providers on the [Mind Recovery Net website](#).

Social care services support people who struggle to manage day-to-day activities. To find out more, see our [page on social care](#) in our guide to health and social care rights.

Make informal plans with friends or family

Talking to people close to you about how you'd prefer to manage a crisis can be a good way to plan for the future. It could be helpful to write down what you've decided, so you both remember what you've said.

For example, you could let them know:

- how they might help you spot the signs of a crisis
- how you would like them to help you
- who they could contact
- what treatment you would prefer.

You could also discuss whether your friend or family member might feel able to act as your advocate. (See our pages on [advocacy](#) for more information).

“Luckily I had fantastic support from friends and family.”

Make an advance statement

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 about losing capacity, you might decide to make an advance statement. This is a written statement about what you would like to happen if you lose capacity, such as:

- what treatment you would prefer
- who you would like to be contacted in a crisis
- any spiritual or religious views and requests
- your food preferences.

You could ask your GP, care coordinator, psychiatrist or other health care professional to help you make an advance statement. For more about what you might include, see the [Rethink Mental Illness website](#).

Advance statements **aren't legally binding**, so health care professionals aren't required to follow them, but they should carry out your wishes wherever possible. (For more information about your rights if you lose capacity, see our pages on the [Mental Capacity Act](#).)

Examples of advance statements include:

Joint crisis plans (JCPs)

Joint crisis plans (also known as JCPs) are a type of advance statement agreed between you and any health care professionals involved in your treatment. This could include:

- signs that you might be experiencing a crisis
- what support you might be offered in a crisis
- practical help you might need if you go into hospital, such as childcare arrangements
- who you would want to be contacted.

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published recommendations on what to include – you can [read these on the NICE website](#). You might also decide to include other information, for example, details of medication you're taking or any allergies you have.

Crisis cards

A crisis card is a small card you carry in your wallet, purse or pocket with key details about how you'd prefer to be helped in a crisis, so you can easily find it or show it to other people. You might decide to tell people you know, such as friends or family, about the card and where you keep it.

What's the difference between advance statements and advance decisions?

Advance statements aren't legally binding, and can cover a wide range of issues related to your treatment in a crisis. They should be taken into account if a relevant decision is being made about you during a crisis.

Advance decisions are legally binding decisions to refuse certain types of health care in the future. (See our page on [advance decisions](#) in our guide to the [Mental Capacity Act](#) for more information.)

What are emergency GP appointments?

Your local GP surgery should be able to offer you an appointment to see a doctor quickly if you need urgent support for your mental health. This is often called an emergency appointment or same-day appointment.

When should I make an emergency GP appointment?

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

How could it help me?

An emergency appointment involves seeing a doctor quickly – usually the first appointment with an available doctor. If it's not with your regular GP and you'd like to see them too, you can ask your surgery about booking a follow-up appointment.

What might happen at the appointment?

In your appointment, the doctor might:

- **ask about what's happening for you currently**, including your moods, thoughts, behaviours and any recent events that have contributed to you feeling in crisis
- **provide information and advice**, for example, about other local services you can contact yourself
- **prescribe or adjust medication**, which might be to help you cope with symptoms you're experiencing or to try to reduce [side effects](#) that are contributing to how you're feeling
- **refer you for more support**, for example to a [crisis team \(CRHT\)](#) or potentially for [hospital admission](#).

(For more information on [talking to a GP](#), [what might happen at the appointment](#) and [whether it's confidential](#), see our guide to [seeking help for a mental health problem](#).)

How can I access it?

If you need an emergency appointment, you should be offered one as quickly as possible – although you might be asked to wait for a doctor to call you back before being given an appointment time. You can go to a doctor's surgery in person to ask for an appointment, but they won't usually be able to see you straight away – so it's often best to contact them before going in.

If you need an appointment outside regular opening hours, you might see a doctor at your nearest surgery or you might be asked to visit another surgery in your local area.

You can get urgent help from any GP surgery without being [registered as a patient](#), although you might need to register as a temporary patient if you need treatment over more than 24 hours.

