



Supporters Newsletter

September 2020

Working together to improve the lives of children and Families

How are things for others



Households in temporary accommodation rose nearly 10% as pandemic hit

25/08/20 Inside Housing

The number of homeless households in temporary accommodation across England climbed nearly 10% last year to reach a 14-year high as the coronavirus pandemic hit.

On 31 March, there were 93,000 households in temporary accommodation including 129,380 children

[Official figures released on Thursday](#) also showed that councils assessed 75,140 households as either being homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days over the three-month period.

That is a 9.7% jump from the figure for the previous quarter and the highest level since the assessment system was introduced in April 2018 as part of the Homelessness Reduction Act.

On 31 March, there were 93,000 households in temporary accommodation including 129,380 children – up 5.3% from 88,310 households at 31 December and a 9.4% rise from the 85,040 recorded on the same date in 2019.

The increase was mainly driven by single households, with a 28.5% rise over the 12-month period among this group.

Of the 75,140 households assessed as being owed a homelessness duty by councils between January and March, 2,320 were rough sleeping – only a marginal increase from 2,210 between October and December.

Another 19,160 had been living in the private rented sector, up 15.7% from the 16,560 recorded over the previous three months, while there was a 12% rise to 18,080 among those who were living with family.

The figures were released the day before ministers [announced a four-week extension to the evictions ban](#) imposed in March following widespread fears about a potential surge in homelessness when the moratorium was supposed to lift on 23 August.

Of the 73,960 households whose homelessness duty owed by councils came to an end between January and March, 48.9% were secured accommodation for at least six months.

Use of B&B temporary accommodation for families with children fell 18.4% to 1,550 households over the three months, although for all types of households there was an 11.6% rise to 8,180.

Eight in 10 poorer UK families feel worse off since lockdown – survey

Families tell of abandoning balanced meals and selling possessions for lack of money

25 Aug 2020 The Guardian

Some families have abandoned balanced meals for lack of money during the coronavirus crisis, while many have faced physical and mental problems, according to a report.

Researchers from the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) and the Church of England (C of E) spoke to parents who said they had been forced to sell possessions to protect their children's quality of life, and found that 80% of poorer families surveyed felt they had become worse off financially since the lockdown began.

The findings underline the disproportionate strain being placed on the poorest households as the UK struggles to deal with the pandemic. In June the [Resolution Foundation](#) said that while many low-income families were turning to credit cards to get by under lockdown, many higher-income households were able to save more money as their costs fell.

The CPAG and C of E researchers found that costs had gone up for many low-income families, many of whom were having to spend more on food and utilities than before. Meanwhile, many had lost work either as a direct result of the lockdown or the loss of support such as childcare.

“We have had to cut down quite a bit, not have the diet we had before when I was trying to make sure that they get a balanced diet. I just manage whatever I can make, really ... with fruit and everything being so expensive, you just have to get what’s affordable,” said one parent, named by the researchers as Ann-Marie.

Another, named Claire, said: “I went round Lidl with a list and a calculator to try and get everything I possibly could at the lowest possible price. It has just meant worry and stress and anxiety, because as long as you can see a light at the end of the tunnel, it gives you strength to move forwards. We haven’t had that. In terms of financial impact, it’s meant absolutely counting every penny.”

Another respondent, whom the researchers did not name, said: “I’m trying to sell my things, my jewellery, so they [the children] can have their TV.”

Physical abuse of older children soared in lockdown, says NSPCC

Adolescents four times more likely to be targeted than under-11s, as cases in England rise 53%

- **Coronavirus – latest updates**
- **See all our coronavirus coverage**



25 Aug 2020

Four times as many adolescents are physically abused compared with younger children in England, analysis of police-recorded offences shows, with incidents against 11- to 18-year-olds soaring during the coronavirus lockdown.

The numbers and rates of recorded physical abuse offences against older children in England and Wales have increased since 2014-15, the NSPCC said in a report.

There were 99,139 recorded physical abuse offences against adolescents in England in 2018-19.

