

IIMHL & IIDL Leadership Briefing XXXIX

COVID-19 and the Impact on Mental Health: The importance of non-government organisations (NGOs)

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Introduction

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has recently reported on the need to maintain essential services and highlighted the importance of mental health NGOs in the community.¹ The WHO surveyed 130 countries during the period June-August 2020, and published information about the extent of disruption to mental, neurological and substance use services due to COVID-19, the types of services that have been disrupted, and how countries are adapting to overcome these challenges.² NGOs are key agencies for all countries, for example, in the UK around eight million people are supported by mental health NGOs.³

This report describes how four IIMHL countries are focusing work on NGOs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Australia

Australian Government budget announcement

6th October 2020

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg announced a \$5.7 billion commitment to mental health initiatives in this year's Federal Budget, labelling mental health and suicide prevention as a "national priority". More detail on his announcement can found via the link below:

<https://www.skynews.com.au/details/6197898950001>

Canada

COVID-19 and Mental Health: Heading off an echo pandemic

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

25th August 2020

¹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-essential-health-services-2020.1>

² <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/978924012455>

³ Steve Appleton, Regional Lead for Europe IIMHL, email 29/9/20

The aim of this recent policy brief on mental health and COVID-19 from the CMHA was to:

- Raise awareness about gaps in the response to COVID-19 in relation to mental health problems and mental illnesses, including problematic substance use and addictions;
- Share public policy recommendations that will protect the mental health of all people in Canada, including people with lived experience of mental illness and addictions, both immediately and in the “recovery phase” of COVID-19.

It makes eight policy recommendations to minimize the mental health consequences of COVID-19 and to strengthen the mental health care system in response to the pandemic and beyond. Including persons with lived experience (PWLE) in COVID-19 economic supports and including them in the process of forming the mental health response to COVID-19 feature in those recommendations.

The full recommendations can be viewed via the link below:

https://cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/EN_COVID-19-Policy-Brief.pdf

England, Wales & Northern Ireland

Mental Health Services and COVID-19: Preparing for the Rising Tide

NHS Confederation

August 2020

In this report the NHS Confederation has indicated that in next phase of COVID-19, it expects there to be three drivers of additional demand:

1. Demand from people who would have been referred to services had the pandemic not struck;
2. People requiring more support due to a deterioration of their mental health during the pandemic; and
3. New demand driven by people needing support due to the wider impacts of the pandemic, such as self-isolation and increases in substance abuse and domestic violence.

They point to particular concerns that the inequalities in accessing services and recovery rates that black and minority ethnic (BME) communities face will be exacerbated.

They suggest that social determinants that affect mental health require greater attention and that a cross-government approach that considers the wider impact of policies on people’s mental health is essential.

The full report can be viewed via the link below:

https://www.nhsconfed.org/-/media/Confederation/Files/Publications/Documents/Report_Mental-health-services-NHS-Reset_FNL.pdf

COVID-19 and the nation's mental health

Centre for Mental Health (CMH)

October 2020

This most recent report from the CMH focuses on work undertaken with NHS colleagues to build a model based on the best available evidence to forecast how many people may need mental health support as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary purpose of the model is to support local organisations to predict levels of need for mental health support among children and adults in their communities. You can [access the model here](#).

Nationally, in England, the model predicts that up to 10 million people (almost 20% of the population) will need either new or additional mental health support as a direct consequence of the crisis. One and a half million of those will be children and young people under 18.

The CMH recommends that Government and the NHS can and must take steps now to prepare for this additional need among people of all ages.

The full report can be viewed via the link below:

<https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/publications/covid-19-and-nations-mental-health-october-2020>