

## IIMHL & IIDL Leadership Briefing XV

### COVID-19: National approaches to a better future

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This briefing highlights two articles about taking national approaches to a COVID-19 future. Australia has developed a national plan to address key mental health and wellbeing issues arising from the pandemic. The London School of Economics in the UK has examined the way the pandemic has worsened both economic and educational inequality and it suggests strategies and policies needed to counter these issues.

#### **Australia: National Mental Health and Wellbeing Pandemic Response Plan**

##### **National Mental Health Commission - May 2020**

*“The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic is posing significant challenges for Australia including physical and mental health issues, economic consequences and disruptive changes to lifestyles of individuals, families and communities<sup>1</sup>.”*

The mental health and wellbeing response to the pandemic has three core objectives, being to:

- meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of all Australians to reduce negative impacts of the pandemic in the short and long-term;
- outline core principles and priority areas to inform jurisdictions as they respond to the challenges of COVID-19, including as restrictions ease, to balance national consistency with flexibility for locally-appropriate community-based responses and solutions and ensuring that any risks posed by relaxation of restrictions are assessed and responded to; and
- define governance, coordination and implementation requirements including data collection and sharing across jurisdictions to facilitate informed planning and decision making.

The Plan was developed using seven foundational principals and identifies 10 priorities to guide and inform decision making, and to ensure that responses are consistent and connected to a national mental health system. The principles align the immediate response to the pandemic and the long-term work needed to deliver system reform.

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<sup>1</sup> Page 3 of the Plan

Significant recognition has been given to the social context in which we experience mental health and wellbeing in our lives - where we live, work, learn and engage with our communities.

The Plan is a coordinated mental health response that recognises the intersection of mental health, suicide prevention and domestic and family violence.

The Plan includes the many and diverse vulnerable groups who are at risk of adverse experiences of mental health, who have acute and complex experiences of mental illness, are at higher risk of suicide and self-harm, and need a coordinated and reinforced service system to ensure that the services they need are available when and how they need them.

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/getmedia/1b7405ce-5d1a-44fc-b1e9-c00204614cb5/National-Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing-Pandemic-Response-Plan>

A one-page info graphic outlines key points:

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/getmedia/0ed417d3-68c6-406f-8007-3975d01f7b59/National-Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing-Pandemic-Response-Plan-Infographic>

## **UK: Covid-19 and social mobility CEP Covid-19 analysis**

### **London School of Economics - May 2020**

“Governments are having to balance short and long-term interests, and the trade-offs they generate, as they try to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. An extended lockdown could cause lasting damage to livelihoods for years to come. The effects vary across age groups: while the coronavirus health shock has particularly affected the over-60s, the longer-term economic and social damage is likely to hit young people disproportionately, especially the under-25s.

In terms of longer-run consequences, the Covid-19 crisis is generating significant worries about future social mobility. This is because it has drastically worsened both economic and educational inequality, the two key drivers of low social mobility. These inequalities are increasingly interdependent reinforcing each other to determine future social mobility levels (Elliot Major and Machin, 2018).”

To avoid a decline in social mobility, the LSE work suggests the need to address both economic and educational divides, and develop coherent policies for both the classroom and the workplace”.

In summary:

- There are serious concerns that the pandemic will push Britain’s young people under the age of 25 – the ‘Covid generation’ – into a dark age of declining social mobility because of rising economic and educational inequalities.

- Without policy action to counter the threat, unprecedented economic and education shocks could inflict long-term 'scarring' effects, damaging future life prospects for young people.
- Potential scarring effects for the under-25s could result from spells of long-term unemployment and failure to achieve the exam grades needed to pursue the next steps in education or employment.
- Some economic and educational inequalities are interdependent, reinforcing each other to determine future social mobility levels.
- We need to develop bold policies both for now and the longer term – to stimulate an economic recovery and with the aim of creating a more socially mobile society.

The authors recommend four strategies to assist economic and educational problems.

<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/cepcovid-19-004.pdf>