Emergency GP appointments in England

To access this service in England, you can:

- **contact your local GP surgery.** You can find GP surgeries on the [NHS Choices website](#). If the surgery is closed, you should hear a recorded message explaining what to do, or you can call 111 instead.
- **call 111**, a free 24-hour NHS helpline that can help you access local services including GPs. (Find out more about this service, including options for people with hearing difficulties, on the [NHS Choices website](#).)

Emergency GP appointments in Wales

To access this service in Wales, you can:

- **contact your local GP surgery.** You can find GP surgeries on the [NHS Direct Wales website](#). If the surgery is closed, you should hear a recorded message explaining what to do, or you can use the options below instead.
- **contact your local out-of-hours service.** To find their details, see the [Health in Wales website](#).
- **call NHS Direct Wales** on 0845 46 47, a 24-hour NHS helpline that can help you access local services, including GPs. (Find out more about this service, including call charges and options for people with hearing difficulties, on the [NHS Direct Wales website](#).)
- **call 111**, a free 24-hour NHS helpline being trialled in some areas of Wales. (Find out more about this service, including where this service is available and options for people with hearing difficulties, on the [Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust website](#).)

What is Accident & Emergency (A&E)?

Accident & Emergency (A&E) departments deal with serious and life-threatening medical emergencies, which includes helping people experiencing a mental health crisis.

When should I go to A&E?

If you feel unable to keep yourself safe and you need immediate help – especially if you think you are at risk of acting on [suicidal feelings](#), or you have seriously harmed yourself and need medical attention.

How could it help me?

Some A&E departments have a liaison psychiatry team (specialist help for mental health) that you can ask to see. If there isn't a liaison psychiatry team, A&E staff might contact other local services such as a [crisis team \(CRHT\)](#) to help assess you.

The liaison psychiatry team or mental health team might:

- make an initial assessment of your mental health needs (sometimes called a psychiatric evaluation)
- help keep you safe for the short-term
- prescribe [medication](#) to help you cope with symptoms you may be experiencing right now
- put you in contact with other crisis services, such as your local [crisis team \(CRHT\)](#)
- decide whether you can go home, or if you need to be [admitted to hospital](#).

"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."

What might happen when I arrive?

This can vary depending on the situation and the hospital you go to, but might include:

- **being asked to register** – staff might ask for details like your name and address, and the reason why you've come to A&E.
- **being assessed** (sometimes called **triage**). A medical professional should talk to you to find out what's happening and how best to help you. It could help if you mention that you're experiencing a mental health crisis and ask to see the liaison psychiatry team.
- **having to wait**. A&E departments can be very busy and unfortunately you might have to wait for some time even though you need help urgently. It could be helpful to ask someone you trust to wait with you, if this is an option for you.
- **being treated, transferred or sent home**. You might be given treatment in A&E, transferred to another part of the hospital (such as a mental health ward) or be told you can go home.

[Read Caroline's blog about how going to A&E helped her.](#)

Want to add your story? [Find out more about blogging for us.](#)

How can I access it?

A&E departments are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and anyone can visit them free of charge.

Not all hospitals have A&E departments – to find one near you, you can:

- search on the [NHS Choices website](#)
- contact [NHS 111](#) (in England and [some parts of Wales](#)) by dialling 111

- contact [NHS Direct](#) (in Wales) on 0845 46 47.

To get to A&E, you can:

- **go directly to A&E** – if it's too far to walk you could take public transport, call a taxi or ask someone to give you a lift.
- **call 999** and ask for an ambulance.

Can I be turned away from A&E?

You can't be turned away from A&E if you need emergency treatment, or prevented from coming back in the future. When you arrive in A&E you should be assessed by a clinical member of staff. But you might not get treatment if it's not an emergency, for example, if professionals believe you could wait to get help from your GP instead.

What are helplines and listening services?

Many national and local organisations run helplines that you can call in a crisis. Talking to a trained listener could give you some support and help you make sense of what's happening for you.

When should I use a helpline or listening service?

If you're struggling with difficult feelings and need to talk to someone quickly, including if you're not ready or able to access other types of support.

