



C19 National Foresight Group: Intelligence Briefing Paper 14 Data Trends and Children (additional material incl. Child Maintenance) 11/08/2020

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This briefing synthesizes data with systematic findings from across academic subjects. This evidence of empirical data and academic insight contributes to our existing knowledge on who is most likely to be experiencing adversity in our communities. To start to build a (provisional) picture about the impacts of Covid-19 on children and younger people.

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Context

A data review is undertaken by academics at Nottingham Trent University every week to inform the C19 National Foresight Group. Evidence related to Covid-19 psychological, social and economic trends are reviewed to inform, frame and prioritise discussions at national and local strategic decision-making level (LAs and LRFs). The C19 National Foresight Group synthesise data trends and academic findings across disciplines, with evidence of existing vulnerabilities and inequalities to start to build existing and emerging risk or adversity profiles of impacts from Covid-19.

Who is this for?

This is most useful for national thought leaders, local strategic decision-makers, intel cells and those involved in populating the MAIC.

Focussed theme this week: This week we are focussing on the development of the Covid-19 approach to understanding the impacts on individuals, families and groups of Covid-19. This is a tool for local strategic and operational decision makers to use to understand and prioritise need within their local communities.

Data trends:

YouGov Mood Data.

Covid-19: children, young people and family data and comparison data

Academic Insights:

We are providing two summaries of work we have completed relating to children and younger people.

- 1) Child Social Development
- 2) Child Maintenance Allowance

Academic Synthesis

(gathered from systematic literature reviews, rapid reviews, webpages, academic articles, pre-prints, academic expertise)

N.B. This is not a literature review, but a review of the broad area (balanced with Covid-19 specific literature) to see what topics lie within the area to inform future work. Predominantly based on systematic literature reviews and rapid reviews, this is to indicate the size of the literature review should we wish to commission one. Carried out by Stephanie Bianco, Adam Potter, Dr Stacey

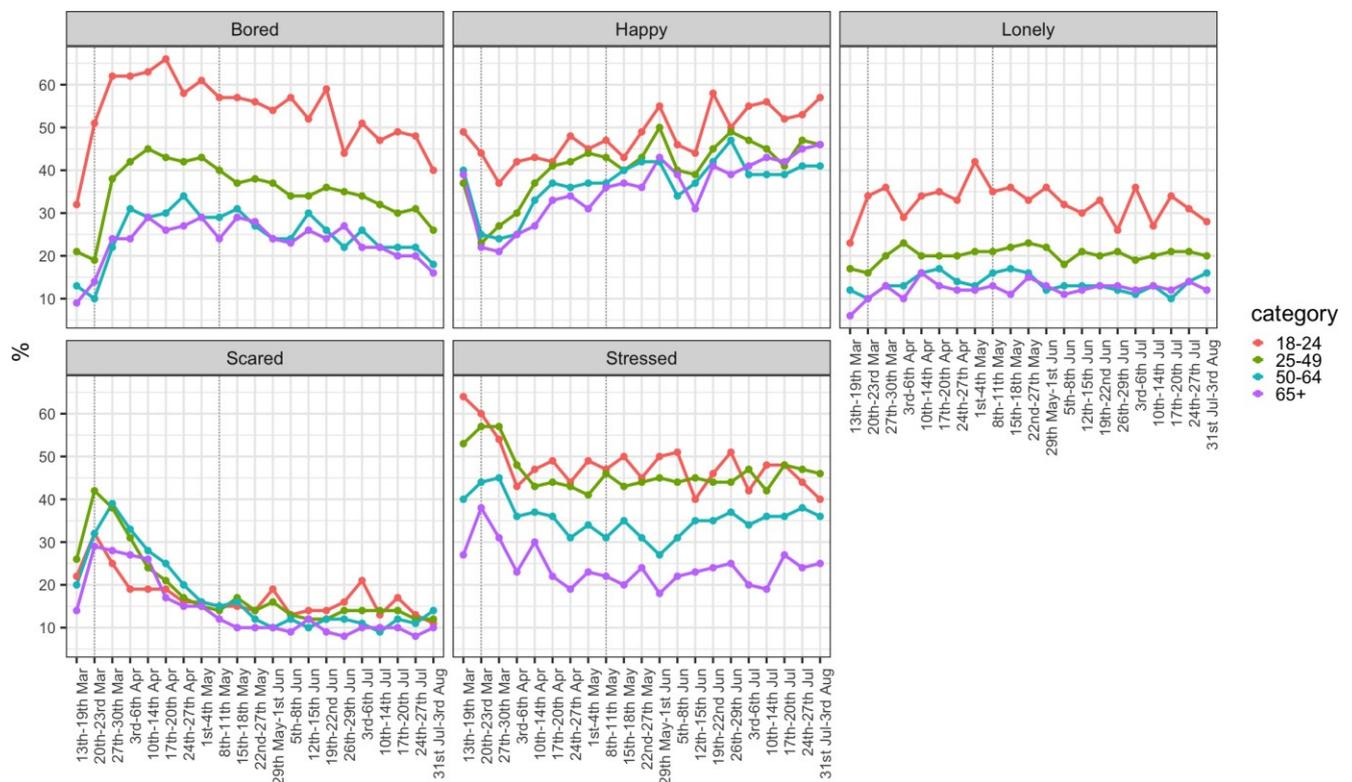
Stewart, and Rich Pickford, with revisions and edits by Dr Rowena Hill, NTU. Please contact us if you require a list of sources consulted to develop your own literature review.

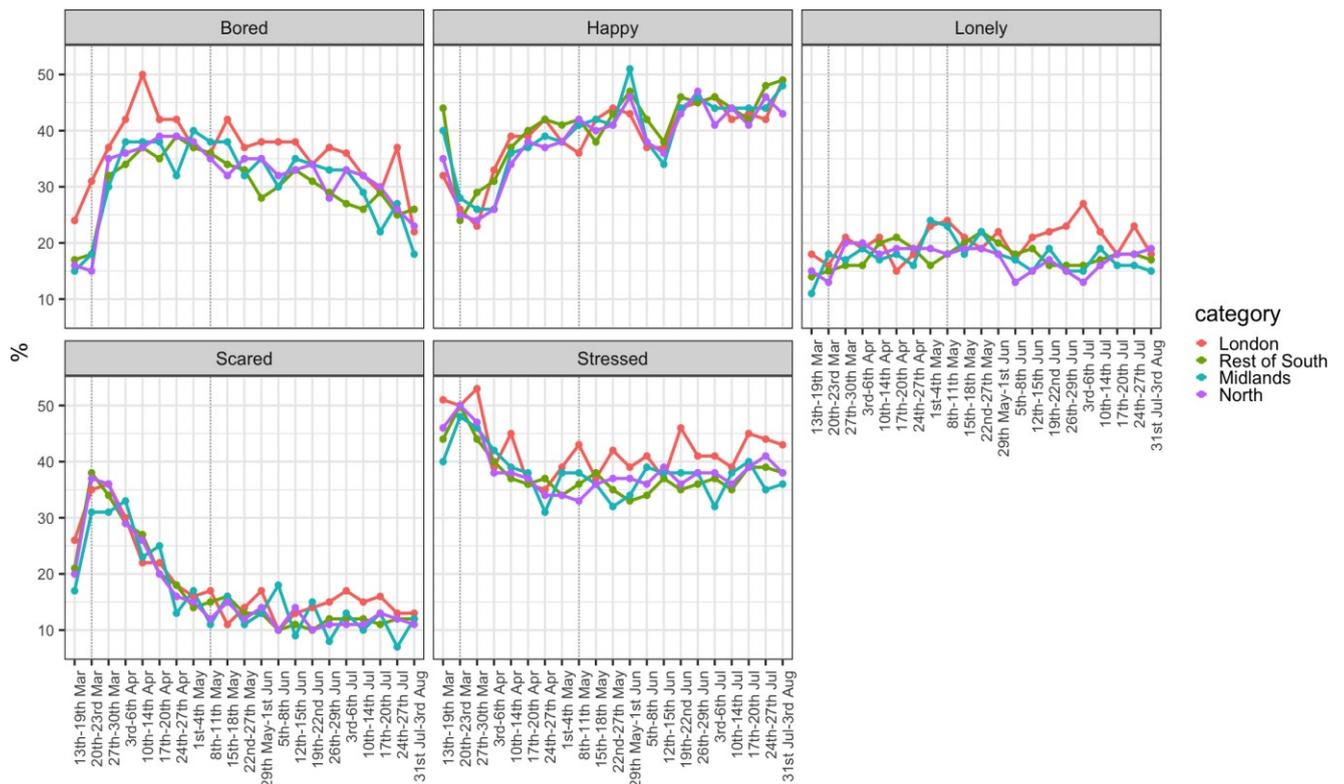
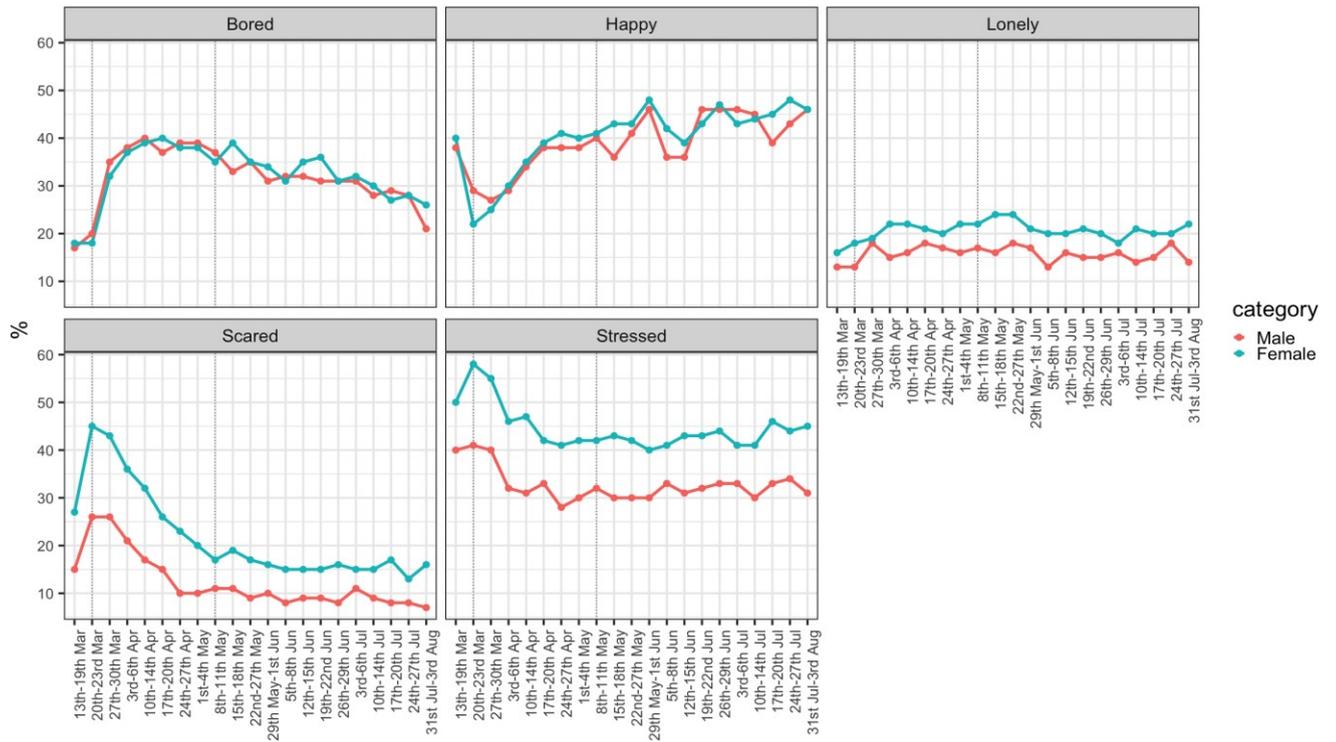
The section is to provide an overview of the academic and research foresight on the developing areas of latent and emergent needs relating to younger people in the community.

