

Understanding the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people

Early Pandemic Period April - May 2020

July 2020



Understanding the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on children and young people

This report summarises the key messages we found out in the April to May 2020 period about how Covid-19 was affecting children and young people already facing challenges in their lives. We have also produced a separate report on the ways in which grantees were responding to the early crisis.

As the pandemic took hold in March 2020, BBC Children in Need needed to understand the implications for children and young people and the projects we fund to support them (our grantees). We designed an enquiry framework for gathering insight around Covid-19 to understand:

- The implications of the pandemic on the lives of disadvantaged children and young people.
- How projects (our grantees) were responding to the challenges and changing needs.
- How we need to adapt and respond as a funder.

Throughout this report, we use the term grantee to reflect the projects that are funded by BBC Children in Need. These projects are run by a range of different organisations.

The average value of grants in our portfolio is £63,400. The majority of the organisations that we fund are micro (income of less than £10,000) to medium sized (i.e. income up to £1M turnover per year).

Our approach

We sent a Covid-19 form to all our grantees (3,000+) to hear about the implications of Covid-19 in their own words. Nearly half our grantees submitted these forms during April and May 2020.

We analysed a sample of more than 300 of these forms and drew on conversations with grantees and networks, and insight from a range of external reports and research. We needed to quickly learn about the fastmoving crisis to gain a timely picture of the issues to inform our immediate response.

We appreciate this is not a comprehensive view and are aware this briefing is primarily adult perspectives of children's experiences. Children and young people have been involved in our Covid-19 journey through networks that inform our work. Children and young people's voices will be heard and reflected as we continue to gather insight and evaluate our response to the pandemic.



Summary



In April and May 2020, our grantees told us how the Covid-19 pandemic was having a detrimental effect on children and young people who already face challenges in their lives. The situation was heightening existing challenges and making them more complex for some. It was also causing new challenges and risks for children and young people to deal with.

This paper outlines the eight key themes we've identified that showed the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people who already face challenges in their lives during the early stages of the pandemic. It also explores how different groups of children and young people were being affected.

The impact of Covid-19 on children and young people in the early pandemic

BBC Children in Need funds projects that target children and young people aged 0-18 years who face challenges in their lives. In the early pandemic period, BBC Children in Need grantees were concerned about the potential short and long term challenges for children and young people.

The pandemic was felt to be having a detrimental impact on children's lives through:

- Heightening existing challenges, making some challenges more complex and creating new challenges and risks to deal with,
- A change, reduction or loss of support which would impact on children and young people's outcomes, and
- A regression in progress for children and young people.

Grantees were also concerned about children and young people's longer term outcomes, in particular mental health and wellbeing and re-integrating into 'normal' life after restrictions lift.

8 impact themes for children and young people during early Covid-19

Looking across a wide range of different groups of children and young people that our grantees' projects reach, we identified eight themes that show how Covid-19 was affecting children and young people who face challenges in their lives.

1. **Isolation:** children and families were missing personal connections, relationships and support from trusted adults and peers outside the home.
2. **Increased emotional wellbeing and mental health challenges:** the pandemic was impacting on existing mental health and new issues were emerging for children and their parents. Anxiety, fear and stress are particular concerns.
3. **Pressure on family relationships:** families were under pressure, from difficulties coping with stress and worry to crisis. Conflict and difficult relationships were increasing, whilst respite for children and parents was reducing.
4. **Increased exposure to harm:** children faced increased risks both within families and outside the home, e.g. with increased time online and being unable to access safe spaces.
5. **Basic needs are harder to meet:** children and families faced hunger and increased financial hardship. Digital access became a basic need in lockdown.
6. **Reduced access to education & activities:** children lacked the stimulation, development opportunities, structure & positive engagement these can bring.
7. **Risks to physical wellbeing:** children's physical wellbeing was at risk through reduced nutrition or physical activity for fitness, for those with health conditions, from the pandemic itself.
8. **Concern for the future:** children, young people and families were concerned for the future, such as education transitions, loss of jobs or risks to job prospects and financial stability.

The impact of Covid-19 on children & young people



Covid-19 for different groups of children and young people

The cross-cutting themes show Covid-19 is affecting children and young people in a vast range of ways.

The following sections explore how different groups of children and young people were thought to be affected in the early pandemic.

We use the present tense as the pandemic continues at this time, so these issues may be ongoing.

We have focused on a set of priority groups of children and young people where external research indicated high level of impact at the start of the pandemic. These are presented within the following broad target groups of ways in which children and young people are disadvantaged (see notes for definitions). There are groups we have not explored within this initial analysis, and we seek to continue to build our insight across different areas.

Our analysis spans all age groups. We've also identified particular considerations for two age groups - early years and young people.



