Online support service launches across nation

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AN ONLINE emotional support service set up by an Oxfordshire therapist for people affected by the coronavirus crisis has now launched nationwide.

The Help Hub, which was created by Ruth Chaloner, is a free, online clinic offering mental wellbeing sessions for those struggling with self-isolation and social distancing.

Launched in March, and initially only intended for people living in West Oxfordshire, interest in the clinic's services has proved so widespread Ms Chaloner is now working with about 500 volunteer qualified therapists to provide support nationwide.

She said: "We originally trialled it locally and received 75 bookings in the first week alone.

"It was very clear there is a huge demand for this type of service and that's when we decided to extend it across the country.

"I see so many clients who experience anxiety, and then you add something like coronavirus into it, and bring fear as another layer on top, and that's tough to cope with.

"It's really important for people to realise they can talk about their feelings."

The website, which has been created and hosted for free by the innovation team at nearby Blenheim Palace, allows people to log in and book 20-minute time slots either on a landline, via Skype or FaceTime.

They then receive a call back at an agreed time.

Ms Chaloner added: "Our aim is to be able to continue to offer the service for as long as the restrictions remain in place."

The Help Hub is also working with NHS Practitioner Health to provide online support for those within the NHS, as well as offering specialist help for other potentially vulnerable groups like homeless refugee women.

For more information email ruth@thehelphub.co.uk

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RUTH Chaloner of The Help Hub