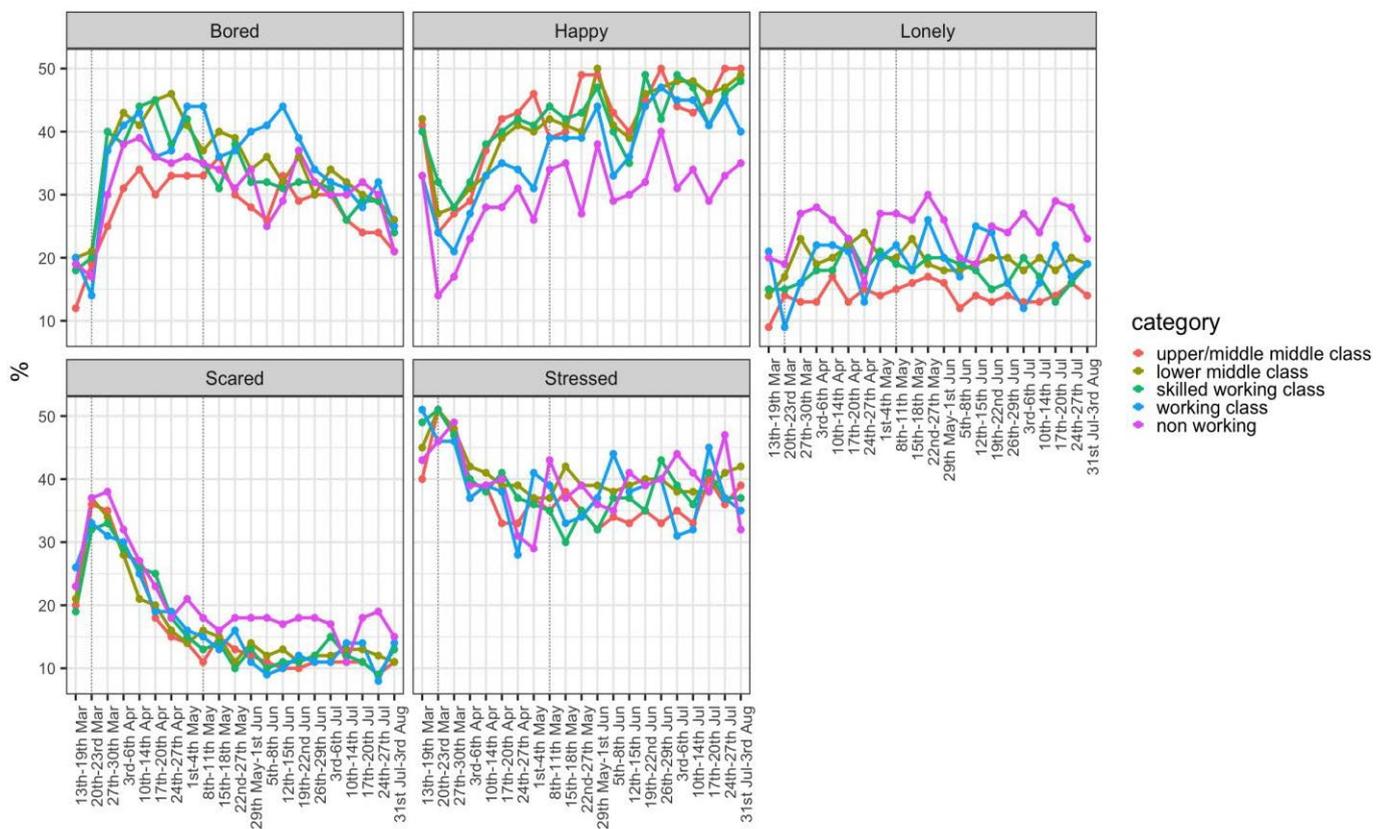
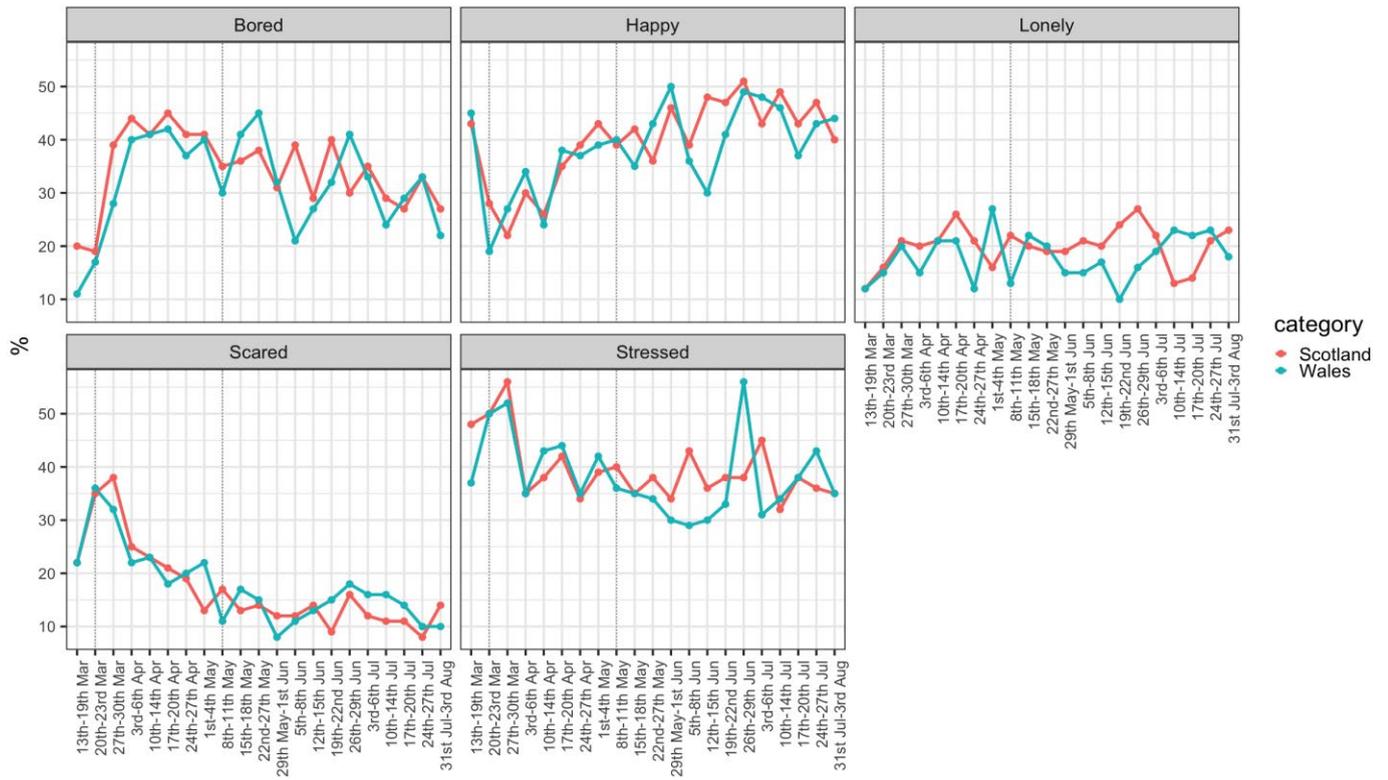
YouGov Mood Data 10 August 2020

Key Messages:

- Happiness appears to be continuing its upwards trend for most groups although the trend appears to be decreasing for individuals from Scotland.
- The percentage of people feeling bored has dropped for all groups **although 40% of young adults (18-24years) report feeling bored** compared to around 15% of the 65+ years group.
- Loneliness is plateauing **although around 30% of young adults (18-24years) report feeling lonely** compared to around 10% of the 65+ years group.
- Feeling scared is also plateauing with around 15% of respondents in most groups reporting this emotion.
- Stress also appears to be plateauing **although around 40-45% of younger and middle-aged adults (18-49 years) still report feeling stressed** compared to around 25% of the 65+ years group.
- Similarly, 45% of women report feeling stressed compared to 30% of men.









Covid-19: children, young people and family data

The data reported below are drawn from YoungMinds (youngminds.org.uk), the National Youth Trends: take the temperature report, the Co-SPACE Study Report 4 and the Understanding Society: COVID-19 Study.

Key messages

- Multiple data sources highlight that young people's mental health has been negatively affected by Covid-19.
 - Parents and young people cite concerns on attentional challenges due to Covid-19.
 - Loneliness continues to be a significant concern for young people.
 - Younger people are expressing concerns about a lack of positive experiences and are expressing much higher levels of hopelessness, unhappiness and a belief unable to make decisions.
 - Young people did express a belief that they were playing a useful role during the pandemic.
 - When we investigated home schooling the amount of time spent home schooling increased with age but having younger siblings 0-4 negatively affected the hours for 5-10 year olds.
 - Affluence seems to play a role in the use of online teaching systems with 60% of private schools offering an online platform compared to only 23% in state schools from the most deprived backgrounds.
 - Over half of parents report they have struggled to home school their children.
 - Schools report that access to electronic learning devices is a challenge for some schools but more affluent area-based schools more likely to supply devices 28% compared to 15% in most deprived areas.
 - Almost two thirds of 16-18 years olds felt that home schooling would negatively affect their future life chances.
 - 50% of parents report concerns about children returning to school but feel their children are less concerned than they are.
 - Prior to lockdown 68% of 2-4 year olds were accessing early years provision. This dropped to 7%.
 - In June 49% of respondents said they would not be sending their children back to early years provision that month with 83% not yet sending children back that month.
- Some parents reported concerns about their children's social and physical development due to a lack of access to provision.
 - Whilst two thirds of provision closed those that remained open were reported to provide strong social and community network ties.
 - When comparing the 2020 Understanding Society survey data with 2017, across all measures, more people at most ages have reported poorer outcomes. Younger people are also more affected by this difference.

Data Sources

YoungMinds conducted a survey investigating the impact of coronavirus on 2,111 young people (13-25 years) who at some point in their lives have looked for mental health support. The survey took place between June and July 2020. National Youth trends: take the temperature reports results from 1,535 14-25 years old during late March to early April 2020. The Co-SPACE Study Report 4 which assessed Changes in children and young people's emotional and behavioural difficulties through lockdown. The sample contained approximately 2,890 parents/carers between the end of March 2020 and the end of May 2020. The authors of the study stress that the sample is not nationally representative and is drawn from primarily high-income, white British households with full- or part-time working parents. The Understanding Society: COVID-19 Study (<http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-8644-2>) sampled 14,123 respondents in June 2020.

Mental health and mood

81% of YoungMinds respondents said the coronavirus crisis had made their mental health a bit or much worse, with 11% saying it was a bit or much better. This was echoed in the National Youth Trends data which showed that **65% of young adults surveyed were concerned about their mental health**.

This is in contrast to the national result which showed around 20% of respondents were concerned about their mental health during lockdown (Ipsos MORI <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/Covid-19-and-mental-wellbeing>). Conversely, results from the Co-SPACE Study Report 4 show that adolescents reported no change in their own emotional, behavioural or attentional difficulties during lockdown with their parents reporting a reduction in their child’s emotional difficulties but an increase in attentional difficulties. However, an inspection of the mean scores for all three behaviours shows that parents/carers underestimate the levels of the children’s self-reported emotional and behavioural difficulties whose scores are on the higher end of the scale, see figure 1 and figure 2.

Figure 1. Parents mean difficulty scores

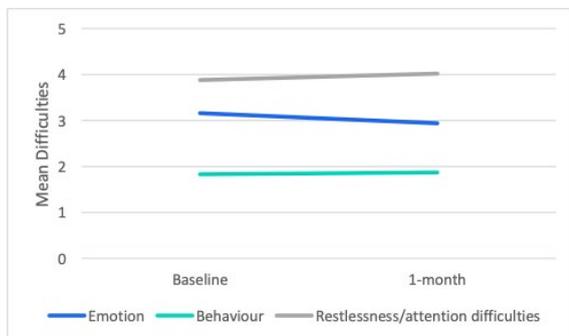


Figure 2. Adolescent difficulty scores

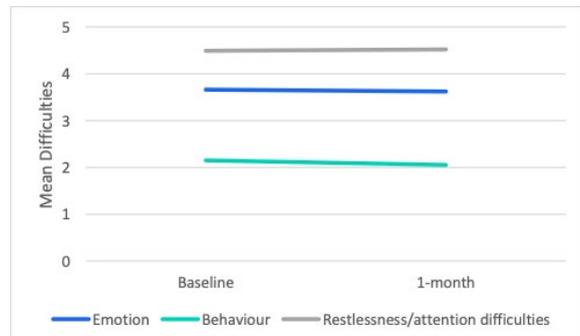


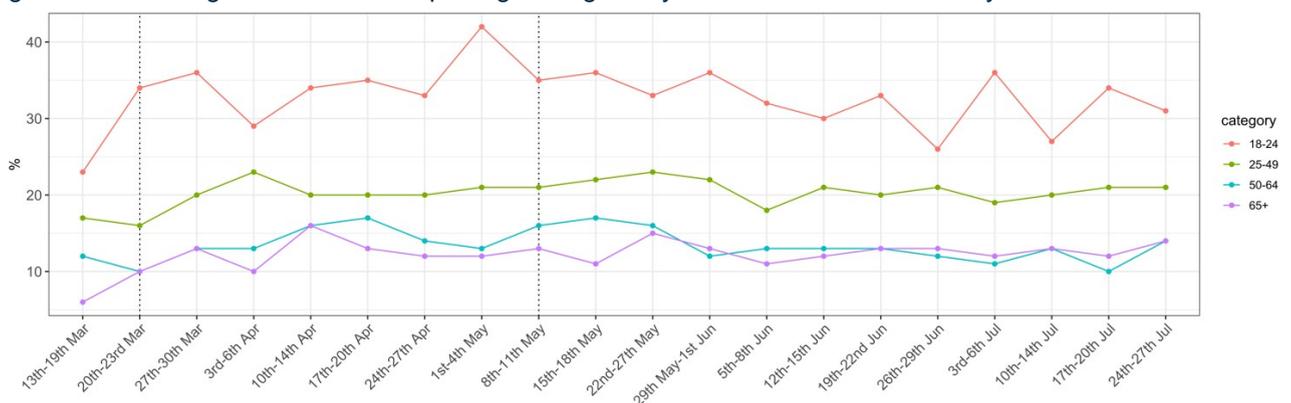
Figure source: Co-SPACE Study Report 4

Regarding primary school aged children, the Co-SPACE Study Report 4 revealed that parents/carers believed their children’s emotional, behavioural and attentional difficulties had increased during the pandemic.

In the National Youth Trends data, of the respondents who experienced mental health concerns during the pandemic, 45% said communication with friends helped most, 20% said being creative, 15% said not reading the news and 11% said staying well informed was the most helpful.

87% of Youngminds respondents reported an increase in loneliness and anxiety during lockdown. Feelings of loneliness appear to be greater in younger than older adults with results from YouGov’s weekly mood tracker showing that the percentage of individuals reporting feeling lonely decreasing with age, see Figure 3. Relatedly, 83% of National Youth Trends respondents feeling more worried than usual.

