



The All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Fit and Healthy Childhood

Chair: Steve McCabe MP Co-Chair: Baroness Floella Benjamin OBE. Vice-Chairs: Julie Elliott MP, Diana Johnson MP, Lord McColl of Dulwich, Adam Holloway MP

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at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmallparty/191105/fit-and-healthy-childhood.htm>

THE COVID GENERATION: A MENTAL HEALTH PANDEMIC IN THE MAKING

IMPACT ASSESSMENT: HELEN CLARK 21st May 2021

Media Launch

The report and press release were distributed on Friday 16th April 2021 with a publication embargo of 6am Monday 19th April. The publication date was chosen to avoid (as far as possible) the blanket coverage of the death and funeral of His Royal Highness, Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh and also to comply with our agreement for an exclusive with 'The Daily Telegraph.'

The Press Release

The report, sponsored by MQ Mental Health Research contained input from an APPG on A Fit and Healthy Childhood record number of 41 academics, charity sector and children's play specialists. The press release distilled a wealth of information into nine key recommendations. The overriding message was that in the United Kingdom, the type and quality of services available for children and young people varied enormously and unacceptably.

Opportunities to view

The OTVs as measured by MQ amounted, at the time of writing to:

Earned – 29,112,819 (of which 28,878,577 were from 'The Daily Telegraph' channels)

Owned – 175,424 (of which 174,367 are MQ's). The figure does not include any other contributors to the report who may have also shared on their channels.

Total OTVs: 29,288,243

Breakdown of OTVs

Earned

'The Daily Telegraph' ran an exclusive feature on the report on page 4 on Monday 19th April's paper and also online on the website behind a paywall, written by the Health Editor, Laura Donnelly.

Telegraph print – **2, 683,000**

Telegraph online – **23,150,000** (Monthly overall visitors to 'The Telegraph' site) plus **3,045,577** followers on Twitter.

Nursery World – **8001** subscribers to print magazine, **56,000** email recipients, **120,000** average unique views on website, **35,810** Twitter followers.



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Nursery Management Today – no distribution figures available – **5578** Twitter followers

National Counselling Society – no distribution figures available

Willis Palmer – no distribution figures available

Child in the City – **4472** newsletter subscribers, **2182** Twitter followers – no website figures available

API online – no distribution figures available – **2499** Twitter followers

Clear Sky Children's Charity <https://www.clear-sky.org.uk/clear-sky-in-the-news/>

Children and Young People Now

Physical Activity Facilities – <https://www.paf-media.co.uk/playground-closures-creating-pandemic-of-mental-health-problems>

Owned

MQ website blog- **539** unique visitors to blog page

MQ newsletter – **69,565** recipients

MQ Facebook – **75,947** followers

MQ Twitter – **26,183** followers

MQ LinkedIn - 2133 followers

APPG on A Fit and Healthy Childhood Twitter – **1057** followers

Please note, this Owned section does not include data from any of the other authors of the report who may also have shared via their own channels.

Paid

None

In addition, Lea Milligan Chief Executive of MQ was interviewed about the report by Al Jazeera.

BACP Young People magazine have commissioned an article for their September issue. There are **4972 subscribers of the print magazine plus online articles.**



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What Next?

APPG members and Working Group contributors to this report **in particular** are strongly urged to use outlets to which they have access to further publicise this report. The excellent initial publicity has placed the APPG firmly in the driving seat of the children's mental health debate; especially important as we await a draft Mental Health Bill – due to become law by the end of this parliament.

Distribution

The APPG on A Fit and Healthy Childhood Secretariat sent the report and the press release to a comprehensive list of interested MPs and Peers; all the APPG officers, members and supporters and the Children's Commissioner for England

MQ sent copies to:

- Jeremy Hunt MP: Chair of the Health and Social Care Select Committee. The Committee Operations Officer subsequently sent copies to the specialist who is leading on the current Select Committee Inquiry into 'Children and Young People's Mental Health'
- Lord Stephenson
- Chris Whitty
- Patrick Vallance
- Nicola Sturgeon
- Mark Drakeford
- Arlene Foster
- The Mental Health Ambassadors for England and Northern Ireland

Developments since the publication of the report

Thanks to the campaigning efforts of the contributors to this report the following positive developments have occurred:

Meeting with Patrick Spencer: Head of Children and Families Policy, Department of Education

Lead Author, Helen Clark was invited to speak to Patrick Spencer about the Government's proposals for a network of Family Hubs.

