# Meet Ollee – a virtual friend to help children talk to parents

**26 October 2020 – for immediate release**

- **Parent Zone launches new tool to help parents and children have difficult conversations**

- **Ollee is a web app made with funding from BBC Children in Need's A Million & Me initiative**

- **The app is packed with advice for parents and children about subjects including school, family and the internet**

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Parent Zone has today launched Ollee, a powerful new tool to help parents support their child's emotional wellbeing and encourage communication within families.

2020 has undoubtedly put a strain on the mental health of many people, young and old.

But in a year when 80% of young people said their mental wellbeing has been made worse by the Covid pandemic and lockdown, it's clear that there's a particular need for wider support for children.

Despite the many services that focus on children's mental wellbeing, perhaps the single greatest influence and resource can still be found closer to home – in parents.

We know parents are great and that they are often the first responders for their children – they are literally children's emergency services. But we also know that parents aren't always given the tools they need to help their children.

And that's where Ollee comes in.

Ollee is an app designed to help children articulate their feelings and share them with their parents – and to help parents talk to their children about what they're going through.

Funded by BBC Children in Need's A Million & Me initiative, Ollee is aimed at children aged 8-11 and takes the form of a virtual friend.

Children can choose from a range of subjects – school, family, friends, their body, the internet and the world – and match each of these with an emotion: happy, angry, sad, confused, frustrated, stressed or worried.

They can then choose from a list of topics – for instance, a child who was worried about school might be able to select 'I haven't done my homework' as the cause of their worry.

Finally, they'll see a page of advice about the topic, presented in child-friendly bite-sized chunks they can read then or save for later.

Parents can also follow the same pathways to get advice on the subjects and emotions they think their child might be struggling with. This advice is presented in the same bite-sized format but is tailored to the parent audience.

Sharing is at the heart of Ollee. Parents and children can link their accounts with each other, then share advice about a topic they think the other might want information on. The advice that is sent is tailored to the relevant audience – so if a parent shares advice with a child, the child will see the right version for them.

It's all part of encouraging children to talk to parents and other trusted adults about the things that might be troubling them.

Parent Zone CEO Vicki Shotbolt said: "Parents are children's first and most important source of support. However it isn't always easy for a parent to know how to respond and they don't always  find it easy to step in when they sense a problem. Ollee is designed to support parenting – technology can often be a challenge for families but this tool is all about using a medium children enjoy to support conversations parents want to have."

Ollee is available from today (26 October 2020) as a web app: ollee.org.uk

You can find out more about Ollee on the Parent Zone website:
https://parentzone.org.uk/Ollee

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**About Parent Zone**

Parent Zone are the experts in digital family life. We provide support and information to parents, children and schools, working globally to help families to navigate the internet safely and confidently. We regularly work with parents, schools, governments and businesses to study, understand and address the impact of emerging technologies on young people.

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## NOTES FOR EDITORS

**Vicki Shotbolt, Parent Zone founder and CEO, is available for interviews**

**Contact press@parentzone.org.uk with any enquiries or questions**