Household Poverty & Living Conditions



Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing



Disabled Children & Young People



Personal Harm



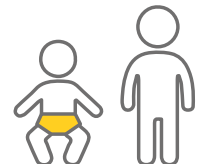
Family Related Challenges



Physical Health



Marginalised (identity/nationality)



Covid-19 for different age groups





Household Poverty & Living Conditions

Children and young people living in a household facing poverty and socioeconomic deprivation or they are homeless/at risk of homelessness.

BBC Children in need are currently funding

- Over **1,000** projects to the value of over **£54.8 million** supporting children and young people affected by poverty.
- Over **20** projects to the value of over **£1.8 million** supporting children and young people affected by homelessness.

Children and young people facing homelessness or housing difficulties

Our grantee insight indicates this group appear to face particular challenges when social distancing.

Emotional wellbeing & mental health:

- Limited personal or outdoor spaces create challenging, fraught situations and may have a detrimental impact of emotional wellbeing and mental health and physical health.
- Grantees told us that families living in hostels and other shared accommodation appear to have a greater fear of catching Covid-19.

Basic needs:

- Children and their families are confined to homes which are unsuitable and overcrowded.
- Digital exclusion is a key issue for those living in hostels and other shared accommodation.
- Some young people have been highlighted as being at particular risk of becoming homeless as a result of the pandemic including LGBTQ+ and those in kinship care with high risk family members might need to find a new place to stay.

Physical wellbeing:

- Socially isolating in cramped, crowded or unsuitable accommodation will be difficult and hard to cope with, particularly if social distancing measures continue for months.
- Families living in hostels and shared accommodation appear to have greater fear of catching Covid-19 and face difficulties social distancing.

- Children and young people who are 'hidden homeless' may struggle to find somewhere to isolate & may have to continue sofa surfing and are at greater risk of rough sleeping.

Overall far and away the biggest issue that we have been made aware of by families in hostels and refuges is their lack of internet access.

BBC Children in Need grantee

What we are finding is that the women we are supporting in hostel accommodation express much higher levels of fear of the Covid-19 fear of catching the disease and fear of having the disease than we encounter with other families that we work with in the community.

BBC Children in Need grantee

- Pre-Covid-19 in Britain there were an estimated 135,000 children who are homeless and living in temporary accommodation. This doesn't include those who are sofa surfing in England - estimated at 90,000 young people.
https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/homelessness/rules/what_is_homelessness
https://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1876518/Generation_homeless.pdf
- More than 1.7 million children and young people were living in overcrowded housing.
https://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/726166/People_living_in_bad_housing.pdf
- Centrepont reported a 36% increase in people seeking homelessness support since lockdown began.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcthree/article/2ff6ca11-e20d-482f-a69b-1f766c5595bb>

Children and young people living in households affected by poverty

Basic needs:

- The pandemic creates challenges for children and young people and their families to afford and/or access the basics including food and hygiene products.
- Grantees are seeing financial hardship, instability and worries increasing (with rising job losses and falling incomes). The unique context of the early pandemic posed challenges to easily accessing affordable food.
- During lockdown there has been increased focus on digital access as a basic, fundamental need. Many families lack access to sufficient technology and data/connections to be able to access opportunities to learn, receive support and help, connect and socialise.
- Many families living in poverty have been unable to afford resources to support their children's development and happiness at home during lockdown.

The spreading of the Coronavirus/ Covid-19 has had a greater impact on many families and individuals who were already struggling and suffering from food poverty. The desperation and reality of the current crisis is evidently seen with those we are working with, and the inability to access food and provide for their families is leading to increased emotional stress, an alarming effect on physical health and wellbeing, and an impact on children and their welfare. Many families who would ordinarily be receiving free school meals now have the increased burden of providing wholesome meals. Those who have lost jobs now have no financial means to meet their household bills or provide food.

BBC Children in Need grantee

Children and young people affected by material deprivation and crisis

This group are at risk of additional hardships with potentially long term implications to health and wellbeing.

Emotional wellbeing & mental health:

- Families are experiencing anxiety around catching Covid-19 due to poor health and working in certain low paid jobs with more risk of exposure to the virus.
- There is considerable worry about job losses
- Children, young people and their families are experiencing lockdown within often challenging home and family environments without the respite provided by school, project activities and clubs.
- Grantees working with children and young people living in poverty expect to see increases in poor mental health and wellbeing as a result of this crisis.

- There are 4.2 million children and young people already living in poverty in the UK.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-199495-to-201819>
- Pre-Covid-19 in some parts of the UK more than half of children were living in poverty.
<http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2018/>
- An estimated 2.1 million 10-17 year olds are living in a household where there has been difficulty paying the bills.
<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/cv-19-impact-on-children-report-from-the-childrens-society.pdf>
- The number of children needing support from food banks in April 2020 was more than double the same period last year (107% increase).
https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/06/APRIL-Data-briefing_external.pdf
- The Trussell Trust have seen a 95% increase in the number of families with children that received a parcel from a food bank from April 2019.
https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/06/APRIL-Data-briefing_external.pdf
- Pre-Covid-19 - It was estimated that 3 million children were at risk of being hungry in the school holidays.
<https://feedingbritain.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/hungry-holidays.pdf>



Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing

Children and young people experiencing issues with their mental health or emotional wellbeing.