How could they help me?

By letting you talk through your feelings and experiences without judging you or telling you what to do. Many listening services let you talk through your problems for as long as you need.

Before calling a helpline, you might want to consider:

- What times are they open?
- Is it free to call or is there a cost involved?
- Is what you say confidential? For example, many services have policies on what to do if someone says they have attempted suicide or are actively planning to.
- What will you do if the line is busy? It's often worth trying several times, or you might plan to call back later or try a different service.

You might be able to find this information on the organisation's website, or you could ask the advisor to explain their policies during the call.

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

Who can I contact?

- To talk about anything that is upsetting you, you can contact [Samaritans](#) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can call 116 123 (free from any phone), email jo@samaritans.org or [visit some branches in person](#). You can also call the Welsh Language Line on 0300 123 3011 (7pm–11pm every day).
- If you're experiencing a mental health problem or supporting someone else, you can call [SANEline](#) on 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm–10.30pm every day).
- If you're under 25, you can call The Mix on 0808 808 4994 (Sunday–Friday 2pm–11pm), request support by email [using this form on The Mix website](#) or [use their crisis text messenger service](#).
- If you're under 35 and struggling with suicidal feelings, or concerned about a young person who might be struggling, you can call [Papyrus HOPELINEUK](#) on 0800 068 4141 (weekdays 10am–10pm, weekends 2pm–10pm and bank holidays 2pm–10pm), email pat@papyrus-uk.org or text 07786 209 697.
- If you identify as male, you can call [the Campaign Against Living Miserably \(CALM\)](#) on 0800 58 58 58 (5pm–midnight every day) or use their [webchat service](#).
- If you're a student, you can look on the [Nightline website](#) to see if your university or college offers a night-time listening service. Nightline phone operators are all students too.
- If you identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, you can call [Switchboard](#) on 0300 330 0630 (10am–10pm every day), email chris@switchboard.lgbt or use their webchat service. Phone operators all identify as LGBT+.
- If you live in Wales, you can call [the Community Advice and Listening Line \(C.A.L.L.\)](#) on 0800 123 737 (open 24/7) or you can text 'help' followed by a question to 81066.
- For more options, visit [the Helplines Partnership](#) website for a directory of UK helplines. [Mind's Infoline](#) can also help you find services that can support you. If you're outside the UK, [befrienders.org](#) lists emotional support helplines around the world.

“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!”

If you can't talk on the phone

As well as phone numbers to call, some organisations routinely offer support in other ways – which could include emails, text messages or web chat. Or you might need to make a specific request:

- Some organisations are required to make reasonable adjustments for people with disabilities, which could include providing other forms of communication. (See our page on [what are services and public functions?](#) in our [guide to discrimination in everyday life](#) for more information).

- If you have difficulty hearing or speaking, it might help to use the [Next Generation Text Service \(NGTS\) Typetalk/Text Relay app](#) on a mobile device or computer.
- If you need a translator or British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, you could ask the organisation if they provide a translation service and if it costs anything to use.

What are crisis teams?

Crisis resolution and home treatment (CRHT) teams can support you if you have a mental health crisis outside of hospital. They're often called crisis teams for short, although you might find your local service is called something different.

"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."

When should I use a crisis team?

If you need urgent support and you are already in contact with your local mental health services. This could include ongoing support after [visiting A&E](#) or [staying in hospital](#).

How could it help me?

Crisis teams support people who might otherwise need to go to hospital, for example due to psychosis, severe self-harm or suicide attempts. They usually include a number of mental health professionals, such as a psychiatrist, mental health nurses, social workers and support workers.

They can:

- visit you in your home or elsewhere in the community, for example at a [crisis house](#) or [day centre](#)
- visit you [in hospital](#) if you're going on leave or [being discharged](#)
- assess your needs and offer support to help you stay at home, or [leave hospital](#) more quickly
- assist with [self-help strategies](#)
- administer [medication](#)
- provide practical help, for example with [money](#), [housing](#) or [childcare arrangements](#)
- help [plan your care](#) if you've had a crisis, to prevent this happening again in future.