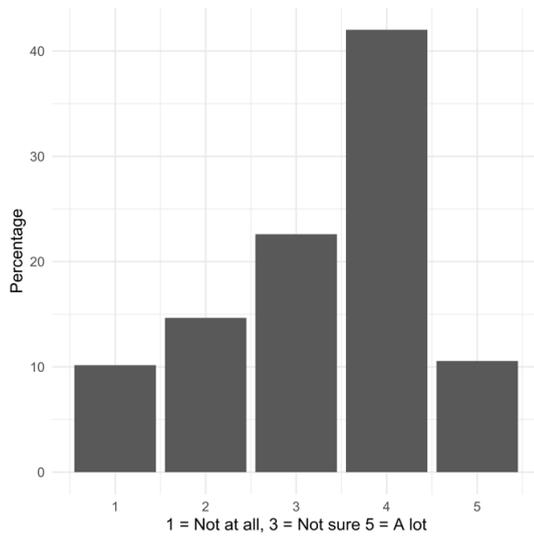
Figure 3. Percentage of individuals reporting feeling lonely from 13th March – 27th July 2020.



Data source: YouGov Britain’s mood measured weekly.

A quarter of respondents of the National Youth Trends survey reported experiencing few or no positive moments during the pandemic, see Figure 4.

Figure 4. Percentage of responses to the question: have you experienced any moments of positivity during the pandemic?



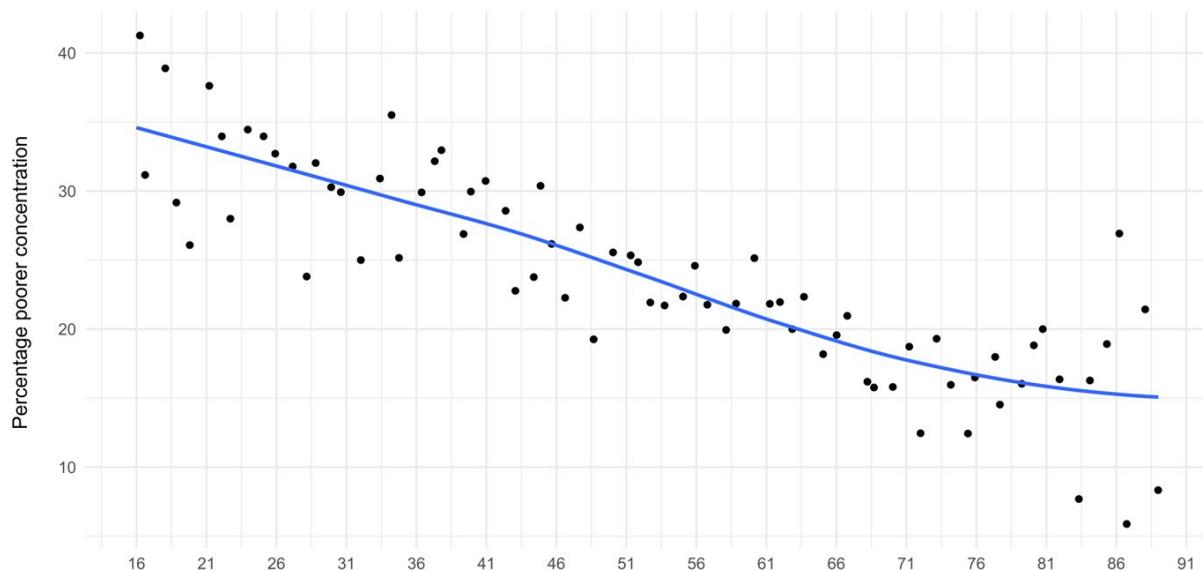
Understanding Society Covid-19 Panel Survey

Data from the Understanding Society: COVID-19 Study showed the following impacts on mood and mental health across ages.

Concentration

The percentage of respondents reporting that their concentration was less or much less than usual was **highest in younger adults** and decreased with age.

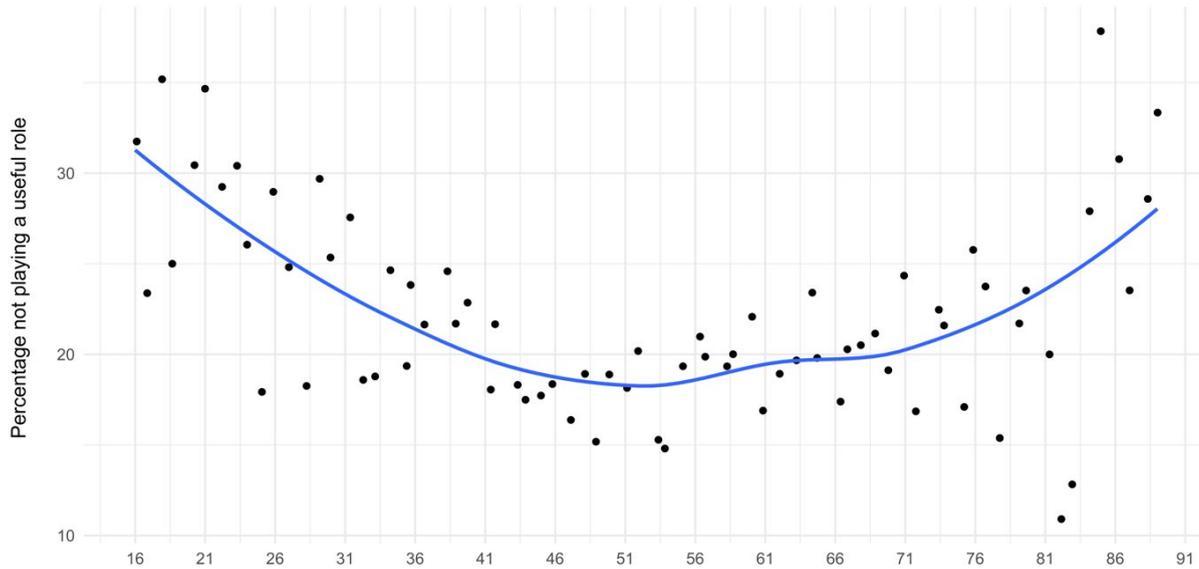
Figure 5. Percentage respondents reporting poorer concentration across age



Feeling of playing a useful role

The percentage of respondents reporting that felt they were playing a useful role less or much less than usual **formed a U-shape with young people and older adults reporting the highest levels.**

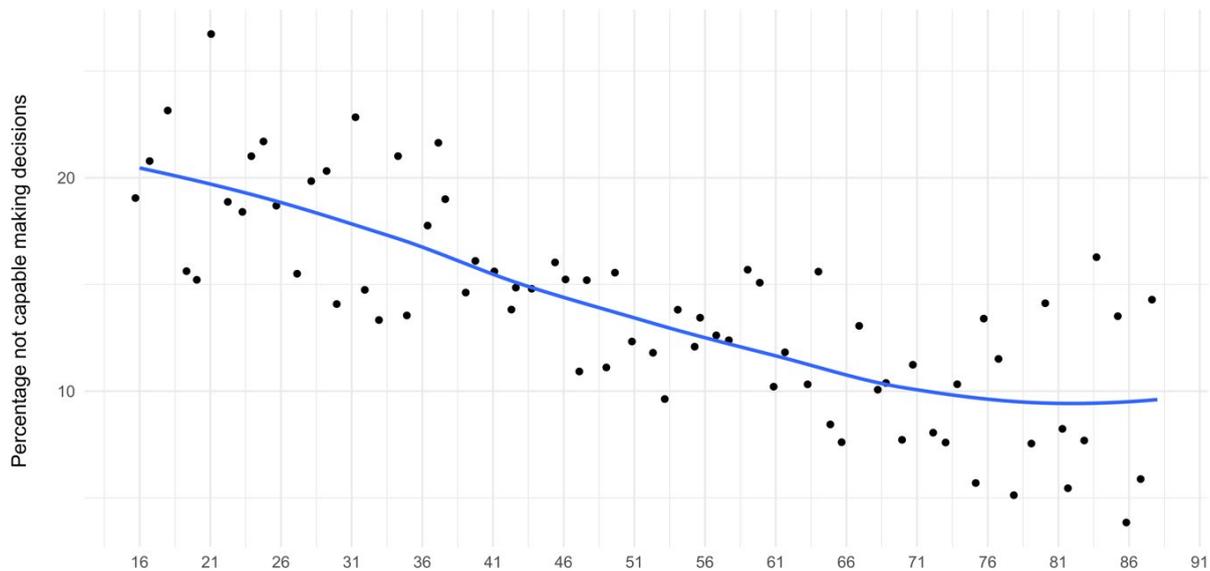
Figure 6. Percentage respondents reporting feeling they are not playing a useful role across age



Feeling capable of making decisions

The percentage of respondents reporting that their **ability to make decisions was less or much less than usual was highest in younger adults** and decreased with age.

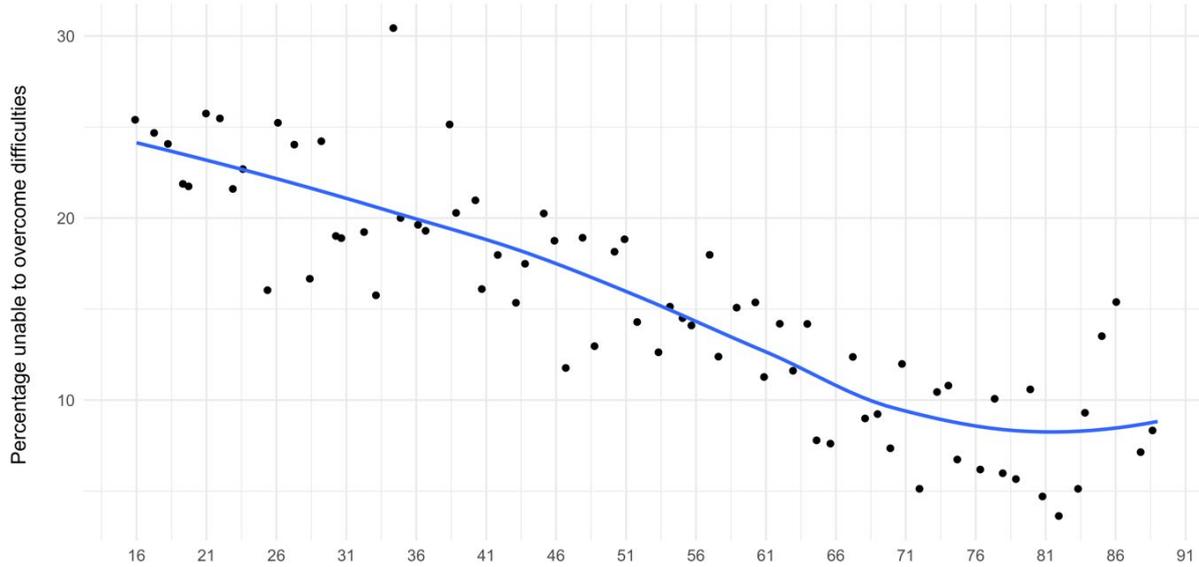
Figure 7. Percentage respondents reporting feeling they are less capable of making decisions across age



Unable to overcome difficulties

The percentage of respondents reporting that their ability to **overcome difficulties was poorer or much poorer than usual was highest in younger adults** and decreased with age.

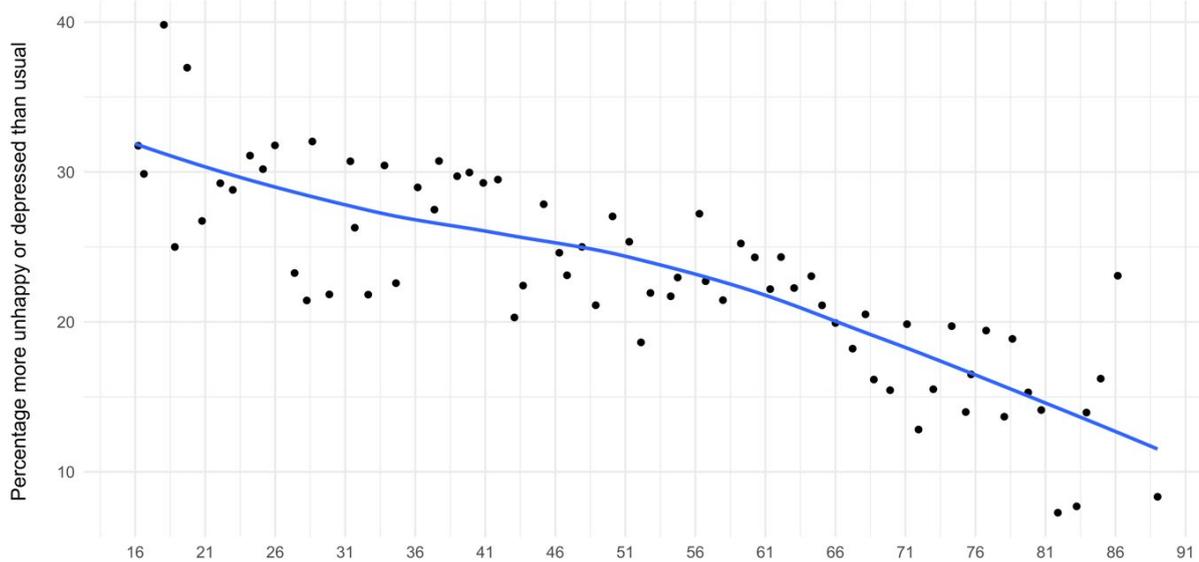
Figure 8. Percentage respondents reporting feeling they are less able to overcome difficulties across age



Feeling unhappy or depressed

The percentage of respondents who felt rather **more or much more unhappy or depressed than usual was highest in younger adults** and decreased with age

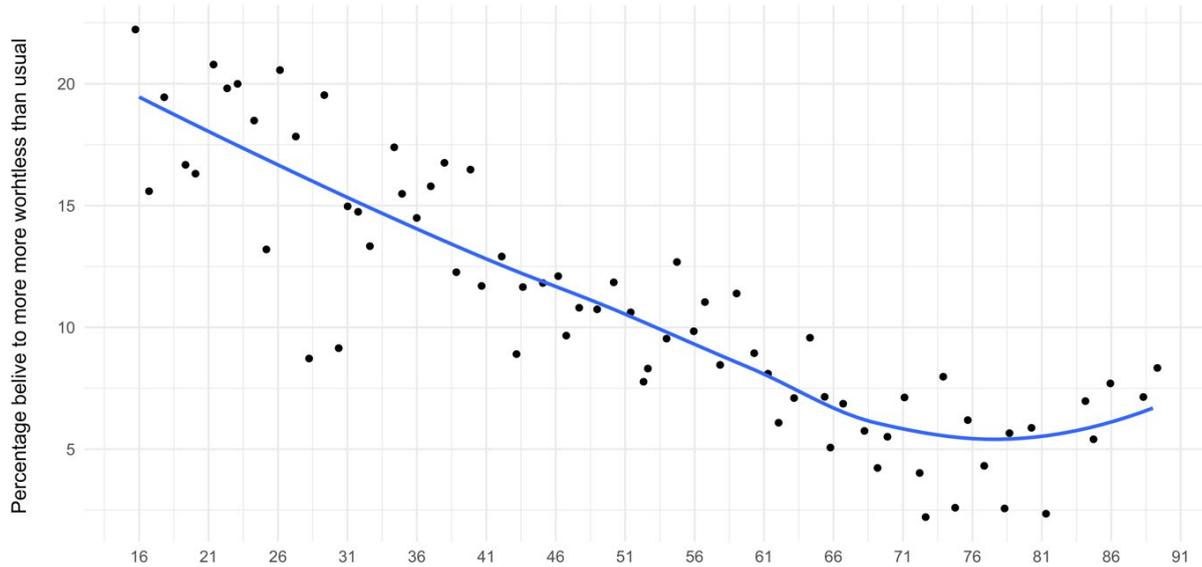
Figure 9. Percentage respondents reporting feeling unhappy or depressed across age



Feelings of worthlessness

The percentage of respondents who felt rather **more or much more worthless than usual was highest in younger adults** and decreased with age, although scores began to increase in older adults over the age of around 78.