BBC Children in Need are currently funding

- Over **150** projects to the value of **£11.5 million** supporting children and young people with mental health issues.
- Over **300** counselling projects to the value of **£25.4 million** supporting children and young people affected by mental health issues and other issues such as distress and trauma.
- Over **1,400** projects to a value of over **£88.2 million** focused on improving the emotional wellbeing of children and young people.

Children and young people face short and long term impacts on their mental health and emotional wellbeing

Across grantees, the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people is of particular concern.

Emotional wellbeing & mental health:

This has been a difficult time for children with existing mental health conditions in a range of ways:

- Fear and worry about the Covid-19 virus and its potential effects, such as death in family.
- Major disruptions to children's lives: social distancing, school closures, cut off from social support networks, limited opportunities for exercise and being outdoors.
- Loss of coping mechanisms and isolation from social support networks, routines etc.
- Risk of re-traumatising of individuals that have experienced forms of exploitation.
- Children isolated in unsafe home environments where they are at risk of or exposed to abuse, have enforced close proximity to potential causes of abuse, neglect and trauma.
- Children isolated in challenging family circumstances and poverty, such as concerns over family financial difficulties or getting enough food.

Looking ahead

- Grantees anticipate increasing demand for mental health and emotional wellbeing support due to deteriorating mental health, bereavements, rising issues such as sexual exploitation, babies born into families with parents experiencing poor mental health. There may also be increased demand from current service users disengaging with online support.

The Covid-19 virus outbreak has had a devastating effect on the lives of children young people experiencing mental health problems and psychological distress. The worry and anxiety about becoming infected (or one of their family members becoming infected), living in isolation, not being able to go to school, family financial difficulties unsafe home lives have brought a whole new raft of problems which have hugely increased the psychological distress compounded the mental health problems of not only our existing clients, but additional children young people across the region.

BBC Children in Need grantee

- In early survey of young people with existing mental health needs, **26%** said that they were no longer able to access mental health support.



Disability

Disabled children and young people, and children and young people with learning difficulties.

BBC Children in Need are currently funding

- **640** projects to the value of over **£33.6 million** supporting disabled children and young people, including
 - Over 90 projects to a value of **£4.5 million** supporting children with autism spectrum disorder.
 - Over 160 projects to a value of **£9.1 million** supporting children with learning disabilities.
 - Over 250 projects to a value of **£13 million** supporting children with multiple impairments.

Disabled children

A key theme for disabled children, across wide ranging needs, is the risk of regression to progress they've worked hard to achieve in their physical or social skills. They are also at risk of isolation. Many families are under intense pressure.

Physical health and wellbeing:

- Some families have needed to support vulnerable children with complex physical needs in their own homes to maintain their child's physical progress and reduce risk of deterioration to physical conditioning and mobility.
- For children and young people with additional educational needs there may be long term risks to their education and development from not receiving specialist support they need at the right time.
- Social skills are at risk of regressing due to social isolation.

Mental health and wellbeing:

- Concerns about deteriorating mental health and emotional wellbeing of parents and children including anxiety, challenging behaviour, complex needs, isolation, frustration, loss of progress and challenges ahead for reintegration.

Education

- Lack of stimulation, familiar activities and routine structure from school is leading to a deterioration in mental health, wellbeing and in some cases, behaviour. This is a particular challenge for children and young people on the Autism spectrum.

Many of our children have taken years to be able to confidently leave the house, be in social situations and access opportunities that all children should have, and many of our parents are now terrified that now having to stay indoors and experience 'enforced isolation' will take them back and that they'll struggle to re integrate or come back in to the community once it is over.

BBC Children in Need grantee

Isolation:

- Disabled children and their families are already more likely to be socially isolated, and they have lost face to face connections and formal and informal support outside family such as grandparents, friends and project support.

Families under pressure:

- Families supporting their child's complex needs at home have little or no other support available to them at this time e.g. wider family support, additional educational support, specialist physical support, respite care.
- Some families have reached crisis situations, whereby grantees describe families being desperate and exhausted.

Risk of harm:

- Some grantees told us of greater safeguarding risks at this highly challenging time.

Basic needs:

- Some families with disabled children have seen significant reduction in finances and many are struggling to afford the basics.

The level of isolation, exhaustion and desperation for some parents has been chronic. The impact of this has also meant that some parents have already had to give up work because of a lack of childcare and the fact that special schools transport has not really been running.