Mental Health Awareness Week: 10th-16th May 2021

The Government has boosted spending on mental health services for children and young people in schools and colleges.

Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson announced a further £17 million in funding for pupils and students to help them recover from the devastating and ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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The package has been publicised as part of the Government's strategy to 'build back better' and includes:

- £9.5 million to train a 'senior Mental Health Lead' from existing staff in up to 7,800 schools and colleges
- A £7 million 'Wellbeing for Education Recovery' programme providing free, expert training, support and resources for staff dealing with children and young people experiencing additional problems arising from the pandemic including trauma, anxiety or grief
- The Department of Education will also fund a 'Link' programme; designed to improve partnerships between health and education leaders in local areas, raise awareness of mental health concerns and improve referrals to specialist help when needed
- An Education Staff Wellbeing Charter launched with a cross sector commitment to protect and promote the wellbeing of all staff working in schools and colleges
- A Suicide Safer Universities framework will be established to 'promote good practice in the sector, ensuring that university students are supported during their time at university.'

The Queen's Speech 11th May 2021 included a commitment to reform the Mental Health Act and a Government timescale states that a Bill will be introduced to Parliament in 2022. Matt Hancock MP, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care confirmed the schedule in the debate on the Queen's Speech. A key aim is to give people greater control over their treatment and in particular, people with a disability and autistic people. Sir David Amess MP (Con) welcomed the new legislation:

'I am pleased that there is an emphasis on early detection and coping strategies,'

and Dean Russell (Con) stressed the need for *'an integrated approach,'* to the serious mental health issues that had been:

'An absolute focus in my constituency over the past few years.'

Other key contributions welcoming the proposed Mental Health Reform Bill came from Jonathan Ashworth MP (Lab) Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Dr Ben Spencer MP (Con) a former NHS consultant psychiatrist and Darren Henry MP (Con) who had previously raised the mental health crisis in his constituency as a direct result of the pandemic via an Oral Question to the Prime Minister.

Dr Lisa Cameron MP (SNP) herself a psychologist (and in concert with the Royal College of Psychiatrists) called for:

'Parity of esteem for mental health services. In December 2020, there was an 11% increase in referrals, and the UK household longitudinal study found that during the



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peak of COVID, average mental distress was 8.1% higher than normal levels, so we cannot underestimate the potential tsunami of mental health issues that will require to be treated as a consequence of this pandemic.'

Dr Cameron also made specific reference to the need for mental health services not being 'sidelined yet again,' and in specific reference to the needs to children saying:

'Our children have coped in their young lifetimes with one of the biggest adjustments and crises we have ever seen. We must be cognisant of their resilience but also the impact, because they have been dealing with a killer disease that they know can take away their loved ones and have had their educational and social lives turned upside down. Ensuring that the mental health concerns of children are identified, referred and treated is of paramount importance. The Royal College of Psychiatrists found that 1.5 million children are predicted to need new or extra mental health support as a result of the pandemic.'

We hope to meet Ministers and officials for further discussion at the earliest possible date to ensure that the first big reform of mental health services in the UK for 38 years will be a milestone in the society that we want to make after the COVID-19 pandemic and not just another testimony to a lost generation.

Our report demonstrates the devastating effect on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing of ingrained disadvantage, social exclusion and poverty.

We are profoundly grateful to MQ Mental Health Research for the sponsorship of this important work.

By bringing together experts in mental health to work with APPG members and associates, MQ has helped the APPG to share expert voices directly with the decision-makers in government. Our work in this report and others is essential.

It is only with accurate data, generated through research and illustrated by lived experience that policy-makers can take informed and fair decisions in the best interests of the whole population.

This is what our reports are intended to achieve.