The amount of support they provide can vary, for example, how often they can visit you and whether you can contact them 24 hours a day. Staff members often work in shifts, so you might not see the same people each time.

Support from a crisis team could help you manage a crisis at home, which some people prefer. But this isn't right for everyone and you might feel you'd rather be treated in hospital – for example if your home environment has contributed to you feeling in crisis.

"[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."

How can I access it?

There are different ways you can access your local crisis team during a crisis, depending on your situation and how your local team works. These can include:

- **Contacting them yourself.** If you're already in contact with a crisis team, you might have been given details for getting in touch with them during a crisis.
- **Being referred.** Many crisis 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.
- **Through your care plan.** If you are currently being supported by a community mental health team (CMHT), your care plan should include details of who to contact in a crisis, which will often be your local crisis team.

"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."

You might want to ask your crisis team:

- **What support can they provide during a crisis?** For example providing information or advice, or support if you're experiencing suicidal thoughts.
- **How do they provide 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 times of day.

"[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."

About treatment in hospital

Why might I need to go to hospital?

If you're experiencing a mental health crisis, staying in hospital might be the best way to keep you safe and provide you with the level of treatment you need. This might be because:

- you need to be admitted for a short period for further assessment
- there's a risk to your safety if you don't stay in hospital, for example, if you are severely self-harming or at risk of acting on suicidal thoughts
- there is a risk you could harm someone else

- there isn't a safe way to treat you at home
- you need more intensive support than can be given to you elsewhere.

"[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)."

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 prefer being in hospital while others find it very difficult. This table lists some aspects of hospital stays you might want to consider:

Potential advantages	Potential disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You're likely to have access to a range of talking therapies and medication.• Trained staff are around to support you, for example, if you feel like self-harming.• You might feel you're getting a welcome break from stressful experiences or problems.• It can provide structure in your day and there are people around you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You can't always decide what you do, so there might be times when you feel bored or have to do activities you don't enjoy.• You don't have all your own things around you.• You won't be able to have family or friends near you whenever you like.• Nearly all hospitals have single-sex sleeping accommodation, but some may have mixed facilities during the day which some people find difficult.• You can't always leave when you want to.• You may be assessed under the Mental Health Act if you try to leave permanently (see our page on leaving hospital as a voluntary patient for more information).

"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 can I access it?

If you think staying in hospital could help you, then you can ask your GP, psychiatrist or another health care professional to refer you.

If you choose to go into hospital, you are considered a **voluntary patient** (also known as an **informal patient**). This means that:

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

Unfortunately many areas have a shortage of available beds, so it might not always be possible for you to be treated in hospital - even if that's what you'd prefer. (Our page on [voluntary patients](#) has more information, including on the [advantages and disadvantages of being a voluntary patient](#).)

About locked wards

Locked wards are a kind of hospital ward where you can't come and go freely.

- 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 patients who are [sectioned](#) under the [Mental Health Act](#). Health services have an equal duty to keep all these patients safe. For these reasons 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.

[Read Claire's blog about her experience of going into hospital during a crisis.](#)

[Read Karl's blog about depression, suicidal feelings and going into hospital.](#)

Want to add your story? [Find out more about blogging for us.](#)

Could 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.

See our pages on [sectioning](#) for information about the circumstances in which you can be sectioned, and about your legal 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 sectioned under the Mental Health Act.

- If you are a **voluntary patient**, see our pages on [voluntary patients](#).
- If you have been **sectioned under the Mental Health Act**, see our pages on [sectioning](#), [discharge from hospital](#), and [aftercare under section 117 of the Mental Health Act](#).

"I don't recall having a care plan in hospital. I certainly wasn't aware of a discharge plan and this caused myself and my partner stress and anxiety."

What are crisis houses?

Crisis houses offer intensive, short-term support to help you manage a mental health crisis in a residential setting (rather than in a hospital).

When should I use a crisis house?

As an alternative to going into hospital, for example if you don't feel safe at home overnight, or things at home are contributing to you being in crisis.