This is a recorded rate of 197.4 physical abuse offences per 10,000 adolescents, four times the rate of 48.7 per 10,000 children aged under 11. In Wales, there were 240.1 physical abuse offences recorded per 10,000 11- to 18-year-olds, compared with 70.5 per 10,000 aged under 11.

During the coronavirus lockdown, reports of physical abuse to the NSPCC rose by 53%.

Its helpline received 1,066 contacts about physical abuse on average each month between April and July, compared with a monthly average of 696 before lockdown.

Peter Wanless, the NSPCC chief executive, said: “No one has been left unaffected by the uncertainty we are living through. For adolescents, already navigating perhaps the most challenging period of their lives, the impact is likely to be significant and, in some cases, lasting.

“As **pupils return to education**, we need to be prepared to make sure schools and teachers, children’s social care and other safeguarding partners are ready to support every young person who has suffered during lockdown.”

The charity’s report, *How Safe Are Our Children? 2020*, found that recorded offences of rape and sexual activity with a 13- to 15-year-old had risen 5% and 8% respectively in the past year in England.

[Sharp increase in UK child sexual abuse during pandemic](#)

[Read more](#)

The report said rates of police-recorded online grooming offences against adolescents were nine times higher than those concerning younger children.

The NSPCC said there were indications that child suicide deaths may have increased during lockdown, but said it was too early to call this a trend.

There were 26 probable child suicides during the 82 days before lockdown and a further 25 in the first 56 days of lockdown in England, the charity said.

In 12 of the 25 post-lockdown deaths, factors related to coronavirus or lockdown were thought to have played some part. These included restrictions on education and other activities, disruption to care and support services, tensions at home, and isolation.

Male suicide rate hits two-decade high in England and Wales

1 Sep 2020 The Guardian

Rate of 16.9 deaths per 100,000 in 2019 was highest since 2000, ONS data shows

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)

The suicide rate for men in England and [Wales](#) in 2019 was the highest for two decades, official figures show.

Data from the [Office for National Statistics](#) (ONS), published on Tuesday, found there were 5,691 suicides registered, with an age-standardised rate of 11 deaths per 100,000 population.

The ONS said men accounted for about three-quarters of suicide deaths registered in 2019, 4,303 compared with 1,388 women.

The England and Wales male suicide rate of 16.9 deaths per 100,000 was the highest since 2000 but remained in the line with the 2018 rate. The rate for women was 5.3 deaths per 100,000, the highest since 2004.

Samaritans pointed to “worrying trends”, including men aged 45-49 remaining at the highest risk of suicide, and an increase in suicide rates among young people, especially women under 25. An increase in suicide rates among people aged 25 to 44 in recent years continued in 2019.

“With the impact of the pandemic this year taking a huge toll on people’s mental wellbeing, we should be even more concerned,” said the charity’s chief executive, Ruth Sutherland.

Although there was no guarantee the impact of Covid-19 would lead to higher suicide rates, Samaritans said its research, based on calls to its helpline, found the pandemic had exacerbated known risk factors for people already vulnerable.

“Volunteers are telling us that many callers have been worried about losing their job and/or business and their finances, with common themes around not being able to pay rent/mortgage, inability to support the family, and fear of homelessness.”

Vicki Nash, the head of policy and campaigns at the charity Mind, said: “Not all suicides are mental health-related but many are, and we know that a significant proportion of people who take their own lives have asked for support for their mental health within the last 12 months, which means that services are failing people when they need help the most.

“With more and more people seeking support for their mental health, it is absolutely crucial that services are equipped to meet the demand. No one in touch with services, asking for help, should reach the point of taking their own life.”

Among men, the area with the highest rate was Yorkshire and the Humber at 20.6 per 100,000, followed by the south-west at 19.4. London recorded the lowest rate with 11.8.

The area with the highest female suicide rate was also Yorkshire and the Humber at 7.3 per 100,000, while the north-east had the lowest rate among women at 4.1.

The male suicide rate in the south-east increased from 13.5 per 100,000 (526 deaths) in 2018 to 16.8 per 100,000 (657 deaths) in 2019.

