

News links from March 2020

COVID-19 - What a difference a month makes

Thank you for continuing to serve our communities up and down the country. We will continue to monitor news and information regarding children's health and wellbeing throughout the crisis. One thing we can be sure of is that the impact on children's mental health, activity levels and weight problems is bound to be considerable.

As for the virus itself, we can take solace in one thing: the disease has generally been milder in children. They can be infected with and appear to be able to transmit it, even if they do not have symptoms. However, research is ongoing and much of what we know today is based on reports from China, where the outbreak began. There 2.4% of all identified cases were in children under 19 years old. An even smaller number within this group of children had severe symptoms, 2.5%. But more research is being done and a clearer picture is still emerging. Source: [Guardian, 23/03/20](#)

Coronavirus: just letting children play will help them, and their parents, cope

Researchers from the University of Reading make a distinction between normal homeschooling and what is happening during the lockdown, where many parents are trying to work from home at the same time. Parents should not try to recreate school at home and the evidence shows that, at this uncertain time, supporting children's play should be a vital part of the picture – for their own mental health and for the wellbeing of the entire family.

[Read the full article](#)

Survey: 80% of young people with a history of mental illness report worsening conditions

The charity Young Minds asked over 2000 young people how the pandemic had affected them. Of the 83% who said the crisis had made their mental health worse, 32% said it had made it "much worse" and 51% said it had made it "a bit worse".

When the charity asked respondents what had impacted their mental health the most, the loss of routine and social isolation were the most commonly cited factors.

[Read the Guardian article.](#)

Coronavirus: Government advice for parents and carers

The Government has issued practical advice for those who support children and young people, saying that coronavirus will affect everyone's daily lives and that this may be a difficult time for children and young people. Some may react right away, while others may show signs of difficulty later on.

How a child or young person reacts can vary according to their age, how they understand information and communicate, their previous experiences, and how they typically cope with stress. Negative reactions may include worrying thoughts about their health or that of family and friends, fear, avoidance, problems sleeping, or physical symptoms such as stomach ache.

The advice is to help adults with caring responsibilities look after the mental health and wellbeing of children or young people, including those with additional needs and disabilities, during the outbreak.

[Read the guidance](#)

Children living with parents with emotional distress

In an update from Public Health England, an increase was reported in the number of children living with at least one parent with emotional distress. This can lead to mental health problems including anxiety or depression in children and is associated with an increased risk of behavioural and emotional difficulties in later childhood and adulthood.

[Read the report](#)

Dental Health: Reports and statistics from Public Health England

The dental health of five-year-olds improved between 2008 and 2017, but has levelled off since then according to the data for the 2018-2019 academic year. 23.4% of the children surveyed had experience of dental decay, with 3.4 (out of 20) being the average number of teeth. There was wide variation in both prevalence and severity of experience of dental decay by geographical area, level of deprivation and ethnic group. [Full details here.](#)

Public Health England also released data from 2011 to 2019 about hospital extractions in children and young people in English NHS hospitals, saying that although dental decay has reduced in recent years it is still a problem that causes pain, infection, lack of sleep and time off work or school. It also costs a lot to treat in general dental practices and hospitals. Some communities are far more affected than others.

Children have extractions carried out in hospital mainly because they need general anaesthetic for the procedure. They may be very young or uncooperative, have multiple teeth requiring extraction or have very broken down teeth or infection. [Full details here.](#)

Wellbeing of Future Generations Bill

Baroness Benjamin: “We know that childhood in this country is in a crisis; a vicious circle of inactivity, mental health problems and being overweight feed off each other and are likely to result in the least healthy adult population in living memory. We have, therefore, argued consistently for a Cabinet Minister for children and young people, to ensure that children’s needs are central to decisions across the policy range.”

[More here](#)

Supermarkets can be our allies in tackling the childhood obesity timebomb

Steve McCabe MP calls for supermarkets to be partners in the fight against obesity, saying “We need to utilise the public’s love of supermarkets to provide more information and health and education campaigns and to emphasise the importance of shopping lists and planning meals but we should also be prepared to legislate on issues like price and multi-buy promotions.” [More here.](#)

Gambling: “Children think it’s a harmless activity”

A new report cites TV advertising, social media and the influence of family among factors likely to lead young people to gamble, prompting renewed concern about increased exposure during the Covid-19 lockdown. Researchers at Ipsos Mori and the University of Stirling found that 96% of people aged 11-24 had seen gambling marketing messages in the last month and were more likely to bet as a result.

[Read the report](#)

Child Abuse - dark areas of the internet

Technology is ever changing. It helps our society to grow and makes communication instant. The Internet and social media are now as important to a family, school, college or workplace as heating and lighting. For the vast majority of us we navigate the common messaging services such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger etc. without realising that there are very dark areas of the Internet, shared via multiple platforms, containing horrifying abuse of our children. It is all too easy for us to bury our heads and believe this is small, doesn’t happen ‘in our area’. The following BBC report sheds light on this dark area and reminds us that we as guardians must be brave enough to make sure that ‘light’ is shone brightly... to save children from such horrors.

Warning: this is not an easy read.

[Read the full article](#)

Foodbanks

Six months after the announcement that austerity had ended, many still rely on food banks to survive. Chris Vallance says: “I have been visiting the food bank since mid-January, on and off, listening to people’s stories. In that time I’ve spoken to a nurse, a student librarian, former academic researchers, someone who gets ambulances ready to answer calls, a nursery teacher, a former primary school teacher, a funeral director, carers, a charity worker, someone on a zero-hours contract, a former chef, a painter and decorator, the recently destitute, the recently separated, the mentally ill, the physically ill and the homeless.” [Read the report](#)