

IIMHL & IIDL Leadership Briefing XXVII

COVID-19 Issues and Resources for Children and Youth

27 August 2020

Janet Peters

Many countries are concerned about the current and long-term impact of COVID-19 on children and young people and their mental health and wellbeing. This short Briefing provides information on issues and resources from Canada, New Zealand, the UK and Italy that we hope IIMHL leaders will find useful.

Canada

Mental Health Commission Canada (MHC): External COVID-19 Resources: Children & Youth

August 2020

The MHC has developed a helpful list of resources from agencies within Canada and internationally in relation to children and young people.

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/external-covid-19-resources-children-youth>

In addition there is an interview with Dr Stan Kutcher, Psychiatrist and Senator. The topics he covers include:

- How can young people maintain good mental health?
- How Can I Help My Kids Be More Resilient?
- What's the difference between fear and anxiety?

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/media/4353>

Government of Canada

COVID-19 resources for parents and children

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/resources-parents-children.html>

Covid-19 resources for young adults and students

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/resources-youth-students.html>

Aotearoa/New Zealand

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet - COVID-19 response and Budget 2020 reflect ongoing commitment to child and youth wellbeing

4th June 2020

The New Zealand government has reasserted that the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy framework remains a critical lens for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

<https://childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2019-08/child-youth-wellbeing-strategy-2019.pdf>

The link below provides an overview of recent investments that support child wellbeing and poverty reduction, including immediate actions taken to respond to COVID-19, as well as Budget 2020 initiatives, and those included in the dedicated COVID Relief and Recovery Fund (CRRF).

<https://childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/community/your-stories/covid-19-response-and-budget-2020-reflect-ongoing-commitment-child-and-youth>

Aotearoa/New Zealand: Werry Workforce Whāraurau: COVID-19 Resources & Information for the Workforce and for Whānau

August 2020

This website has information for children, youth and staff of mental health services serving these two populations.

<https://werryworkforce.org/professionals/publications-and-resources/covid-19-coronavirus-resources-information-workforce-and>

Italy

Debate: COVID-19 and psychological well-being of children and adolescents in Italy

12th July 2020

Italy was the first country in Europe to deal with COVID-19. Measures taken by the government to contain the spread of the virus were based mainly on quarantine and social distancing, with dramatic economic, social and psychological consequences. Since March, Italian children and adolescents have experienced school closures, which have caused a disruption in the daily lives of millions of young people and their families.

To date, despite the slow reopening, the Italian government has decided to maintain school closures for the entire academic year, leaving the future of young people in uncertainty. There is already some evidence that quarantine and social isolation are having negative impact on children's and adolescents' psychological well-being.

Moreover, this situation is likely to disproportionately affect those children and adolescents with pre-existing vulnerabilities and those suffering from mental disorders. The Italian government has stated that it is imperative to keep young people's needs at the core of reconstruction plans, allowing them to return to school safely, and providing them with some strategies to heal and dealing with this stressful and potentially traumatic situation.

<https://acamh.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/camh.12405>

UK

UK Parliament: Child and Adolescent Mental Health During COVID-19

14th July 2020

The UK government produced guidance on child and adolescent mental health during COVID. What follows are the headline points from that guidance.

Key points:

- Charities and academics have expressed concerns that children's mental health is disproportionately affected by the intervention measures used during the pandemic.
- Child and adolescent mental health may be compromised by factors such as strained family relationships, academic stress and reduced social contact with friends.
- Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) have been reduced during the pandemic. They are likely to be under strain to meet increased demand.
- The UK Government has announced funding to ensure that charities can continue supporting those in need.

<https://post.parliament.uk/analysis/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-during-covid-19/>

UK Parliament: Post: COVID-19, children and schools

16th July 2020

The UK government produced guidance on COVID19, children and schools. What follows are the headline points from that guidance.

Key points:

- Children who have COVID-19 are much less likely to develop severe symptoms and much less likely to die from the disease than people in older age groups.
- There is some research indicating that children aged 13 years and under may be less susceptible to infection than adults, but the confidence in this evidence is low.
- There are some limited data suggesting that children from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background are at higher risk of severe disease, consistent with the evidence for adults. More data from well-designed studies with large samples is needed before drawing conclusions.
- There is some evidence to suggest that children transmit the virus less than adults, but more research is needed to reduce uncertainty.
- Children are more likely to catch an infection from adults in their household.
- There is evidence that schools are a low-risk environment for transmission.
- The academic consensus is that the risks to children's health and general well-being from not attending school outweigh the risks from COVID-19.
- Each national government has set out plans for full school re-opening to all pupils for the next academic year. Scientific advice on re-openings is that they must be contingent on several criteria, notably the incidence of infections in the community, effective test, trace and isolate systems and implementation of measures to mitigate risks in schools.

<https://post.parliament.uk/analysis/covid-19-children-and-schools/>