BBC Children in Need grantee

“The biggest impact we are seeing is the increased stress levels and poor mental health of the parents of the children we work with. Not being able to have any respite from their children, not just from attending our groups, but because many of them do have grandparents or other relatives who will help out but who can't now because of the social distancing, is leading to some very tense and volatile home conditions.”

BBC Children in Need grantee

- **Nearly nine in 10 [89%]** of families said the health and wellbeing of their disabled or seriously ill children had been negatively affected as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.
- **More than half** of families with disabled or seriously ill children have lost income, **nearly two-thirds** have no savings, and they are struggling financially.
- **73%** of families with disabled or seriously ill children have gone without some essential household goods as a result of Covid-19.
- **Two thirds of families [67%]** have said the informal support available to them has declined as a result of being without friends and family networks.
- **Half [50%]** of families said that formal support has declined.

Family Fund Impact of Covid-19 UK Initial Findings April 2020



Personal Harm

Children and young people who have experienced personal harm by other people, or are at risk of experiencing this. This includes physical and emotional abuse, violence and exploitation. Children and young people can both experience and engage in harmful behaviour.

BBC Children in Need are currently funding

- Over **20** projects to the value of over **£1.3 million** supporting children and young people affected by neglect.
- Over **120** projects to the value of over **£8.6 million** supporting children and young people affected by exploitation (Child Sexual Exploitation CSE and Child Criminal Exploitation CCE).

Children in families with limited parental capacity or neglect

Risk of Harm:

- Grantees are seeing increasing risks of child abuse, neglect and domestic violence. The risk of neglect and abuse at home has also risen as teachers and social workers have limited contact at present.

Family pressure:

- The vulnerability of some children has increased due to gaps in support and care at home.
- Parents and children are receiving less statutory support.
- With higher thresholds for statutory support and less contact between young people and trusted professionals it is more likely that cases of neglect will go unseen and unreported.

Basic needs:

- Families face poverty related difficulties such as access to food and difficult living conditions which contribute to the strains at home.

Isolation:

- Some children are isolated in challenging family circumstances, away from their friends and trusted relationships outside the home.

Emotional wellbeing & mental health:

- Social isolation and emotional wellbeing issues have increased. For some they are further exacerbated by mental health and other capacity challenges faced by their parents and carers. Parental mental health appears to be deteriorating due to increasing stress as parents struggle to meet their children's needs under lockdown.

Whole families are struggling with mental health issues, as people are feeling anxious and depressed, shut up in a small space with little to break up the monotony adults are therefore shouting more at the children, losing empathy, and struggling to cope in the absence of support they used to get.

BBC Children in Need grantee

- Child protection referrals are reported as being **down by 50%** in some areas because children are not seeing professionals, like teachers, that notice and raise concerns.
- The Children's Commissioner England found that **only 5%** of the "most vulnerable children", including those at risk of or experiencing neglect, have been at school during the Covid-19 crisis raising concerns about safety during lockdown.

Children at risk of child exploitation

Grantees are concerned of increased risks of child exploitation as a result of the pandemic.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Risk of Harm:

- Grantees have seen increased risks of online grooming and sexual exploitation which may be due to a combination of factors; increased social media presence; destabilised support structure and reduced sense of emotional wellbeing and security; no school attendance; disrupted routines, removal of a safe space; lack of social interaction.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Risk of Harm:

- An increased risk of online grooming or exploitation due to time online, not being at school or college and increased exposure to harmful online content (such as inappropriately sexualised or hyper violent content).
- There's a risk of anti social behaviour or gangs due to lack of the project delivery opportunities to support YP away from this.
- In the early stages of the pandemic, it wasn't clear yet what it would mean for violence and drugs although some more recent feedback suggests this is starting to escalate as restrictions lift.

“Young people we support are those that will be amongst the hardest hit by Covid-19 due to poverty, lack of schooling and the vulnerable situations many of them find themselves in.”

BBC Children in Need grantee

- At the start of lockdown the National Crime Agency intelligence revealed there were at least 300,000 people in the UK who posed a sexual threat to children, either through physical contact abuse or online.

<https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/news/onlinesafetyathome>

- The British Transport Police have reported that the lockdown has not resulted in a reduction in the number of, mostly juvenile, drug runners identified across the country.

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/apr/13/gangs-still-forcing-children-into-county-lines-drug-trafficking-police-covid-19-lockdown>



Family Related Challenges

Children and young people facing challenges relating to their family including children and young people in or with experience of care, young carers and children and young people with difficult family functioning or other circumstances.

BBC Children in Need are currently funding

- over **145** projects to the value of over **£12.5 million** supporting children and young people affected by domestic abuse.
- **120** projects to the value of over **£7.9 million** supporting young carers.
- over **85** projects to the value of over **£7.1 million** supporting children and young people affected by bereavement.
- over **60** projects to the value of **£3.9 million** supporting children and young people in and on the edge of care.

