

## Mental health helpline goes live

Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust (NSFT) has set up a 24/7 helpline offering immediate support for mental health difficulties during the coronavirus pandemic.

The **freephone** service, called **First Response**, launched at midday Wednesday 15 April. Staffed by mental health professionals from the Trust, it will provide reassurance, self-help advice, support and signposting designed to avoid the need for people to attend hospital, except in the case of a medical emergency.

It will be **available to members of the public of any age**, regardless of whether or not they are an existing NSFT service user.

The line will **also be open to other healthcare professionals** such as GPs, ambulance and social care staff who need to make referrals or seek advice when working with people undergoing mental health difficulties.

First Response will be available on **0808 196 3494**. Callers will hear a recorded message instructing them to press either 1 or 2, depending on whether they are a professional or member of the public, and will then be connected to a mental health practitioner.

Stuart Richardson, Chief Operating Officer with NSFT, said: "This is an unprecedented time for all of us, which is inevitably causing people anxiety and putting them under additional strain. That is why it is so important to offer as much support as we can.

**"This phone line is designed to keep people safe in their homes by providing them with immediate mental health support.** We hope that this will be particularly helpful during this period of uncertainty when access to secondary mental health services is unfortunately more limited.

"As well as providing a vital service to members of the public, we hope the helpline will also be a useful resource for our health and social care colleagues, as well as our partners in the police, by offering guidance and advice when they are working with people experiencing mental ill health."

**First Response will be open to anyone in Norfolk or Suffolk.** For more information, visit [www.nsft.uk/helpline](http://www.nsft.uk/helpline)

