Young people

Covid-19 briefing note: May 2020

This series of briefings address significant issues that are emerging in the UK as a result of Covid-19 that impact on the work of community investment. In each one, we have brought together available evidence to help you think about and plan future strategies and how resources can be directed. This briefing covers young people.

The current situation

Over one million young people (aged 11-25) have known needs that have been amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic.[1] An estimated two million young people have emerging needs that have been triggered or caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.[2]

Of the 360,000 young people from vulnerable families who were in receipt of formal support, just 5% of them were in school prior to Easter 2020.[3]

An estimated 448,000 young people from vulnerable families are not known to services.[4]

Young people have been dynamic and at the forefront of the covid-19 response across the world, volunteering, supporting friends and families and filling essential job roles.[5]

Education

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have access to resources and a suitable learning environment at home.[6] By the age of 16, disadvantaged pupils are over 18 months behind their more affluent peers in attainment.[7]

An extended period of disrupted education will further exacerbate existing educational inequalities, with serious long-term effects.[8]

Increases in the "stress, depression and irritability" of parents is detrimental to the home learning environment.[10]

In 2018, 8% of renters in social housing lived in overcrowded homes, compared to 6.2% of private renters and 1.3% of owner occupiers.[11]
In London, 15% of social housing households are overcrowded.[12]

There may be an increase in interest among young people to remain in education longer, while employment opportunities are limited.[13]

Social housing and young people

Over 45% of all housing association households have dependent and / or independent children.[30]

14% of housing association households consist of a lone parent with dependent children, compared to 2.2% of owner occupiers and 9.4% of private renters.[31]

In 2018, a prize-winning report used regression analysis to compare the mental, emotional and behavioural development of children living in social housing with those living in private rented housing in England. It found that there is no evidence of a negative or positive tenure effect from social housing.[32]

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Young people living in social housing are more likely to be part of a family unit suffering from furloughing, uncertainty and job losses.[14]

School closures, and reduced capacity when reopening could put millions of children at risk of hunger, increasing reliance on holiday food projects.[15]

Employment

Recessions can disproportionately affect young people: after the 2008 crisis, unemployment amongst school leavers with GCSEs (or equivalent qualifications) increased from 22% to 32%.[16]

One third of 18-24 year olds who were in employment have either been furloughed or lost their job, compared to one sixth of prime age adults.[17]

One in three 18-24 year olds who are in work have seen their pay reduced, while 9% who were in work have lost their job, three times the average.[18]

Young people are more likely to have some of the skills which will be essential in the new working environment, and can be leaders in driving forward digital transformation.[19]

Mental health

83% of young people with a history of mental health issues said the pandemic had made their mental health worse. Over 25% said they were no longer able to access support.[20]

Almost 60% of young people said that Covid-19 has left them uncertain about their future.[21]

Youth services and community organisations

Almost 90% of youth sector organisations are likely or very likely to reduce service provision because of the current situation.[21] One in five youth clubs are expected to close.[22]

Youth services were already underfunded, with funding falling by £2.2 billion between 2010-2019.[23]

The importance of understanding social impact for young people.

Drivers of young people's wellbeing differ significantly from other age groups. When planning initiatives for young people it is important that their needs are taken into account.

The UK Social Value Bank reveals that young people place particular importance is being able to rely on family, having internet access, experiencing good mental health, being confident and feeling safe.

Age data should be collected for a variety of reasons:

- It helps to understand how effective projects are in comparison to other age groups.
- It demonstrates if the specific needs of young people are being met.
- It helps you develop effective age specific initiatives.
- It illustrates and identifies the specific project skills and approaches needed to maximise impact.

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Gangs, violence, crime and abuse

One third of those fined for breaching lockdown rules were aged 18-24.[24]

Over 55% of 18-23 year olds are using social media more.[25] Social media is often used to make initial contact with young people being targeted for exploitation in county lines drug trafficking.[26]

The NCA also predicts a potential rise in online sexual abuse with young people spending more time online.[27] The NSPCC warn that lonely children are more likely to be groomed.[28]

Those more at risk of being targeted by drug gangs include those having prior experience of neglect, physical / sexual abuse, lack of stable home environment, all of which have been exacerbated by the current situation.[29]

What does this mean for social housing?

Whilst initial focus of community-based Covid-19 responses was on older people and those with long-term health conditions, the needs of younger people are now coming to the fore. How we work with young people and their families will be critical in supporting community based recovery.

Young people have been disproportionately affected by both disruption in education and in employment. For many, this will have had an impact on household finances. Dedicated programmes to support younger people back into jobs will be needed.

Youth participation programmes, particularly those delivered face-to-face, have moved online. How these programmes are run in the future in a more digital mode will be a key area of focus.

School holiday programmes will need to be re-thought. Housing providers will need to work with their local partners to find new ways of delivering programmes that seek to achieve multiple aims and outcomes.

Those young people at risk of abuse will need specific help. Local collaborations will be important to help safeguard those at risk of exploitation, violence and crime.

Community Insight datasets

There are numerous datasets in Community Insight that can be used to inform strategies and new initiatives for young people:

- Children in poverty
- Youth unemployment
- Obese children
- Low birth weight
- Key stage 4 average point score
- Income deprivation affecting children index
- Children and young people sub domain rank.

Book a demo or find out more

Further reading:

HAYN

British Association of Social Workers: Covid-19 resources

ADCS resources

National Youth Agency

Youth Employment UK

NSPCC

The Mix

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