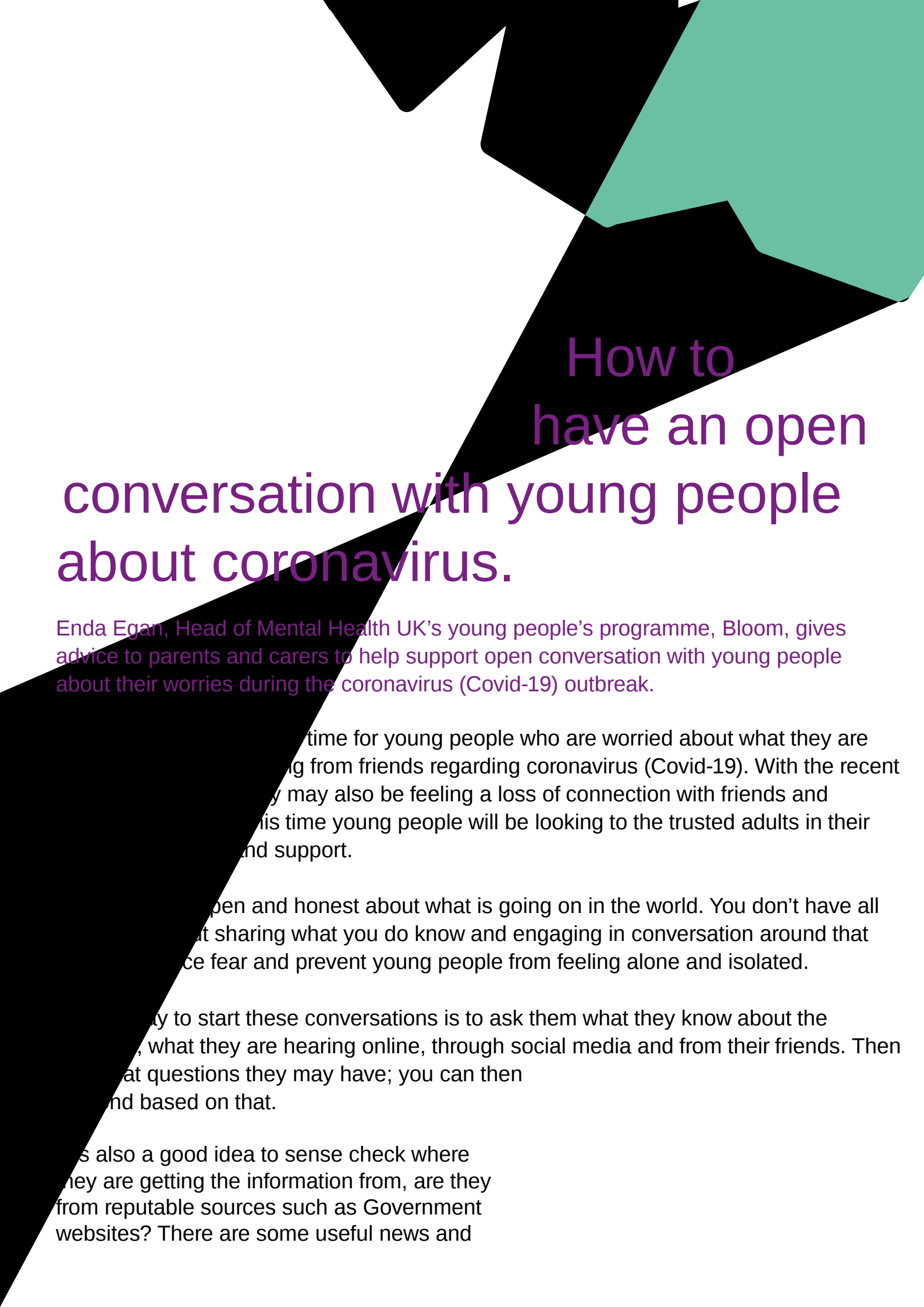




How to have an open conversation with young people about coronavirus.

Enda Egan, Head of Mental Health UK's young people's programme, Bloom, gives advice to parents and carers to help support open conversation with young people about their worries during the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak.

It's a difficult time for young people who are worried about what they are hearing from friends regarding coronavirus (Covid-19). With the recent outbreak, they may also be feeling a loss of connection with friends and family. At this time young people will be looking to the trusted adults in their lives for advice and support.

It's important to be open and honest about what is going on in the world. You don't have all the answers, but sharing what you do know and engaging in conversation around that can help to reduce fear and prevent young people from feeling alone and isolated.

A good way to start these conversations is to ask them what they know about the virus, what they are hearing online, through social media and from their friends. Then listen to their questions they may have; you can then provide information and based on that.

It's also a good idea to sense check where they are getting the information from, are they getting it from reputable sources such as Government websites? There are some useful news and

For younger people, think of ways you can show them what their friends are doing during their day.

- **Reassure them** that it is unlikely that they will get seriously ill, and if they do get sick, you will look after them. Also, reassure them that other family members such as grandparents are ok and encourage the use of video calling as a way of staying in touch with family and friends or writing letters and cards to family members who are less familiar with technology.
 - **Structure:** stick to as many routines as possible. Plans and structure within the day may help things feel more normal. Also, accept that some things may not go to plan and that you will be learning and growing together during this time.
 - **Activities:** join in positive activities with them such as reading, cooking, playing etc. This will reassure them and help reduce any anxiety. Having open conversations with young people is best done during more relaxed times, pick your time to speak and allow them to open up.
 - **Finish conversations with care:** Ensure they know that they can talk to you or a teacher, or other adults in their family about what's worrying them.
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