The ONS said: “Higher rates of suicide among middle-aged men in recent years might be because this group is more likely to be affected by economic adversity, alcoholism and isolation. It could also be that this group is less inclined to seek help.”

Provisional data, also published by the ONS, showed there were 6.9 suicide deaths per 100,000 people in England between April and June, during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic. This was the equivalent of 845 registered deaths, the lowest of any quarter since 2001, the ONS added.

But the ONS said the low number of suicide deaths registered during this period was probably because inquests were delayed because of the Covid-19 outbreak.

“The lower number of deaths registered caused by suicide in quarter two of 2020 should be interpreted with caution; this likely reflects delays to inquests because of the impact of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic on the coroner’s service. All deaths caused by suicide in England are investigated by coroners,” it said.

“Given the length of time it takes to hold an inquest (around five months), we do not currently know the total number of suicides that occurred during the coronavirus pandemic.”

Gap between rich and poor pupils in England 'grows by 46% in a year'

Disadvantaged and BAME pupils lost more learning in lockdown and need urgent support, researchers say

1 Sep 2020 The Guardian

Urgent support must be targeted at disadvantaged pupils and schools in areas of high deprivation, researchers have said, as figures reveal the gap in England between some pupils and their wealthier peers widened by 46% in the school year severely disrupted by the coronavirus lockdown.

As the school year begins for most pupils in England and Wales, the authoritative study by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), based on interviews with more than 3,000 teachers and heads at more than 2,000 schools, revealed that disadvantaged and black and minority ethnic (BAME) children had gone backwards compared with their better-off peers since March.

While the average learning lost was three months for all pupils, according to teachers, more than half of pupils at schools in the most deprived areas lost four months or more, compared with just 15% of those in the least deprived areas.

And while just 1% of pupils in the wealthiest areas were estimated to have lost six months in effective learning to the lockdown, in the poorest areas more than 10 times as many were affected as badly.

The NFER estimated that the worst-hit secondary schools in England face an average cost for pandemic measures of more than £700,000 to cover additional staff, cleaning and IT spending for reopening and preparation for potential lockdowns, while primary schools face an average £280,000 cost.

The research found that, based on estimates supplied by teachers, the learning gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in July 2020 was 46% bigger than it was a year earlier. However, it said that 46% was “likely to be an underestimate” if differences between schools were included.

Vulnerable children will 'slip out of view', commissioner warns

- 16 September 2020 BBC

Vulnerable children who require urgent support will "slip out of view" because of the impact of coronavirus, England's children's commissioner has warned.

Anne Longfield has called for central investment in youth work to help handle problems exacerbated by lockdown.

An estimated **two million children** in England live in homes affected by substance abuse, domestic violence or mental health issues.

The government said their safety and wellbeing had always been a priority.

With children having returned to schools across England teachers will begin to identify children who are at risk, leading to an expected increase in referrals to social services, the commissioner told the BBC.

She said: "After the school six-week holidays it's always the case that there are spikes in referrals to social services for children so, after six months, we should expect there to be a really significant increase in the number of children who there are concerns about.

"It will need investment, be it from the police and crime commissioners or indeed from central government to really look at long term, I would say youth work, with these individual children because there's a danger that in five years' time we look back and there's a generation of very vulnerable teens that we let just slip out of view at this time with terrible long term consequences."

Ms Longfield called for further resources to help youth workers engage with young people who may have drifted away from the education system, leaving them at risk of being targeted by criminal gangs.

The St Giles Trust works with teenagers who have been excluded from schools and said it was anticipating a doubling of referrals to its services in the coming weeks.

Carl Morton, who works for the charity, said: "All of a sudden these kids are back out now, so whether it's criminal activity or grooming of gang [members], we're going to see an influx of it.

"It then means we're going to get referrals for these children to work with St Giles."

'I was getting into bother'

Thirteen-year-old Jake (not his real name) had just started at a specialist school in Leeds for children with behavioural problems when lockdown was announced in March.