Children in families experiencing domestic abuse

Grantees told us of domestic abuse rising as access to support became harder.

Risk of harm:

- Grantees were seeing increased levels of domestic violence, risk and fear.
- Different abuse has emerged as a result of Covid-19 and lockdown, e.g. Covid-19 being used by perpetrators as justification to return to family home, increased tensions as families are now in constant contact without respite and support, increased perpetrator control, using infection control measures as a tool of coercive and controlling behaviour.
- Families are returning to abusive homes due to the complications of self isolation.
- Extended families living together could also increase incidences of abuse and difficulties in communication with support providers.

Isolation:

- Children are particularly isolated, lacking in contact with peers, family members and trusted adults.

Mental health:

- Grantees voiced concerns for parents and children's anxiety in particular for survivors coping and recovering from trauma.

Looking ahead:

- Grantees were seeing a rise in domestic abuse and expected a further rise in referrals due to period of restrictions and anticipate an increase in mental health needs.

Covid-19 has presented many challenges. Child protection is a major concern. Perpetrators of domestic violence are motivated to cause harm therefore the lock down situation is giving opportunity to further control & isolate families. Children have witnessed increased domestic violent incidents, suffered physical abuse, suffered harsh punishments, suffered increased emotional abuse they have voiced having increased worry due to parental ill health anxiety Children have also voiced 'feeling low' & 'left out'.

BBC Children in Need Grantee

- There has been a **25%** increase to the national domestic abuse helpline.
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/31/call-for-uk-domestic-violence-refuges-to-get-coronavirus-funding>
- **67%** of survivors who are currently experiencing abuse reported that it has got worse since Covid-19.
<https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/domestic-violence-increases-in-france-during-covid-19-lockdown/>
- **78%** of survivors reported that Covid-19 has made it harder for them to leave their abuser.
https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Key%20issues%20for%20domestic%20abuse%20victims%20in%20the%20Coronavirus%20Bill_0.pdf

Young carers

Emotional wellbeing and mental health:

- The early pandemic was an especially worrying time for young carers with increased vulnerabilities and reduced opportunities for accessing advice and support. They also faced challenges around increased fear about health risks for person they care for, getting behind with school work, exams or transitions due to having a caring role and in some homes, a lack of technology or broadband or parental support.

Family pressure:

- Grantees were particularly worried for how this group of children and young people could cope with the many additional challenges they faced in their families at this time.
- Young carers face increasing caring responsibilities with less ability to take a break.
- Their caring roles are more difficult in lockdown due to living in shielded families, financial difficulties and food insecurity.
- Young carers and their families are facing increased challenges across a range of issues family relationships; parental mental health conditions; physical health issues; substance misuse issues; rise in safeguarding risks; risk of going into care; increased domestic abuse.

Isolation:

- The spaces young carers turn to for support have reduced, there are decreased opportunities to connect with trusted adults and peers for support and advice out of the home.

In light of Covid-19 and the social isolation that is enforced on all, the support networks for these young people now either don't exist or are trying to be delivered remotely. It is impossible to know the impact this will have on young people who are already stressed and suffering. That there will be an impact on their mental and physical wellbeing is obvious and extremely worrying.

BBC Children in Need Grantee

Many are experiencing financial difficulties and finding it hard to make ends meet, source shopping and feed siblings.

BBC Children in Need Grantee

- Official figures state that there are **244,000** young carers in the UK; it is estimated to be as much as **700,000**.
<https://www.caringtogether.org/news/heroes-at-home>)
- The Carers Trust have reported an **60%** increase in call demand to their helpline during the pandemic.
ONS: 2011 Census, Detailed Characteristics for Local Authorities in England and Wales
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-11757907>

Bereaved children and young people

Coping with grief and bereavement can be much harder for children and young people amidst the risks and restrictions of the pandemic.

Covid-19 puts more children at risk of becoming bereaved and exacerbates the challenges for those who are already bereaved or are being supported with a future bereavement.

Children and young people being supported with a future bereavement

- Some children and young people are living apart from a parent/carer due to vulnerabilities, social isolation, frontline workers status. This means limited time to share final days or weeks with loved ones.
- Grantees are reducing or stopping face-to-face bereavement activities as hospices reduce visits.
- Hospices will try to accommodate children's wishes to visit a dying parent if it is safe to do so but restrictions remain in place.
- Families face more distressing experiences of grief during social isolation.

Children and young people who are already bereaved

- Some children are experiencing increased anxiety levels and are managing the fear of potentially more deaths due to the pandemic.
- Children face a loss of access to many of their coping mechanisms, including trusted relationships; social support; school routine; face-to-face support at bereavement projects including group peer support; hands on activities and to confidential counselling.

