

IIMHL & IIDL Leadership Briefing XLIX

Childhood Trauma: the Long-term Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

Many countries are concerned about the long-term effects of COVID-19 on children. The World Health Organisation has good information on the long-term effects on adults¹ and further work is emerging in relation to children and young people. Given the impacts expected on them from the pandemic, developing and implementing solutions to combatting the effects of COVID-19 for children is an important topic.

In this briefing we highlight three examples: firstly, international policy solutions outlined by an OECD policy report, secondly an example of a weekly research on children and COVID-19 from Australia, and thirdly the UK Trauma Council recommendations for priority areas for action.

OECD: Combatting COVID-19's effect on children

August 2020

This OECD Policy document notes children are significantly impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The OECD brief captures some key issues and proposes practical early steps that leaders can take to mitigate negative consequences for children, especially the most vulnerable.

It suggests that the short-term policy focus should be on reducing risks of physical and psychological harm, and ensuring access to good food and nutrition, the provision of immediate care and protection to children in need, and keeping the education loss for many poorer children to an absolute minimum. The concentration of disadvantage often involves poverty, poor housing and a lack of access to necessary services which already shape individual outcomes – in childhood and later on in life.

In addition COVID-19 may present serious challenges for inclusive growth as the poorest children are likely to be hardest hit and their heir life chances severely limited, unless immediate and comprehensive measures are taken.

¹ WHO https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/risk-comms-updates/update-36-long-term-symptoms.pdf?sfvrsn=5d3789a6_2

<http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/combating-covid-19-s-effect-on-children-2e1f3b2f/>

Australia

Melbourne Medical School Department of Paediatrics: COVID-19 Kids Research Evidence Update December 2020

This is a weekly research update which will be of interest to all people working with children and families. Topics covered each week include interviews with experts, and subjects such as epidemiology and public health, mental health, perinatal health, schools and vaccines.

For example, one study, investigating the mental health of children with pre-existing medical and psychological conditions, has analysed the responses of the first 50 children and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings confirm that children have experienced more loneliness, have been more fatigued and more worried. Parents reported that the most stressful element of the pandemic for children was the social isolation from their friends and extended family. Parents also reported that their children's healthcare needs were not being met as they were prior to the pandemic.

[https://medicine.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/3559343/Covid-19 Kids Research evidence update week31_04December_2020.pdf](https://medicine.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/3559343/Covid-19_Kids_Research_evidence_update_week31_04December_2020.pdf)

UK Trauma Council: Beyond the pandemic: Strategic priorities for responding to childhood trauma September 2020

As the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic unfolded, the UK Trauma Council developed four recommendations that should be prioritised to address childhood trauma in both the short and long term. These recommendations present a clear framework for action, to be taken forward in different ways across the UK but may also be of value to leaders in other countries.

1. Prioritise responding to trauma in national and local strategies
2. Invest in specialist trauma provision for children and young people
3. Equip all professionals who work with children and young people with the skills and capacity to support those who have experienced trauma
4. Shift models of help towards prevention, through research, clinical innovation and training.

<https://uktraumacouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Coronavirus-CYP-and-Trauma-UKTC-Policy-Briefing-Sept-2020.pdf>