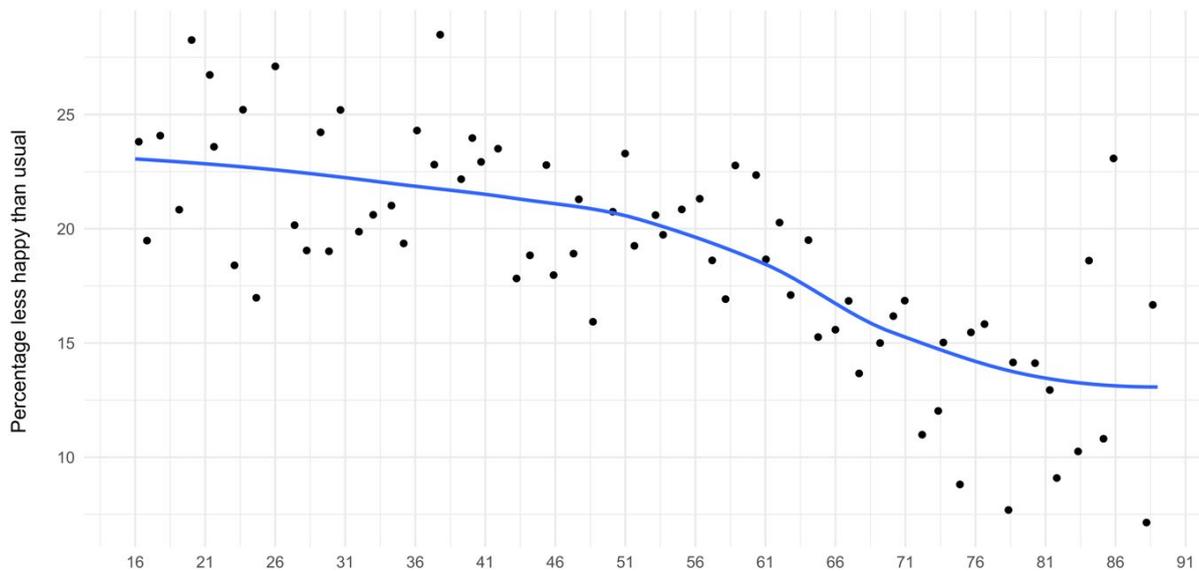
Figure 10. Percentage respondents reporting feeling worthless across age



General happiness

The percentage of respondents who felt **less or much less happy than usual** was highest in **younger adults** and decreased with age.

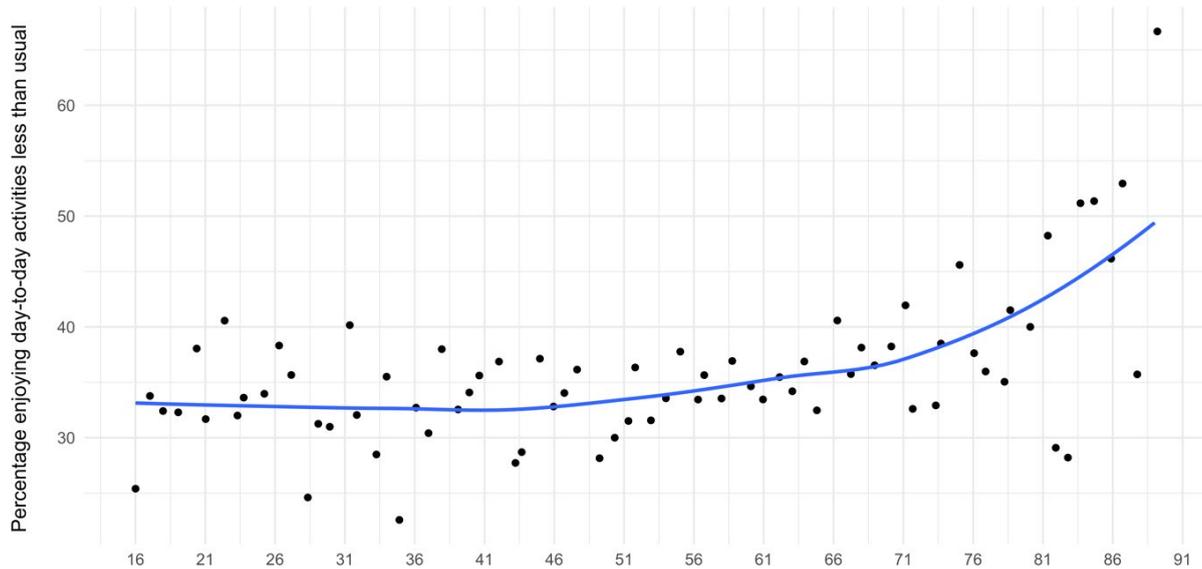
Figure 11. Percentage respondents reporting feeling less happy in general across age



Enjoyment of day-to-day activities

Despite the poor outcomes noted above for younger people, the percentage of people enjoying day-to-day activities less or much less than usual is flat for most ages and increases after around the age of 46. Note though that these data show that at least around a third of respondents of all ages are enjoying day-to-day activities less or much less than usual.

Figure 12. Percentage respondents reporting feeling less enjoyment of day-to-day activities across age



Home schooling

The following data are drawn from the Coronavirus and home schooling in Great Britain Survey, a module of the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey published by the Office for National Statistics and The Sutton Trust Covid-19 Impact Brief Report 3 which focussed on the impact of school shutdown.

The Coronavirus and home schooling in Great Britain Survey sample contained approximately 12,750 respondents aged 16 or over and was between taken between 3 April to 10 May 2020 and 7 May to 7 June 2020; during these periods' schools were closed to most children. The Sutton Trust Covid-19 Impact Brief Report 3 was published in April 2020 but does not provide details of the respondents' demographics.

The key findings of the home schooling survey showed that 87% of parents were home schooling a child in their household due to the pandemic, although this number decreased as the only or eldest child's age increased. Further, the **number of hours doing schoolwork increased as the age of the child increased, with 5-10 year old children completing 10 hours on average and 11-16 year old children completing 16 hours on average.** If there was a child aged 0-4 in the household, hours doing schoolwork dropped but only for the 5-10 year old children. Relatedly, the Sutton Trust report found that more children in private schools are returning more than three quarters of work compared with other schools, see Figure 13.

Figure 13. Percentage of students who have returned work as a function of school deprivation status

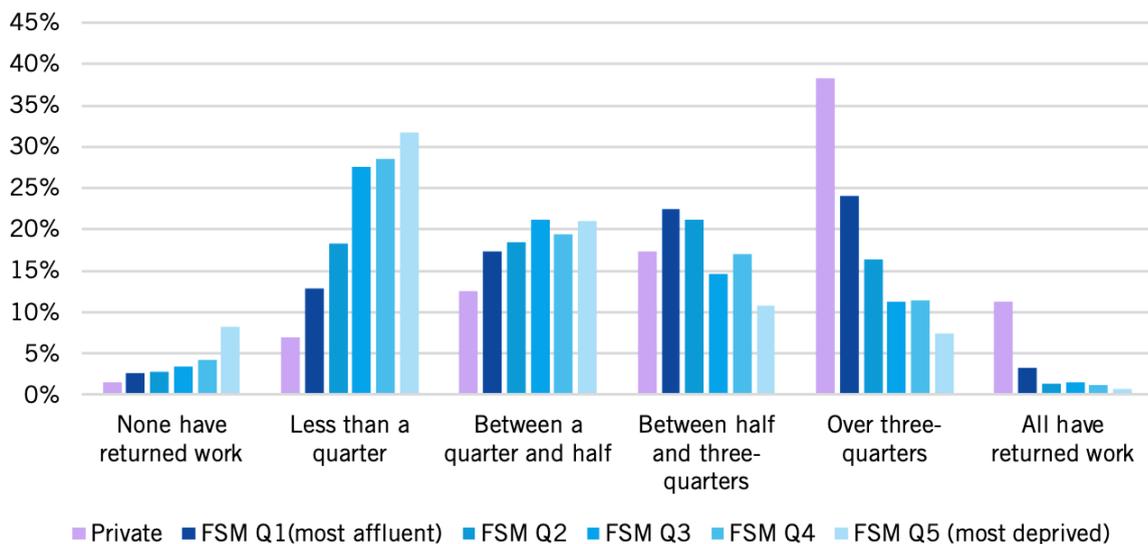


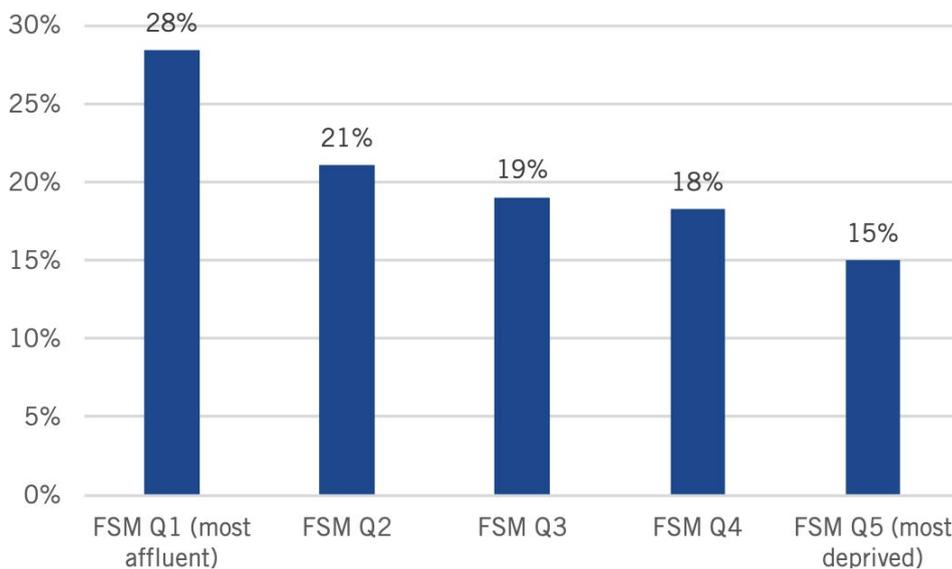
Figure source: The Sutton Trust Covid-19 Impact Brief Report 3

The Sutton Trust report showed that **60% of private schools provided an online platform for students to receive work but these rates were 37% for state schools in the most affluent areas and 23% for state schools in the most deprived.** The home schooling report showed that 44% of children aged 16-18 years had used interactive online learning resources provided by schools whereas this figure was at 13% for children aged 5-10 years. However, the Sutton Trust report showed that 51% of students who attended private primary school and 57% who attended private secondary school were utilising online learning everyday whereas these figures were halved for students in state schools.

More than half of the parents in the home schooling survey said that a child in the household with struggling to carry on with their education whilst being home schooled with the majority (77%) stating that motivation was the key reason. Nine percent of parents stated that lack of devices was a reason for children struggling with education, but this was higher for households with one adult (21%) than those with two or more adults (7%). The Sutton Trust report also showed that 15% of teachers reported that over a third of their students from the most deprived areas would not have access to an electronic device compared with just 2% in the most affluent state schools. Further, 12% of teachers also felt that more than a third of their students in the most deprived areas would not have access to the internet. Despite this, only 15% of schools in the most deprived areas have offered devices to children in need compared to 28% of the least deprived schools, see figure 14.

Figure 14. Percentage of teachers reporting that their school was providing electronic devices to students

Figure source: The Sutton Trust Covid-19 Impact Brief Report 3



Just under 50% of parents reported having the confidence in their abilities to home school their children. However, the Sutton Trust report shows that this figure is dependent on parental education levels with over three quarters of parents with a postgraduate degree and over 60% with an undergraduate degree feeling confident in their ability to support their children’s learning from home, dropping to less than half of parents with A levels or GCSEs.