Children now being referred into our service will have a particularly difficult experience of bereavement unable to visit loved ones in hospital or care homes and perhaps unable to attend the funeral. Socially distanced grief will be enormously distressing. Once referred it will not be possible for the children to meet face to face with [our counsellor] and build trust and rapport in the usual way, so we need to find new ways to build that trusting, honest relationship.

BBC Children in Need Grantee

- Pre-Covid-19 - **45,000** children are bereaved of a parent or sibling every single year in the UK.
<https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/bereaved-children-missing-out-on-vital-support-in-uk-schools-study-finds> http://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/networks/eri/publications/winstonswish/Consequences_of_childhood_bereavement_June_2019.pdf

Children and young people leaving care

Our early insight indicates this group, who often have little access to family support, are becoming isolated.

Basic needs and financial hardship:

- Care leavers are experiencing financial difficulties and food insecurity. This includes struggling to manage finances and coordinate a regular supply of food.

Isolation:

- With little or no family support, and less connection with trusted adults and their friends, young people leaving care face a potentially anxious and isolated experience of the lockdown period.

Emotional wellbeing mental health:

- Mental health is deteriorating for many care leavers due to isolation, anxiety, boredom, uncertainty and the impact of the pandemic on their aspirations for the future.

Future concerns:

- This is a challenging and uncertain time for this group of young people as they look to their future. Young people face disruption to education and training, which is particularly concerning when at an important transitional stage. Some care leavers have lost jobs, they have worked hard to gain.

“Covid-19 has had a wide and negative impact across our group of young people, with some young people feeling more socially isolated than ever and others losing their jobs that they and their mentor have worked hard to achieve.”

BBC Children in Need Grantee

- There are **99,672** children in care in the UK.
<https://www.becomecharity.org.uk/care-the-facts/about-the-care-system/>
- Currently **half** of all children in care meet the criteria for a possible mental health disorder, compared to 1 in 10 outside the care system.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/improved-mental-health-support-for-children-in-care>



Physical Health

Children and young people facing health issues.

BBC Children in Need are currently funding

- **115** projects to the value of over **£7.5 million** supporting children and young people with health issues.
- **Over 30** projects to the value of over **£2.5 million** supporting children and young people with life limiting or life threatening conditions.

Children and young people with life limiting and life threatening conditions

Grantees told us this group have have increased risks to their physical and emotional wellbeing due to the pandemic.

Family pressure:

- This is a crisis period of intensified existing anxiety and stress for families with a child with a life limiting or life threatening condition.

Emotional wellbeing & mental health:

- Families fear the time they have left together may be spent in isolation and without their loved ones and their usual support networks. One grantee told us how only one parent was able to visit a child undergoing hospital treatment, and for many who are self isolating, neither parent may visit, which was extremely distressing.

Physical wellbeing:

- Children in the 'vulnerable' category at risk of the virus are required to shield.

Isolation

- Highly valued support and care is reduced because of social distancing and shielding. There's exacerbated isolation for families and usual coping mechanisms are less likely to be available and pressure without respite support.

Education & positive activities:

- Home schooling siblings presents an additional challenge for of children with complex needs.

In the last [first] two weeks of the enforced lock down period, we've supported one child urgently, this sadly was a child receiving end of life support. We will continue to be available to respond to any urgent referrals like this, as such the project is running but it a very limited capacity.

BBC Children in Need Grantee

- Pre-Covid-19 - **49,000** children aged 0-18 are living with a life limiting or life threatening condition in the UK.
<https://www.togetherforshortlives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ExRes-Childrens-Hospices-Ethnicity-Report-Leeds-Uni.pdf>
- Pre-Covid-19 children's hospice charities across the UK supported approx. **10,509** children and young people with life limiting or life threatening conditions.

<https://www.togetherforshortlives.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/190614-FINAL-Statutory-funding-for-children%E2%80%99s-hospice-and-palliative-care-charities-in-England-2019.pdf>

Children and young people with long term health conditions

This group of children and their families face increasing health concerns for now and the future.

Physical wellbeing:

- Some children are shielding due to their health condition being in the 'vulnerable' category (at risk of the virus). Some families are living apart as one parent shields with the disabled child and the other part of the family lives with the other parent. Many routine health appointments and specialist care are not taking place due to Covid-19.
- Some children are at risk of regression in their physical progress as their physical conditioning and mobility will deteriorate and lose physical independent skills unless families are supported to deliver physical support. Without continued physical conditioning some children could be at a greater risk of significant medical complications if contracting Covid-19.

Emotional wellbeing mental health

- Families now need to support vulnerable children with complex physical needs in their own homes to maintain their child's progress. This is a highly stressful time for families, who face additional caring roles, less support and anxiety about the health risks of the virus.

Looking ahead

- Children will require additional support when face to face support resumes to regain the physical skills that have declined.