How could it help me?

Crisis houses can vary and offer slightly different services. However, they usually offer:

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

Crisis house, sanctuary or safe haven?

Services with these names can be very similar. The main difference is that **crisis houses** usually offer overnight accommodation with a bed for you to sleep in.

Services described as **sanctuaries** or **safe havens** usually don't provide somewhere to sleep or live in. But they might be open overnight as a supportive place for you to go during a crisis.

How can I access it?

Crisis houses might be run by the NHS, independent organisations such as charities, or both of these together – so they're often free to use. If you find a private crisis house you want to access, it's best to check if there are any costs involved.

To use a crisis house, you'll usually need to be referred by a mental health professional, although some let you refer yourself. The staff will also need to assess you, to make sure it's the right place to help you.

When assessing you, they might consider:

- the length of stay you'll need
- the type of mental health crisis you're experiencing
- your willingness to keep to their house rules (such as rules about drug use or how you behave towards other residents)
- your background – some crisis houses are set up to help specific groups (such as women or people who are also struggling with drug addiction).

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

Is there a crisis house or sanctuary near me?

We've listed some details of crisis houses and sanctuaries. Unfortunately there are a very limited number around England and Wales, and there might not be one near you – but **this isn't an exhaustive list** and you may be able to find others we haven't included.

- **Mind doesn't endorse any particular crisis house or sanctuary**, including those listed on this page. We have no knowledge of their services or performance.
- **It's up to you** to decide if the crisis house or sanctuary you're considering is appropriate for you, and whether you're comfortable with their rules, approach and treatments.

This section provides information on crisis houses in:

- Multiple locations
- Bristol
- Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan
- Corby, Northamptonshire
- Hastings, Sussex
- Leeds
- London
- Manchester and Greater Manchester
- Torquay, Devon

Multiple locations

- [Rethink Mental Illness](#) – offers a number of crisis houses around the country. To find out more, you can [search their online directory](#), call their information line on

0300 5000 927 (open from 9.30am–4pm on weekdays, excluding bank holidays) or [ask to get information by email](#).

- [Samaritans](#) – some local branches around the country offer a non-residential drop-in service where you can talk to a volunteer in person. To find out more, you can [search their online directory](#), call them on 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org.

Bristol

- [Bristol Men's Crisis House](#) – residential crisis house, 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 open from 6pm–12.30am on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday. To find out more, you can call them on 0117 9542952, text 07709 295 661 or email awp.bmhsanctuary@nhs.net.
- [Women's Crisis House \(Link House\)](#) – residential crisis house, 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 call them on 0117 925 1811 from 8am–6pm or email enquiries@missinglinkhousing.co.uk.

Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan

- [Coed Arian Community Crisis House](#) – residential crisis house, run by Welsh mental health charity [Gofal](#) with the local health board. A health care professional can refer you to this service.

Corby, Northamptonshire

- [The Safe Haven](#) – non-residential service, open from 6pm–2am on Saturday–Tuesday evenings. To find out more, you can call them on 01536 461414, or [visit their website](#).

Hastings, Sussex

- [Hastings Sanctuary Service](#) – sanctuary run by the charity [Turning Point](#). This service is for anyone experiencing a mental health crisis, and they accept people with drug or alcohol problems. Your crisis team must refer you to this service.

Leeds

- [Dial House](#) – non-residential service, open from 6pm–2am on Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. To refer yourself, call 0113 260 9328 on the night you wish to request a visit or text 07922 249 452. You can also email survivor.led@lslcs.org.uk.

London

- [Drayton Park Women's Crisis Centre](#) – residential crisis house that accepts self-referrals from women living in Camden and Islington. To find out more, you can call them on 020 7607 2777, or [visit their website](#).
- [Maytree Suicide Respite Centre](#) – residential crisis house, which accepts self-referrals. To find out more, you can call them on 020 7263 7070, email maytree@maytree.org.uk or [visit their website](#).