A third of women and a fifth of men said that home schooling was negatively impacting their wellbeing with around two in five parents agreeing that home schooling was negatively affecting their children.

Further, 64% of children aged 16-18 years who were in full-time education believed that home schooling would negatively impact their future plans for life.

Returning to School

The Co-SPACE Study Report 3 which investigated parents/carers and children’s feelings about returning



to school. The sample contained approximately 611 parents/carers between 12/05/2020 and 19/05/2020. The authors of the study stress that the sample is not nationally representative and is drawn from primarily high-income, white British households with full- or part-time working parents.

Key findings of the report are that around 50% of the respondents do not feel comfortable about their children going back to school with key concerns being that the children will be upset by or will not understand the need for physical distancing and catching or transmitting coronavirus. Some subgroups of parents were particularly concerned, these included those of children with additional needs, parents who do not work and those with lower incomes. Parents of children with additional needs were concerned that their child will not get appropriate emotional, behavioural and educational support or support to transition between classes/groups.

The majority of parents/carers perceive their children as feeling comfortable to return to school, perceiving their main concerns to be around school being different, and enjoyable aspects of school not happening. However, this is not the case for children with additional needs or those with mental health difficulties whose parents are more likely to report that they are not comfortable returning to school. Concerns for these children centre around school being different, changes to routine, loss of the enjoyable aspects of school and being away from home. Primary school aged children report feeling concerned with being away from home and transitioning in school where secondary aged children report being concerned about catching coronavirus and academic pressures.

Early Years

The following data are from The Sutton Trust Covid-19 Impact Brief Report 4 which focussed on early years (<https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/coronavirus-impacts-early-years/>). The data in the report were synthesised from three sources: A YouGov survey of the parents of 2-4 year olds; two Early Years Alliance surveys of providers; and a case study of providers in Birmingham.

Key findings of the report show that prior to lockdown 68% of parents of 2-4 year olds accessed early education or childcare with this dropping to just 7% throughout the lockdown period. By June, 83% of parents reported that their children had yet to return to childcare provisioners with 49% saying they would not return that month; key reasons cited include:

- health concerns
- worries about transmitting the virus
- lack of availability of care.

Many parents reported that lack of childcare had caused a negative impact on the child's social and emotional development with some children from deprived homes (particularly those in high-rise flats with limited access to green space) also showing negative impacts on physical development.

Over two thirds of early years childcare providers temporarily closed during lockdown, with marginally more remaining open in the most deprived areas (36%) as compared to the least deprived areas (30%). The report notes that childcare provisioners that did remain open played a big role in creating local support networks. However, providers in the most deprived areas were more likely to seek financial support than those in less deprived areas and as such a third reported being unlikely to still be operating next year compared to a quarter in the least deprived areas.

Understanding Society: 2017-2018 and June/July 2020 panel comparison – additional comparative data analysis

12,098 participants took part in all waves of the Understanding Society: 2017-2018, June 2020 panel and July 2020. **Across all measures, more people at most ages have reported poorer**

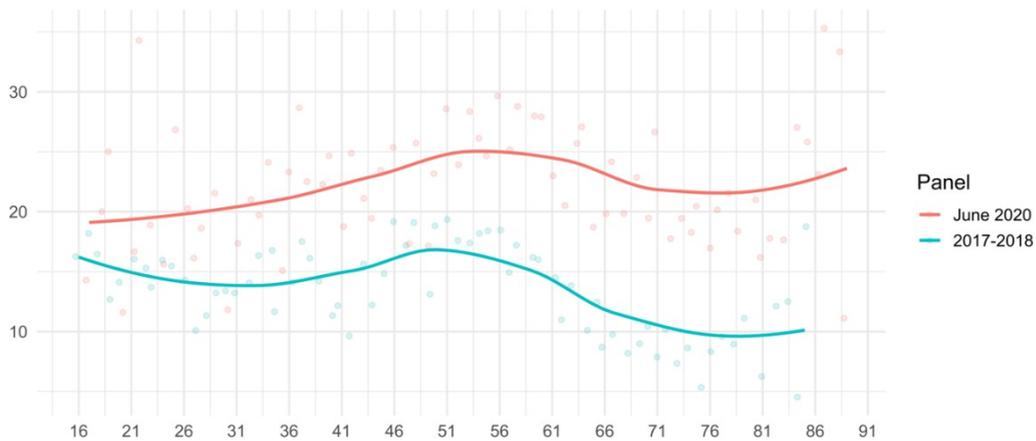
outcomes in 2020 than in 2017. However notable increases in poorer outcomes for young people can be seen in the following variables:

- concentration levels,
- feeling of playing a useful role,
- not feeling capable of making decisions,
- worthlessness and;
- general happiness.

However, looking at overall life satisfaction, younger adults had the smallest change of all ages from 2017-2018 to June 2020.