“Parents/carers need to support their children without the usual support in place in terms of respite/appointments, need to support siblings, and are understandably extremely anxious about what Covid-19 could mean for them. The children/young people have lost usual routines and struggle, especially as their understanding may be limited. Much specialist care has stopped.”

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Children & young people marginalised on basis of identity or nationality

Children and young people belonging to certain groups based on their identity or nationality can be at a greater risk of marginalisation and social exclusion, and face additional barriers to achieving positive outcomes, such as prejudice, discrimination, cultural issues. This includes sexual and gender identity, faith groups, Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

BBC Children in Need are currently funding

- over **50** projects to the value of over **£3.4 million** specifically focused on children and young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.
- over **80** projects to the value of over **£5.2 million** specifically focused on refugee or asylum seeking children and young people.
- over **30** projects to the value of over **£2.1 million** specifically focused on young people affected by issues of sexual identity and gender identity.
- over **10** projects to the value of over **£1.1 million** specifically focused on children and young people from Gypsy, Traveller and Roma backgrounds.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children and young people

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic encompasses a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, cultures and experiences. Different communities experience issues specific to their culture and community such as language barriers, grieving processes and funeral traditions, family roles or gender specific issues.

Physical health and mental health:

- External evidence shows that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children and young people are experiencing the pandemic differently from their peers as a consequence of the disproportionate social, economic, and psychological impacts on their communities.
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities are at higher risk from Covid-19 and are experiencing increased bereavements. This is raising anxiety within these communities and a concern for post lockdown activities that will increase contact

with other people, such as returning to education.

- Bereaved families are grieving alone with limited funerals, without the support of the wider family, communities and religious institutions.
- Children from the Chinese community experienced racism around Covid-19 heightening their feelings of isolation.
- Looking forward, a grantee highlighted a need for culturally specific bereavement support.

The Chinese community includes the children that we are supporting, they fear about the situation and the additional hate crime behaviour such as racism and feel even more isolated than before.

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African Caribbean funerals [are] steeped in religious ceremony based on a strong cultural heritage which is considered to be the final rites of passage. With the exception of support from close family members, Covid-19 bereaved families are having to cope with the passing of their loved ones and community elders primarily on their own.

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- Covid-19 does not affect all population groups equally. Research has found that death rates from Covid-19 are higher for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups when compared to White ethnic groups.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892376/COVID_stakeholder_engagement_synthesis_beyond_the_data.pdf
- People of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Other Asian, Caribbean and Other Black ethnicity had between 10 and 50% higher risk of death when compared to White British.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-53065306>
- More than 90% of doctors who have died during the pandemic were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.
<https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/covid-19/what-the-bma-is-doing/bma-council-chair-message>
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/02/calls-mount-for-public-inquiry-into-uk-bame-covid-19-death-rate>

Refugees and asylum seeking children

Our insight indicates this group of children and young people are living through the crisis with language barriers, fear and isolation.

Education and positive activities:

- Children already experiencing language difficulties and social isolation face falling further behind in education.

Basic needs:

- Children live in families with highly challenging circumstances and poverty relating to their immigration status, including destitute families with no recourse to public funds and overcrowded or suitable accommodation.
- Digital exclusion is a key issue, with two aspects: high levels of poverty meaning many lack devices and internet access and language barriers for online written content.

Isolation:

- Children are already highly isolated and face further cultural and social isolation through spending lockdown in overcrowded accommodation with few things to do, away from school and projects.

Emotional wellbeing mental health:

- Children's wellbeing may be particularly impacted by deteriorating parental mental health and wellbeing issues.
- Fear and anxiety in some refugee communities may be rising from unreliable misinformation and difficulty understanding key information about Covid-19 due to language barriers.
- Children's existing emotional wellbeing and mental health needs may be exacerbated - these can be profound, due to traumatic past experiences.

Physical health

- Families may face difficulties accessing essential services. Being poorly informed around Covid-19 restrictions may increase health risks.

The already isolated and vulnerable young people we support are missing out on vital health messages young people who believed they had to stay inside their houses even when there was no food struggling to make use of 111; living with acute mental health problems, unable to

attend their appointments or buy food that helps them take their medication properly. Most are simply lonely, like many of us, but are experiencing this crisis alone or in places they didn't choose, worried for loved ones overseas, uncertain for the future, and trying their hardest to support others.

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- Pre-Covid-19 an estimated **215,000** undocumented children are living in the UK and they will have no recourse to public funds because of their parent's status.
<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/suspend-the-no-recourse-to-public-funds-condition-parliamentary-briefing.pdf>

Children and young people marginalised due to sexual and/or gender identity

Isolation:

- Grantees told us many young people feel isolated from the support network offered by projects. These support networks provide fun opportunities with their peers and help build their self belief.