Manchester and Greater Manchester

- [The Sanctuary](#) – non-residential service with locations in Manchester, Trafford, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Glossop, Wigan and Leigh, open every day from 8pm-6am, and in Bolton from 4pm–midnight. To find out more, you can call them on 0300 003 7029, or [visit their website](#).

Torquay, Devon

- [Gravue](#) – residential crisis house, run by the charity [Step One](#). Your crisis team must refer you to this service.

What are day services?

Day services provide support for people coping with mental health problems outside of hospital.

When should I use day services?

If you're managing a mental health crisis at home and you'd find it helpful to get more support or have opportunities to meet other people in similar situations.

You might use day services alongside other support – for example, from your GP, community mental health team, [crisis team \(CRHT\)](#) or [social care](#).

How could they help me?

Day services can include:

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

Day services might provide support, help you learn self-management techniques that could help in the future or simply give you a change of scene. They can include:

- [talking therapies and counselling](#)
- other therapies such as [arts therapies](#)
- activities such as gardening or [ecotherapy](#)
- opportunities to talk to others or get [peer support](#)
- opportunities to have peace and quiet.

Staff will usually have a good knowledge of local services, and close links with the local community mental health team (CMHT).

"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 I access them?

You can find day services near you through:

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

Useful contacts

Befrienders Worldwide

[befrienders.org](#)

Worldwide directory of emotional support helplines.

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

0800 123 737

[callhelpline.org.uk](#)

Provides listening services, information and support for people experiencing a mental health problem in Wales. Also provides a [text messaging service](#).

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)

0800 58 58 58 (5pm–midnight)

[thecalmzone.net](#)

Provides listening services, information and support for men at risk of suicide, including [web chat](#) (5pm–midnight).

Helplines Partnership

[helplines.org](#)

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

Mind Infoline

0300 123 3393 (Monday–Friday 9am–6pm)

[info@mind.org.uk](#)

Details of local Minds and other local services, and Mind's Legal Advice Line. Language Line is available for talking in a language other than English.

Mind Recovery Net

mindrecoverynet.org.uk

Publishes information on recovery colleges, including a [searchable list of providers](#).

The Mix

0808 808 4994 (Sunday–Friday 2pm–11pm)

themix.org.uk

Support for under-25s including [email support](#) and [text messaging](#).

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

nice.org.uk

Produces clinical guidelines on recommended treatments for different conditions, including guidance about joint crisis plans.

Next Generation Text Service

ngts.org.uk

Provides a talk/type relay service for anyone who has difficulty hearing or being understood when speaking over the phone. The cost of making phone calls through this service depends on your telephone service provider.

NHS 111

call: 111

111.nhs.uk

Non-emergency medical help and advice for people living in England, and [certain areas of Wales](#).

NHS Direct Wales

0845 46 47

nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Non-emergency medical help and advice for people living in Wales.

NHS Choices

nhs.uk

Provides information on a wide range of health and social care topics. Provides an [online search tool](#) to find GPS and NHS services near you, including day services.

Nightline

nightline.ac.uk

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

Papyrus HOPELINEUK

0800 068 4141 (weekdays 10am–10pm, weekends 2pm–10pm and bank holidays 2pm–10pm)

text: 07786 209 697

email: pat@papyrus-uk.org
papyrus-uk.org/hopelineuk

Provides information and support for anyone under 35 who is struggling with suicidal feelings, or anyone concerned about a young person who might be struggling.

Rethink Mental Illness

rethink.org

Charity providing information and support for people experiencing a mental health problem, including an [online directory of local support services](#).

Samaritans

116 123 (freephone)

email: jo@samaritans.org

Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK

PO Box 90 90

Stirling FK8 2SA

samaritans.org

24-hour emotional support for anyone struggling to cope.

SANEline

0300 304 7000 (4.30pm–10.30pm every day).

sane.org.uk

Helpline offering practical information and emotional support in a crisis.

Stay Alive

prevent-suicide.org.uk

App with help and resources for people who feel suicidal or are supporting someone else.

Switchboard

0300 330 0630 (10am–10pm every day)

email: chris@switchboard.lgbt

switchboard.lgbt

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

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References are available on request.