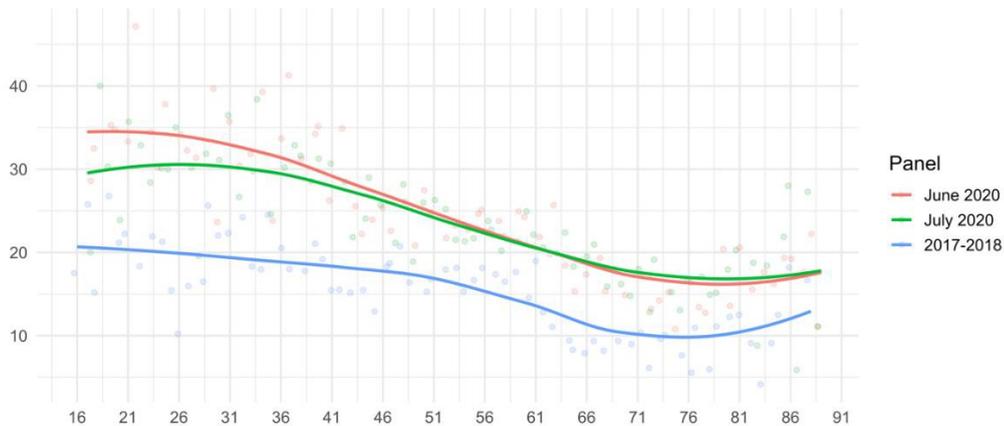
Life Satisfaction

Percentage dissatisfied with life



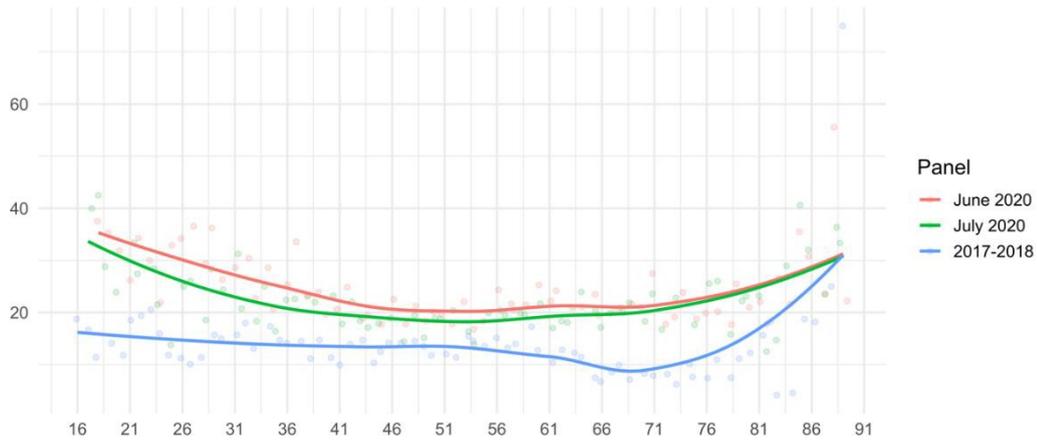
Mental wellbeing Concentration

Percentage poorer concentration



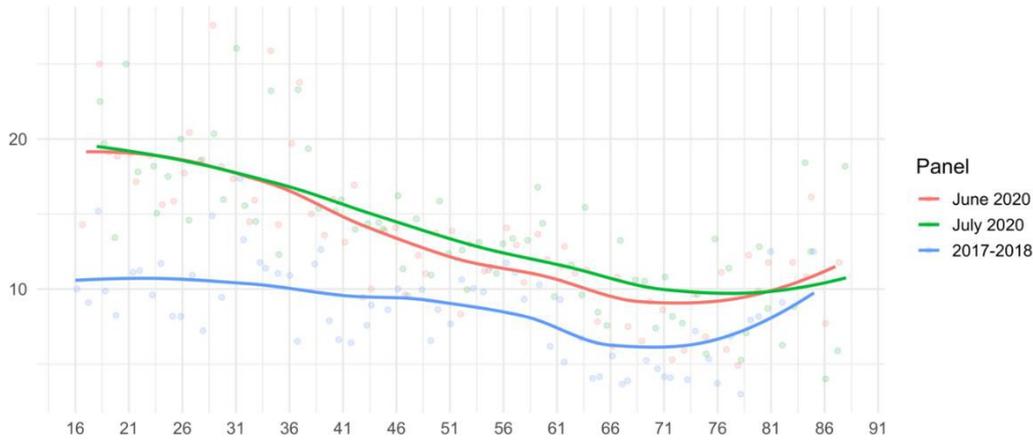
Playing a useful role

Percentage not playing useful role



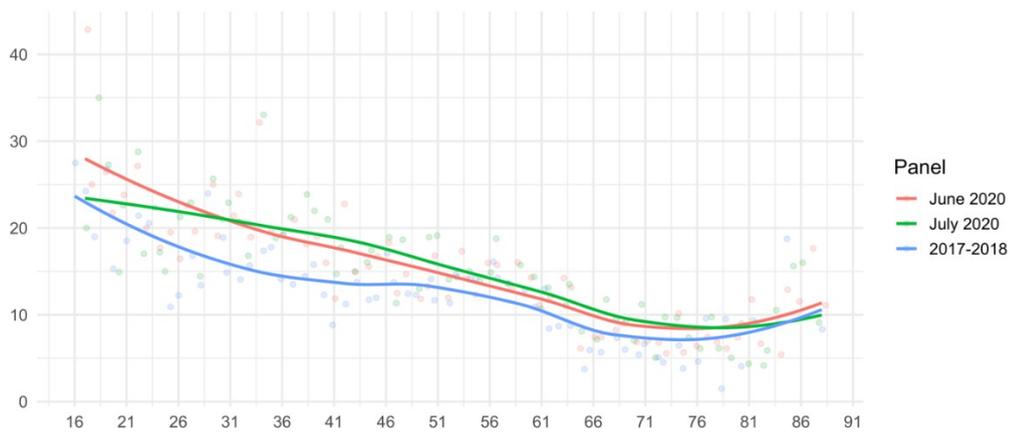
Capable of making decisions

Percentage not capable of making decisions



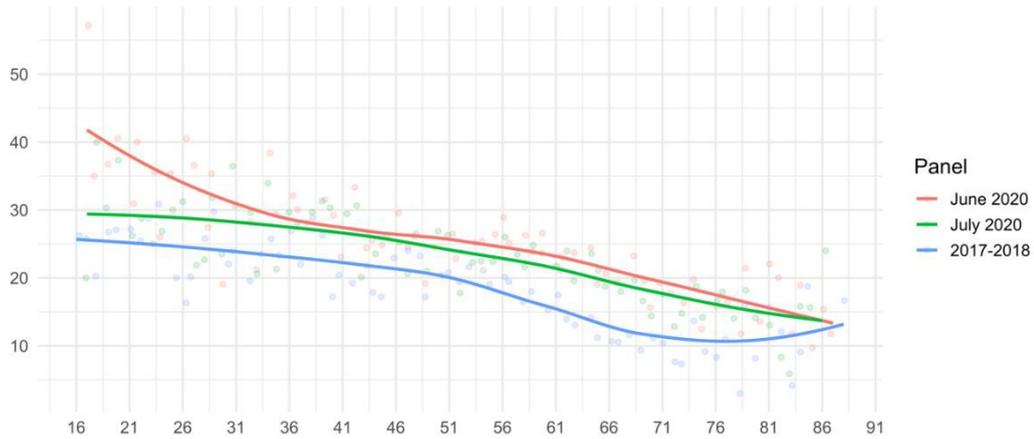
Problems overcoming difficulties

Percentage unable to overcome difficulties



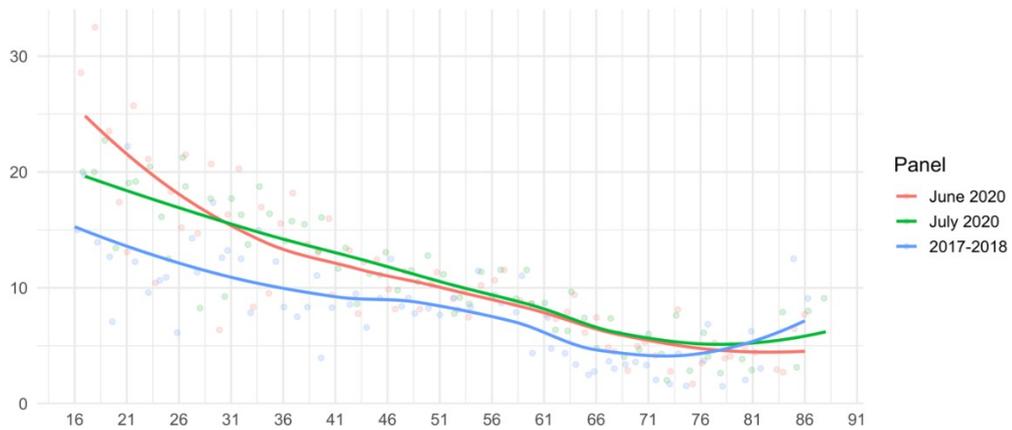
Unhappy or depressed

Percentage unhappy or depressed



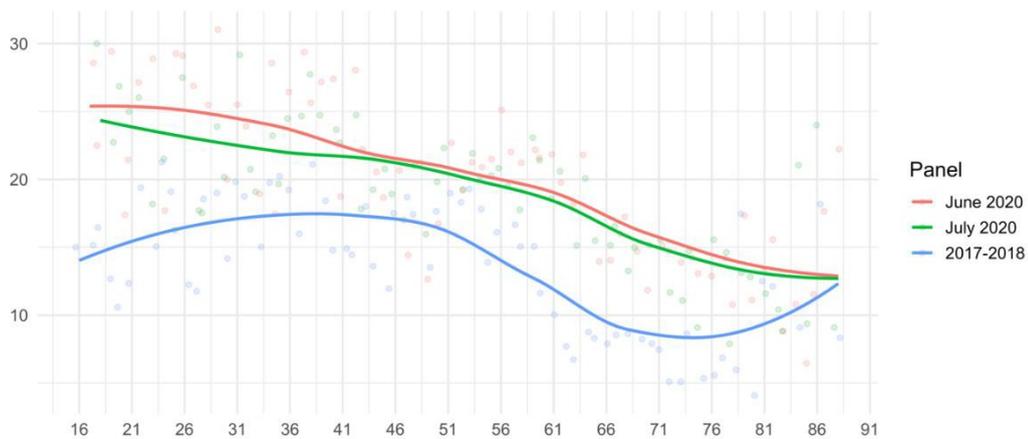
Worthless

Percentage believe to be worthless



General happiness

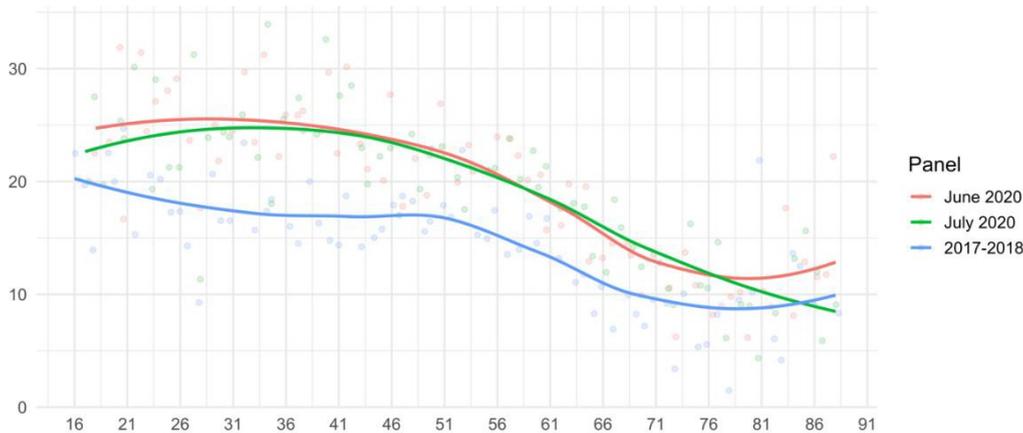
Percentage less happy than usual





Sleep

Percentage losing more sleep than usual



Child Social Development during Covid-19

Narrative of the review

The following rapid literature review aimed to explore the children's social development the Covid-19 crisis. The primary aim of this review was to explore the impact on social development of the economic crisis with reference to the most common forms of UK households. Particular attention has been paid to the group often described as the Ordinary Working Family or Just About Managing, families whom it is thought are most at risk of economic insecurities in this current crisis. The particular struggles of UK households have been discussed with specific reference to this vulnerable, large group. Two additional themes were identified within the literature (gender and young adults) and these have also been discussed. The review concludes with some thoughts on other areas of concern which were expected to be found within the literature but that were not widely discussed.

Key Messages

- The literature highlights that we should be concerned about anxiety, lack of peer contact and reduced opportunities for stress regulation because these are the main concerns for child and adolescent mental health
- Due to the pandemic's disruption academics have highlighted concerns about poor quality attachment for many. Attachment is seen to be a crucial part of children's social development and is especially important for under 5s.
- Parental pressure and stress are likely to have increased impact on positive parental behaviours which may reduce nurturance, guidance, and protection within families.
- The literature highlights that support for children during and following the pandemic needs to be multi-layered, systemic and integrated. Focus should be placed within family and educational settings to ensure this occurs.
- The Children's Society survey highlighted that over 80% of children were concerned about the virus with higher scores presented by girls on several factors. Whilst social class and ethnicity were not statistically significant markers children from households in higher relative poverty were more likely to report that they were very worried about Covid-19.
- NSPCC has reported that children have called Childline to report DA more during the pandemic.
- UNICEF has highlighted several concerns regarding maternity provision across the UK stressing the risk to new parents due to a lack of provision and support.
- Family Court Statistics have highlighted an increase in absolute divorces and decrease in



adoptions in lockdown. The DfE has also signalled concerns regarding adoptions due to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19.

- The impact of predicted and adjusted grades on young people's future is highlighted with several inequalities highlighted.

During this period of unprecedented disruption to daily life, children's social development may be negatively impacted by social distancing measures due to damage to attachment relationships, toxic stress and the impact of Covid-19 on family life. This negative impact may be particularly severe for young children in early childhood; however, there is a lack of research on this population.

The Effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Child Socialisation

The social and family lives of children have been severely impacted by Covid-19 and social distancing measures. Many children have had no physical access to friends, peers, schoolmates and relatives for several months, and limited or no opportunity for outdoor play and socialisation, all of which is likely to have an adverse impact on children, making them easily bored, angry and frustrated. Research on previous disasters shows that children often suddenly lose essential resilience factors, namely the support of parents, friends, neighbours and the social infrastructure that is normally in place to ensure their safety and provide assistance. According to a narrative review of the literature, **anxiety, lack of peer contact and reduced opportunities for stress regulation are the main concerns for child and adolescent mental health** during the pandemic- especially for children and adolescents with special needs or disadvantages, such as disabilities, trauma experiences, already existing mental health problems, migrant background and low socioeconomic status. Disruption to children's social lives is likely to have a significant impact on their wellbeing and social development.

Attachment and Social Development

NICE guideline [NG26], 2015:

Children are born with a range of innate behaviours to maximise their survival. Among these is attachment behaviour, which allows the child to draw their primary caregivers towards them at moments of need or distress. Children whose caregivers respond sensitively to the child's needs at times of distress and fear in infancy and early childhood develop secure attachments to their primary caregivers. These children can also use their caregivers as a secure base from which to explore their environment. They have better outcomes than non-securely attached children in social and emotional development, educational achievement and mental health. Early attachment relations are thought to be crucial for later social relationships and for the development of capacities for emotional and stress regulation, self-control and mentalisation. Children and young people who have experienced insecure attachments are more likely to struggle in these areas and to experience emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Attachment can be understood as being the enduring emotional closeness which binds families in order to prepare children for independence and parenthood. Bowlby suggested that early attachment experience creates 'internal working models' - life-long templates for preconceptions of the value and reliability of relationships, close and otherwise. Attachment allows children the 'secure base' necessary to explore, learn and relate, and the wellbeing, motivation, and opportunity to do so. It is important for safety, stress regulation, adaptability, and resilience.

Attachment is a vital part of child social development. Both the quantity and the quality of attachment relationships predict long-term psychosocial wellbeing. **Given the disruption to children's social lives- being unable to see important attachment figures such as grandparents, teachers and peers- it is possible that children will have fewer attachments of poorer quality.** This is particularly problematic for children in early childhood, who are within the 'sensitive period' for attachment (up to the age of 5), which may be particularly important for brain development- trauma during this period can affect threat processing and social behaviour throughout life due to neurobehavioral changes such as amygdala overactivation. However, there is a lack of research on the effects of the pandemic on this population specifically. Research is needed on how social distancing measures are affecting young children and the

quality and quantity of their attachments, and consideration given to the potential long-term effects of this disruption.

Parental Stress and the Family System

The economic and health uncertainties arising from the Covid-19 pandemic have caused significant amounts of stress and anxiety. This stress and anxiety affects parents, which has knock-on effects on parenting styles and family life, disrupting the ecological systems in which children develop, exacerbating threats to their safety and increasing their vulnerability to future psychopathology. The increased demand on parental resources, combined with reductions in parental capacity due to problematic mental health and/or coping behaviours (e.g., substance use), places parents at risk to rely more heavily on problematic forms of leadership. This can become a breeding ground for coercive cycles in parent– child interactions wherein a parent reacts emotionally to a misbehaving child, which leads to further negativity from the child and the eventual escalation of the conflict or parental avoidance. **Over time, these negative cycles of behaviour have been linked to poor relationship quality and poor child psychosocial adjustment.**

Family stress due to economic uncertainty and difficulty leads to a reduction in authoritative parenting- characterized by nurturance, guidance, and protection- and an increase in less effective parenting approaches such as harshness and coerciveness. These effects are worse for families with more difficult economic situations prior to the pandemic.

Sibling relationships may also suffer as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic due to the negative impact of pandemic-related stressors on marital relationships and parenting behaviour, with spill over effects into the sibling subsystem. Such a deterioration in the sibling relationship may put families at risk for further relational disruptions and family stress.

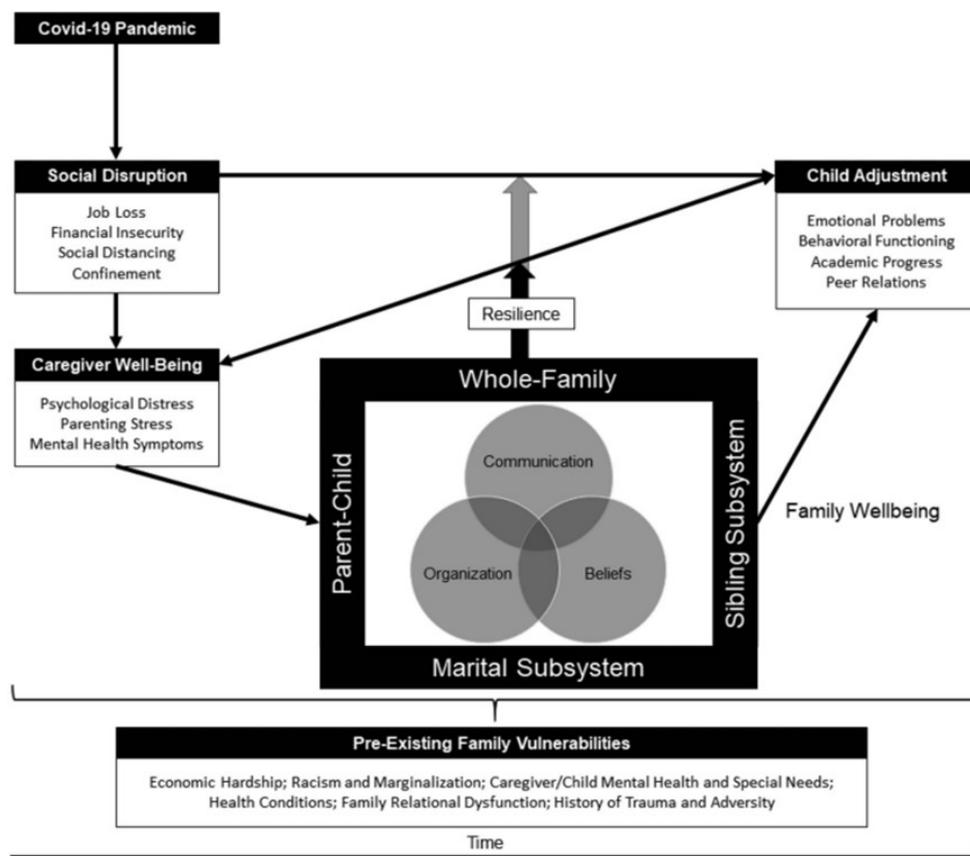


Figure 1. How social disruption due to COVID-19 may impact child adjustment. The conceptual framework purports that the COVID-19 pandemic will influence children’s adjustment in a cascading fashion. Social disruptions from the pandemic will infiltrate family processes across subsystems and the whole family, through their detrimental impact on caregiver well-being. In turn, children’s adjustment across several domains will be compromised, given the extent to which children’s well-being is contingent on the health and well-being of the family. Processes of moderation will also be at play, with some families and individuals at heightened risk for poor outcomes and others in a position to maintain adaptive functioning and/or thrive, thus signaling resilience in the face of adversity.

The effects of Covid-19 on the family system are show below in a figure from Prime, Wade & Brown (2020):

Interventions and Support

Support for children during and following the pandemic needs to be multi-layered, systemic and integrated.