Emotional wellbeing mental health:

- Many LGBT+ young people are currently at home with families that do not support, accept or know about their identity.
- Looking forward, grantees may see an increase in demand for their services after restrictions lift as young people may encounter mental health issues from being at home in this context, without their peers.

Risk of harm:

- Young people are vulnerable to exploitation due to spending more time online.
- Domestic abuse, bullying and discrimination remains a challenge. Access to help may be difficult or reduced currently.

Many young people in the project are facing social isolation from their peers as attending support groups will often be the only outlet and safe space they have.

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- Pre-Covid-19 children and young people attracted to the same gender or both genders were much more likely to self-harm - in fact, **almost half** were likely to have done so.

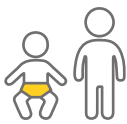
https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/good_childhood_summary_2018.pdf

- **Nearly half (45%)** of pupils who identify as LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) are bullied in Britain's schools.

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/school-report-2017>

- Young people who identify as LGBT are more likely to find themselves homeless than their non LGBT peers, comprising up to **24%** of the youth homeless population.

<https://www.akt.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=c0f29272-512a-45e8-9f9b-0b76e477baf1>



Covid-19 for different age groups

Our grantees support wide range of age groups, which have been affected by the pandemic in different ways.

We have identified some key differences and issues affecting the very youngest and oldest in our age range - pre-schoolers and young people.

Babies and pre-school children

Grantees suggest this age group are at risk of isolation and the harm of deteriorating maternal mental health at a crucial stage in their brain development.

Isolation:

- Grantees are concerned about babies and pre schoolers who already faced isolation, and may not be interacting with anyone other than their primary care givers. They are missing crucial social interaction and play opportunities at a crucial stage in brain development, presenting risks to child's long term social and emotional development.
- Future support may include intensive work to support the transition or re-integration into normal activities such as pre-school and nursery.

Emotional wellbeing & mental health:

- Grantees feel that parental mental health is deteriorating due to increased anxiety isolation whilst raising a baby or small child during social isolation and increasing financial hardship. This may lead to rising demand for family support projects in the future.
- Maternal mental health during pregnancy and in early motherhood is at risk from reduced professional healthcare support and informal support and the isolating experience of having a baby during the pandemic.
- Poor mental health amongst mothers of babies poses risks to bonding with their baby and their ability to provide responsive care. In turn, these issues may lead to reduced breastfeeding rates. All these factors can be harmful to cognitive and physical development.

“First 1,000 days focus is particularly stark in the context of a lockdown of an indeterminant amount of time.”

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- **45%** of parents have reported a negative impact on their young children's social and development wellbeing during the pandemic.

<https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Early-Years-Impact-Brief.pdf>

Young people

Young people's aspirations and motivation are at risk, as fear for their future education and employment opportunities grows.

Concern for the future:

- Young people's aspirations and motivation levels are at risk, and their anxiety about their future employment and education is increasing. Grantees are concerned that young people are more likely to lose jobs in the crisis and less likely to gain new jobs in a potential recession. Some young people have already lost jobs.

Emotional wellbeing & mental health:

- Young people's mental health through this period is a key concern and area where grantees anticipate a rise in need for future service provision.

Family pressures:

- Many young people accessing projects live in challenging family circumstances and household poverty, and were experiencing an increase in family conflicts and relationship difficulties. Grantees feel they miss the respite from family challenges that youth provision gave them.

Lack of education and positive activities:

- Many young people may lack access to positive role models or diversion from external influences that could put them at risk.
- There's a risk of some becoming disengaged, boredom and retreating from day to day life. Some young people will need support to re-engage with life post lockdown.

A number [of young people] have already expressed real worries about the long term effects [of Covid-19] on education, jobs, personal health and the chance of losing a close relative.

BBC Children in Need Grantee

- **Almost a third of students (30%)** report that they are less able to afford study because of the pandemic.

<https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-and-Social-Mobility-Impact-Brief-2.pdf>

- **Almost half (48%)** of applicants feel the Covid-19 health crisis will have a negative impact on their chances of getting into their first choice university. Working class applicants were more likely to be worried about the negative impact (51%, compared to 43% from middle class homes).

<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/covid-19-impacts-apprenticeships/>

Using and learning from our insight

Our early insight fed into the design of a range of new grant programmes and more flexible approaches to funding by our grant making team. Our key themes are feeding into a range of work across BBC Children in Need in our grant-making processes, fundraising and marketing and evaluating the impact of our Covid-19 response.

Our insight will be updated as the situation arising from Covid-19 continues. We continue to gather insight to understand the evolving needs of children and young people and the work being funded to address these issues.



In time to come, when our country is through the worst of this crisis, we need to be mindful of the legacy that it will have created... **let us not forget about those whose lives will take much longer to get back on track.**

We will have families who have suffered the most harrowing of poor mental health experiences, we will have families who will have lost their incomes, we may even have families suffering bereavement because of Covid-19.