Many children and adolescents suffer distress even long after a traumatic event because of the unaddressed traumatic atmosphere in schools or families. Zhou (2020) proposes a cooperative model of psychological services provision for children and adolescents in response to the Covid-19 epidemic. This model suggests that psychological services should simultaneously include social, school, and family systems, which interact and have a synergistic effect. The social system provides direct services not only for children and adolescents but also for their school and family systems; school and family systems cooperate to support children and adolescents. Psychological work also needs to emphasize the key elements of school and family systems. **Attention should be given to teachers' distress, teacher-**

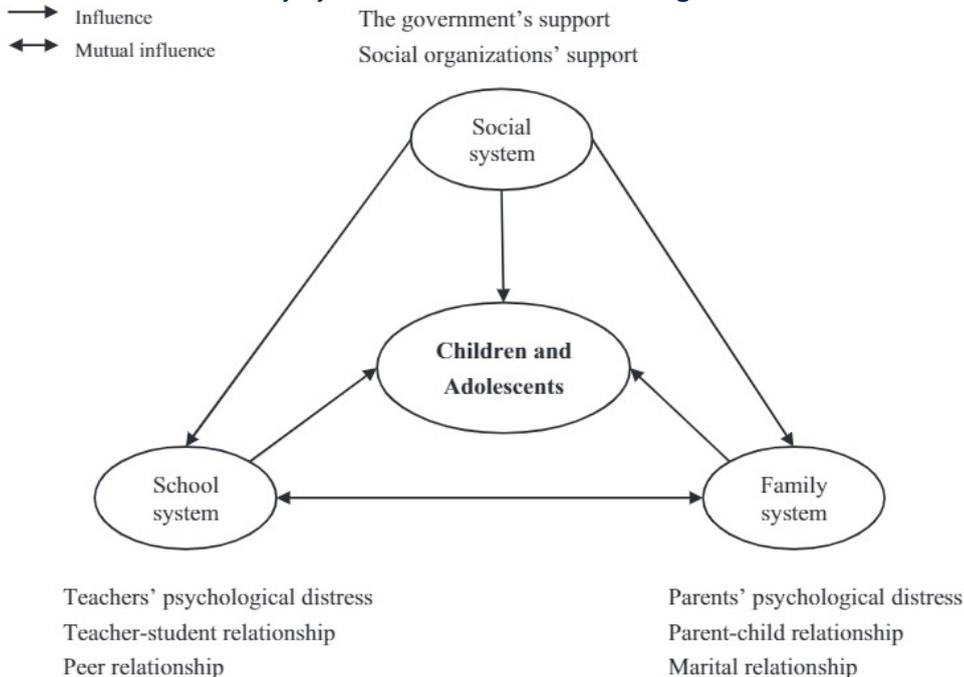


Figure 1. Cooperative model of psychological services provision to children and adolescents.

student relationships, and peer relationships in the school system, as well as to parents' distress, parent-child relationships, and the marital relationship in the family system.

Impact of Covid-19 on children

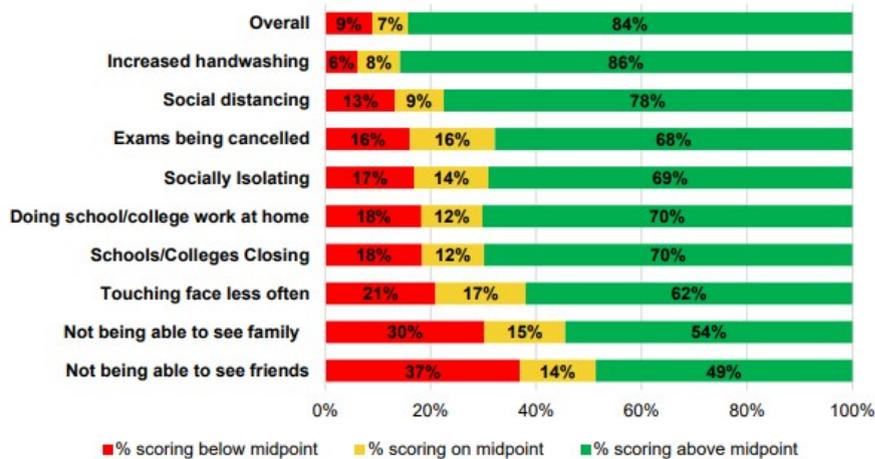
The Children's Society (2020) have researched children's well-being and Covid-19 in their report 'Life on Hold', published July 2020. They sought the experiences of both parents and their children; for children specifically, their findings include;

- The majority of children scored above the midpoint (0-10 scale, 0 that they had not coped well, 10 that they coped very well) for 8 of the specific areas examined, suggesting children were coping with the changes to some extent.
- The 8 specific areas are: overall, increased handwashing, social distancing, exams being cancelled, socially isolating, doing school work from home, schools closing and touching face less often.
- Children reported coping less well with not being able to friends, and not being able to see family members outside of their household. Figure 5 below demonstrates these results.
- Analysis of responses by key demographic characteristics found patterns;
 - o **"A greater proportion of girls (than boys) scored below the midpoint for**

school/ college closures (22% and 15% respectively), exam cancellations (19% and 13%), and not being able to see friends (42% and 32%).

- Not surprisingly, a higher proportion of those aged 14 to 17 (21%) scored below the midpoint (indicating they were not coping well) than their younger peers (11%) for coping with exam cancellations” (p12, Children’s Society, 2020).
- There were no differences by child poverty status or by ethnicity; although the sample size could only analyse white/non-white, rather than specific ethnicity.

Figure 5: Extent to which children (aged 10 to 17) feel they are coping with Coronavirus changes



Note: The above proportions exclude those who responded 'prefer not to say'. As a result, the N's vary slightly between items (weighted Ns range from 1,615 for exam cancellations to 1,734 for not seeing friends).

Children were asked how they felt about coronavirus;

- **Most children were worried to some extent about the virus – 89%**
- A greater proportion said they were only a little worried, or not at all worried (47%)
- There was some association between children’s level of worry and the level of worry expressed by their parents – demonstrated by table 1.
- **The only significant association between levels of worry and demographic group was for relative poverty status** – a higher proportion of children in relative poverty (23%) indicated they were very worried, compared to peers who were not in relative poverty (15%)

Table 1: How children (aged 10 to 17) and their parents feel about Coronavirus

		Child worry			
		Very worried	Quite worried	A little worried	Not at all worried
Parent worry	Extremely/very worried	16%	22%	11%	1%
	Somewhat worried	1%	10%	19%	1%
	Slightly worried	0%	2%	9%	2%
	Not at all worried	0%	0%	1%	4%

Note: Responses from parents who said they were 'extremely' or 'very worried' have been combined to provide a four-point scale, as used for children. It is possible that the differences between scales has affected their direct comparability, however. Weighted N=1,677.



Children were asked 'how has coronavirus changed how you think or feel about the future?' and 'what tips/advice would you give to other young people on how to cope with the coronavirus pandemic?'. The main themes for the first question were in relation to school, wider concerns about society, health and appreciation. The main themes for the second question were; connecting with friends and family, being active, being create and keep learning, taking notice, and following government guidelines.

MCR pathways, a national charity in Scotland that supports care-experiences and disadvantaged young people through mentoring, have published a report titled MCR Pathways Lockdown Survey – how to build back better: listening to the voices of our young people. 1,347 of Scotland's most disadvantaged young people participated in the survey; 56.1% were care experienced – either currently or previously in the care system – and 43.9% were on the edge of the care system and experiencing various forms of disadvantage. The main findings include;

- 66.8% felt low, anxious and stressed
- 88.8% sleeping patterns impacted (over ¼ said they were experiencing significantly disturbed sleep)
- 68.2% did no school work (did not use school-provided learning material- hard to understand, 42.5% were too stressed and anxious, 26.7% had caring duties that impacted their capacity for home learning)
- 80.5% concerned they will find it hard to get back school routine (76.7% find it hard getting back to normal, 76.2% behind with school work. 60.2% concerned about Covid-19 infection, 50.3% worried about not having seen friends for a long time, 46.7% concerned about re-establishing relationship with teacher. 75.3% would like 1:1 time with their teacher, 66.6% would like extra help with learning at home, 55.4% would like extra classes to catch up, 53.4% would like support over summer. Specific findings/recommendations if schools do not go back full time)
- 79.6% were worried about grades (20.4% believe they will get the grades they deserve, 55.1% are worried they will not, 24.5% feel certain there is no possibility they will)
- 61.5% of school leavers were worried about the next step
- 64.8% say Covid-19 has not changed their future plans; 38.5 are feeling confident about the next step; 19.4% want to stay at school for longer; 15.2% are not sure what they will do when they leave

MCR pathways provide a clear set of recommendations to support children returning to school are given.

Domestic abuse

The NSPCC have analysed Childline calls from 23rd March to 17 May 2020 and found a high frequency of concerns regarding domestic abuse (DA). in their report 'the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on child welfare: domestic abuse', the NSPCC report:

- **The number of calls regarding DA has increased** – rising from an average of 140 contacts a week earlier in the year, to an average of 185 contacts a week since the stay at home guidance was issued.
- Over 500 counselling sessions were delivered to children and young people worried about DA – earlier in the year this was about 50 a week, compared to now – 65 a week since the stay at home guidance was issued.
- Impact of domestic abuse on children during Covid-19 pandemic; key themes:
 - o Reduced access to support networks (CAMHS for themselves, services for parents)



- Lockdown has brought DA into sharp focus (children were not aware of DA before lockdown- they are now at home and so exposed to it. Neighbours contacting ChildLine to report their concerns – did not realise it was all day before they had to stay home themselves)
- Making it harder to speak out (and disclose abuse)
- Making it more difficult to leave (worry about child being alone with partner, worry about catching Covid-19, recently unemployed and relying on partners income, hoping it is only due to lockdown and if restrictions ease the abuse will stop)
- Drinking during lockdown (increased)
- Exploiting fears about Covid-19 (intimidation – threatening to breathe over family)
- Young people worried about others (grandparents experiencing DA)

Concerns for maternity services

The UNICEF report (2020) “children in lockdown: what coronavirus means for UK children” shares UNICEF’s concerns for children during the pandemic, rather than presenting data. There are concerns for 700 million days of education being lost, children facing food insecurity, newborn and older children having reduced access to healthcare, stress and anxiety, abuse at home and young people’s voices being absent from decisions made about them. In relation to maternity services, the main concerns are:

- 1 in 5 maternity posts are unfilled
- More than 1 fifth of midwife led units have been closed due to staff shortages and requisitioning of units for treatment of coronavirus patients
- Appointments being carried out remotely or not at all
- Some areas home births stopped due to insufficient midwife numbers and fears about ambulance availability – other areas home births are promoted to keep mothers away from stretched services
- **This impacts mothers due to loss of choice, and stress of giving birth in these circumstances could increase risk of postpartum depression and anxiety – support following birth also reduced**
- Impact on infant nutrition – reduced staffing means support for new mothers to breastfeed is reduced, also cannot get informally from friends or family/voluntary organisations – potential health issues for baby and mother
- Additionally, babies and older children may experience disruptions to their routine vaccinations, when children are the most susceptible.

[UNICEF UK Children in Lockdown Coronavirus Impacts Snapshot](#)

Family Court Statistics Quarterly, England and Wales, January to March 2020 – published 25 June 2020

- The average time for a care or supervision case to reach first disposal was 35 weeks in Jan-March 2020 – up 2 weeks on last year. 36% of cases were disposed within 26 weeks, down 7% compared to last year.
- The mean average time from petition (to divorce) to decree nisi was 28 weeks, with decree absolute at 55 weeks. Both times down around 5 weeks when compared to last year. Median time to decree nisi was 20 weeks, and 38 for decree absolute.
- 29,540 divorce petitions filed in Jan-March 2020 – down 3% from last year. **27,888 decree absolutes granted in Jan-March 2020, an increase of 16% from last year.**



- **Jan-March 2020 saw 1,083 adoption application, down 18% on last year. The number of adoption orders issued decreased by 19% to 1,079.**

Table 4a shows the outstanding cases needing to be heard in the Family Court- both Public and Private Law.

Table 4a: Family Public and Private Law Workload

Period (week ending)	Workload					
	Public Law			Private Law		
	Receipts ³	Disposals ⁴	Outstanding	Receipts ³	Disposals ⁴	Outstanding
Pre-Covid Baseline	361	314	12,295	1,135	905	42,305
8 March 2020	345	352	12,459	1,241	1,186	43,156
15 March 2020	386	301	12,546	1,233	1,078	43,318
22 March 2020	340	265	12,625	1,022	867	43,485
29 March 2020	268	149	12,747	639	402	43,731
05 April 2020	292	221	12,823	664	374	44,028
12 April 2020	267	184	12,913	656	282	44,405
19 April 2020	302	223	12,996	761	380	44,792
26 April 2020	349	280	13,073	1,015	538	45,273
03 May 2020	369	299	13,147	988	528	45,735
10 May 2020	282	196	13,236	823	427	46,134
17 May 2020 ⁵	378	283	13,335	1,032	614	46,559
24 May 2020 ⁵	416	256	13,504	979	534	47,011

Adoption

On 10 April 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) shared that adoptive families will be offered emergency support, including online counselling and couples therapy, as the government expands the scope of the Adoption Support Fund (Gov, 2020). Up to £8 million will be available for different types of therapeutic support for families whose adopted children may already have suffered trauma and be more anxious due to the uncertainty of Covid-19. The fund can be accessed by local authorities and regional adoption agencies. Gov (2020) reports that **adoptive families have been experiencing greater stress due to children with attachment and trauma needs being isolated at home and having the routine disrupted, which can lead to an increase in adoption breakdown and child to parent violence.**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-adoption-support-fund-scheme-to-help-vulnerable-families>

The government have agreed amendments to 10 regulations in relation to children's social care relating to proceedings, foster care and adoption arrangements; it is unclear if this would impact adoptions negatively, in terms of numbers of adoption applications dropping (previous children's briefing).

Adoption UK – the leading charity providing adoption support - explain that some agencies have suspended all adoption processes they have not already started, whilst others are proceeding with the adoption of newborn babies and children where introductions have already been made, and others are proceeding with all adoptions as normal – but moving all processes up until introductions, online. Each agency is different and need to be asked individually (Adoption UK, 2020).

<https://www.adoptionuk.org/Pages/FAQs/Category/adoption-faq>

Impact of predicted grades on young people

On 23rd March 2020, the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, explained that young people that have not had the opportunity to take their GCSE/AS/A level exams would be given predicted grades based on previous work, or there is the option that students who do feel this grade reflects their performance can sit an exam at the earliest reasonable opportunity – once schools are open again (Parliament A, 2020).



Ofqual will develop and set out the process that will provide the calculated grade to each student – to reflect their performance as fairly as possible. Teachers will be informed of this grade and asked to submit their judgement about the grade and what the young person may have achieved had they sat the exam (they will have guidance). Students will be able to appeal their grade if they do not think the process has been followed appropriately (Parliament A, 2020).

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2020-03-23/HCWS176/>

McManus (et al. 2020) explains that calculated A Level grades will replace actual, attained qualifications in 2020 due to Covid-19, and that their research assesses the likely consequences for medical schools in particular (although this is not focussed on for this briefing). McManus (et al., 2020) report that universities consider A Levels the single most important bit of information when making decisions about offers. One issue is that the anonymity of exam halls cannot be recreated when teachers influence the grade; exam halls level the playing field for students of all abilities, ethnicity and genders, as they get the grades they have worked for. The possibility of bias is ever present when these judgements are made by teachers (McManus et al., 2020).

McManus (et al, 2020) report that UK universities selection process mostly takes place before A-Level exams are sat; therefore, offers are largely conditional on later attained grades. UCAS application forms include predicted grades which are estimated by teachers. Admissions tutors also look at AS Level and GCSE results. When reviewing the research literature on predicted grades, McManus (et al. 2020) found that;

Accurate predictions occur in 52% of cases when A is the maximum grade and 17% when A is the maximum grade (and of course with more categories accuracy is likely to be lower). Grades are mostly overpredicted, in 42% of cases pre-2010 and 73% post-2010, with under-prediction rarer at 7% of cases pre-2010 and 10% post-2010. A number of studies have reported that under-prediction is more common in lower socio- economic groups, non-White applicants, and applicants from state school or further education. P6.*

McManus (et al. 2020) reports that predicted grades should be in the best interest of the young person, and aspirational but achievable. Knowing that UCAS focus their decisions on predicted grades before final results are out, under-prediction may mean that these students are not offered places their over-predicted counterparts, further widening the inequality.

<https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2020.06.02.20116830v1.full.pdf>

Parliament B's (2020) report on "getting the grades they've earned: Covid-19: the cancellation of exams and 'calculated' grades". Through asking Michelle Meadows, Ofqual's Deputy Chief Regulator and Executive Director for Strategy, Risk and Research, about the potential for bias in centre-assessed grades, she explained that there is some evidence of bias. **For A-Level grades, there is bias with regard to ethnic minorities and the ability of students** – there is an under prediction of the grades that students then achieve. Additional research shows that there is bias on the predicted grades for students from low-income backgrounds, black, Asian and minority ethnic pupils, and pupils with SEND – all of whom could be affected by the decision to use predicted grades. Further research shows that just 16% of applicants receive the grades they were predicted (Wyness, 2016). **High attaining disadvantaged pupils are more likely to be underpredicted compared to those from more affluent backgrounds. Young people with SEND may be further disadvantaged, because predicted grades consider mock results, yet there is no guarantee that they had appropriate access arrangements in their mock exams – e.g. modified papers for those with visual impairments.** (Parliament B, 2020).

Further concern comes through standardisation; due to the risk of bias in calculated grades, standardisation is needed for fairness, however, historic data for each centre is being drawn on, without considering the centres trajectory. Therefore, schools that have been improving will be judged on historic values that do not reflect current achievement; these schools are likely to disproportionately serve poorer communities. Additionally, newer institutions with no historical data, and high achieving students at



historically low performing schools may be penalised (Parliament B, 2020).

These findings are then further compounded when considering that “even among the elite group of students who do attend university, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to attend a high-tariff university than their richer counterparts, even when they have similar A-level grades” (Chowdry et al, 2013, p1). Wyness (2016) echoes previous reported findings – that grades are not accurately predicted, that BAME/SEND/low-socio economic students are most disadvantaged. This research looks to understand the impact of predicted grades on the student’s university choices;

- High ability, under-predicted applicants are less likely to apply to top universities
- Students with CCC or below are more likely to apply to a high tariff university if their grades are over predicted
- Underpredicted applicants are 10% more likely than applicants whose grades were accurate or over-predicted to have applied to a university that they are over-qualified for
- The most able applicants who under-predict are also more likely to apply to universities they are over-qualified for
- Having under predicted grade increases the likelihood of being over qualified for university
- Being under-predicted increases the chances of attending a university which one is over qualified for
- The most disadvantaged students are most likely to be over qualified for their university
 - o this implies that the predicted grades system may be skewing the socio-economic mix of students at certain universities – if they have a high ability but apply for universities, they are over qualified for, this could result in fewer disadvantaged students at top universities
- A greater proportion of over-predicted students went through clearing to obtain their place
- Those with accurate or under-predicted scores were extremely unlikely to go through clearing

Child Maintenance during Covid-19

Narrative of the review

This rapid review has explored the potential impacts of Covid-19 on the Child Maintenance system across the UK.

Key Messages

- Procedural changes of Child Maintenance Service (CMS) due to Covid-19 have impacted families. This is affecting set up and ongoing payment issues for CMS users.
- Lone parent families in pre-Covid-19 are significantly more likely to be struggling financially (44% of lone parents in poverty in 2018/19 - DWP)
- Reports of non-payment have increased since Covid-19, pre-pandemic close to a third of paying parents were non-complaint through Collect and Pay
- **An increase in non-payment, and a decrease in investigation and enforcement, it is likely that many lone-parent families are not receiving the full amount of child maintenance**
- Due to furlough paying parents may be having to pay an increase amount of their monthly earnings into child maintenance due to payment thresholds
- 1 in 5 parents who receive child maintenance would fall below poverty line without it but those on lower incomes least likely to receive child maintenance payments
- The literature highlights that child maintenance can be used as a form of economic abuse.



Lone-parent families were significantly more likely to be living in poverty even before the Covid-19 pandemic. Child maintenance is an important source of income for these families 1 in 5 families receiving child maintenance would otherwise be below the poverty line. Several procedural changes at the **CMS due to reduced staffing caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, combined with reports of increased non-payment of child maintenance, may be driving more lone-parent families into poverty.**

Lone-Parent Families and Poverty Prior to Covid-19

Many lone-parent families were struggling with poverty or were close to the poverty line even before the Covid-19 pandemic. The latest Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) figures show that **44% of children living in lone-parent families were in poverty in 2018/19**. Single parents are twice as likely as coupled households to live in poverty, to work in low-paying, insecure work and to rely on the safety net of social security. Lone parents face a higher risk of poverty due to the lack of an additional earner, low rates of maintenance payments, gender inequality in employment and pay, and childcare costs. Furthermore, children in large families are at a far greater risk of living in poverty- 43% of children living in families with 3 or more children live in poverty. Childcare and housing are two of the costs that take the biggest toll on families' budgets.

Impact on Timelines

The Government Child Maintenance Service Page states that "It is taking longer than usual to set up Child Maintenance Service cases because of coronavirus (Covid-19)" and that "The first payment is usually made within 12 weeks of making payment arrangements. Payments may take longer because of coronavirus". Therefore, there will be a delay in setting up a new CMS case, compounded by a further delay in the usual amount of time to receive payment. This means that parents seeking to set up a **new CMS case may have a significant period of time without receiving any child maintenance.**

Non-Payment

Prior to the pandemic, approximately a third of paying parents were non-compliant with the Collect and Pay child maintenance service which covers 255,300 children- 68% of parents due to pay child maintenance through the Collect and Pay service paid some maintenance in the quarter ending December 2019 (DWP, 2020).

Since the beginning of the lockdown, there have been reports of an increase in non-payment, from sources such as the single parents' charity Gingerbread, the Young Women's Trust and family lawyers. Gingerbread reports that they are receiving twice as many calls since the beginning of lockdown, with many about reduced or non-payment of child maintenance.

This may be exacerbated by reduced staffing levels at the Child Maintenance Service (CMS) due to Covid-19. The CMS are currently not investigating non-payment of child maintenance- the CMS website states that "reduced staffing levels may mean that the Service [...] may not be able to pursue missed payments."

Furthermore, even if non-payment is investigated, CMS actions may not be enforced. Ordinarily, the CMS can take owed child maintenance payments directly from the paying parent's earnings. However, the CMS are not currently pursuing businesses that are unable to facilitate this. The CMS website states that the "CMS will impose Deduction from Earnings Orders (DEOs) where possible but will not pursue businesses that are unable to implement them. This may have short-term impacts on receiving parent incomes, and CMS will revert to standard practices for managing DEOs as soon as possible."

Therefore, with an increase in non-payment, and a decrease in investigation and enforcement, it is likely that many lone-parent families are not receiving the full amount of child maintenance.

Changes in Circumstances:

The CMS has also changed how it handles changes in circumstances affecting child maintenance payment. Previously, non-resident parents whose income had dropped would need to provide evidence in the form of pay slips, benefits information or tax returns before their payments were reduced or stopped.



However, since the pandemic, the CMS now accepts verbal evidence of a reduction in income. Furthermore, the CMS are currently prioritising loss of employment changes over changes to income, as a result of a lack of resources arising from the coronavirus pandemic. This has raised concerns that inappropriate reduction and non-payment of child maintenance will increase due to a lack of oversight- Gingerbread says that the child maintenance service (CMS) is "allowing non-resident parents to stop or reduce the amount they pay towards the upkeep of their child without any investigation or appeal".

Furlough:

CMS guidelines state that the amount of child maintenance owed will be reviewed if income has reduced by at least 25% as a result of being furloughed or made redundant. **This means that an individual on the furlough scheme receiving 80% of their usual pay would be expected to pay the same amount of child maintenance in full.**

Impact on Single-Parent Households

Poverty:

Lone parents who do receive child maintenance have a lower child poverty rate compared to those who do not receive any, a finding which is consistent across countries (Hakovirta et al, 2020). Gingerbread conducted an analysis investigating how child maintenance uptake affects poverty. They found that the highest income single parents are most likely to get maintenance and receive the highest amounts of maintenance. For the lowest income single parents, child maintenance makes up 20% of their household income. **1 in 5 families receiving child maintenance would otherwise be below the poverty line.** A further group has the gap by which they fall below the poverty line reduced by an average of £40 a week due to their maintenance payments. Therefore, any reduction, disruption or non-payment of child maintenance is likely to push many lone-parent families into poverty and push more families further into poverty.

This is compounded during the Covid-19 pandemic, as single-parent families are facing a 'triple penalty' of reduction in their own income due to loss of work or furloughing, increased costs associated with their children not attending school, as well as reduced or stopped child maintenance payments. Gender: Women make up 90% of single parents, meaning they will be disproportionately affected by non-payment of child maintenance during the crisis. While the majority of single parents are in work (70%), many are in lower paid or so-called unskilled jobs, or rely on income from insecure work such as zero-hour contracts.

Non-payment of child maintenance can also be used as a form of economic abuse. Natalier (2018) reports that **men's deliberate withholding of child maintenance is a form of economic abuse** that is facilitated through gendered state processes and institutions that order child support transfers, and argues that masculine financial discretion structures policy and organisational practices in ways that legitimate men's financial agency at the expense of women's financial autonomy. This may be further compounded by the Covid-19 crisis and the organisational and oversight changes discussed above.

What we do in this analysis, how and why (caution when interpreting)

A data review is undertaken by academics at Nottingham Trent University every week to inform the C19 National Foresight Group. Data related to Covid-19 UK social and economic trends is reviewed to inform, guide and help prioritise discussions at national and local decision-making level (LRFs). The C19 National Foresight Group are keen to ensure that the data included has been ethically governed and structured to adhere to open access, data protection and GDPR regulations and principles. For example, the data is to be manipulated in an ethical manner, and the content and context is to be fit for purpose in terms of the audience and decision timeframe in question.

Activity Completed

The following findings are based on a review of multiple data sources exploring Social, Economic, Psychological, Community aspects of Covid-19 in the UK. These could include:

- ONS: covers wellbeing, perceived financial precarity, objective indicators of UK economy, household financial pressures, perceived impact on work life
- OfCom: Public perceptions of information to help manage Covid-19, perceptions of preparedness and action
- ONS: Deaths from Covid-19
- Gov UK: Relevant contextual information
- Census and geographical data: Geographical/location specifics
- IMD: Socio economic trends associated with spread or primary/secondary impacts
- LG Inform: Population, social, demographic, lifestyle and health data
- You Gov: Public mood
- NTU's own analysis of open source data (lead by Dr. Lucy Justice and Sally Andrews)
- Other academic survey work published within the last week

Limitations for Consideration: The National Foresight Group have been keen to quality assure the data assumptions, including the equity and representation of participants.

Internet use data indicates representational issues in older adults

Almost all of the data sets draw from online surveys. With this in mind the statistics behind online access were explored. The following is to be considered in the assumptions taken from the data sets.

The table below shows the estimated number of people who have never used the internet. The data are drawn from ONS 2019 Internet users:

Table 1: estimated number of people who have never used the internet

Age	Estimated number of people who have never used internet	Age	Estimated number of people who have never used internet
16-24	20,000	55-64	389,000
25-34	28,000	65-74	869,000
35-44	46,000	75+	2,482,000
45-54	158,000	Equality Act Disabled Not	2,336,000
		Equality Act Disabled	1,657,000

Table 1 shows that caution should be applied when considering the inferences made in the rest of the document as older adults could be underrepresented in the samples. The estimated numbers of those that have never used the internet begins to increase around age group category 35-44, the subsequent age categories increase by approximately twice as many non-users as the age category that precedes it. The numbers of 'over 75s' (2,482,000) for example not using the internet equates to almost a million more than the total of the other age group categories (1,510,000).

The interpretation of data should also consider the proportion of people known to be disabled by government agencies who do and do not meet the Act's criteria. These numbers make up 3,993,000 of the population, so this should be considered in the representativeness of the data.

END.

Contact us: If you have any questions about this output please email: C19foresight@ntu.ac.uk
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