"[Lockdown] was hard, there was nowt to do really, I was just sat in the same spot all the time, not being able to go out or see all your mates," he said.

"Without St Giles I was getting into bother, I was going out with the wrong people.

"Now that I've met these it's calmed me down. I'm not going out as much as what I was doing, doing bad stuff.

"They've given me a laptop to learn at home on, they give us vouchers for food, gym equipment.

"It's just been easier."

Ms Longfield added: "I want children to be at the forefront of the recovery and get the emotional help and support and the educational support they need to be able to recover and get ahead.

"Otherwise, we'll have a generation of children who will have had difficulties and setbacks during this period that they may take years to get over, if for some they ever do."

In response, a government spokesperson said: "The safety and wellbeing of the most vulnerable children has always been our priority, which is why throughout the pandemic schools, nurseries and colleges remained open to them.

"Our advice for schools is clear that they should continue to identify and report any abuse or harm for children in schools as well as those learning remotely."

Stress, anxiety and depression levels soar under UK Covid-19 restrictions Sep 2020 The Guardian

Researchers say mental health levels may worsen as infections rise and lockdowns are imposed

Restrictions to curb the spread of coronavirus in the UK has driven stress, anxiety and depression far above normal levels and may do again in coming months if widespread lockdowns are re-imposed, researchers say.

A major study into the mental health impact of the pandemic found that in the early stages of lockdown 57% of those who took part reported symptoms of anxiety, with 64% recording common signs of depression.

While the mental health problems improved as restrictions eased, scientists warn they may worsen again as infections rise and more aggressive nationwide lockdowns are considered over the autumn and winter.

“This is far in excess of levels usually seen in the UK,” said Kavita Vedhara, a professor of health psychology who led the study at the University of Nottingham. Based on thresholds that qualify people for psychological help on the NHS, 26% of the volunteers had moderate to severe anxiety and 31.6% had moderate to severe depression.

The study conducted with King’s College London quizzed more than 3,000 UK adults about their mental health as stay-at-home restrictions came in earlier this year. The researchers

looked specifically at which groups were most affected by lockdown and what issues they found most difficult.

Women, young people and those in high-risk categories for Covid-19 were most affected, the researchers found, though different factors probably drove the mental health difficulties in each group. While the fear of catching the virus was likely key to those with underlying health conditions, young people and women may have felt more distress through **work insecurity**, loneliness and **more domestic violence**.

As part of the study researchers have collected hair samples from the participants to measure the stress hormone cortisol. The hormone plays a role in how emotional wellbeing affects physical health. Tests on the samples should reveal whether the pandemic, and the social restrictions imposed in response, have altered cortisol levels and whether this changes the severity of Covid-19 infections.

In **a separate study**, which has yet to be published, Michael Daly at Maynooth University in Ireland investigated the mental health of 14,000 people in UK households during lockdown. The results confirmed that women and young people experienced the greatest increases in mental health difficulties, though they also enjoyed the fastest recovery.

“Essentially we’re seeing that recovery from mental health difficulties is fastest in the young, in women, and also in the high education groups, which were the three groups that showed the sharpest increases,” Daly said.

Vedhara, whose report is published in **BMJ Open**, said worrying about contracting Covid-19, feeling lonely, and not thinking positively were all strongly associated with how anxious and depressed people became.

To prepare for the coming months, she said new policies were needed to help people feel less worried about picking up the virus. Specifically, she said the UK needs to suppress the virus to low levels, have an effective system for tracing the contacts of those who test positive and have enough **testing capacity** so people can go about their daily lives without fear of becoming infected.

Extreme poverty 'will double by Christmas' in UK because of Covid-19 14 Sep 2020 The Guardian

End of coronavirus job and income support expected to spark 61% rise in food bank use

Britain's largest food bank network has warned that UK destitution rates will double by Christmas alongside an explosion in demand for charity food parcels, as coronavirus job and income support schemes are wound down.

The Trussell Trust predicts that at least 670,000 extra people will become destitute in the last three months of the year – a level of poverty that leaves them unable to meet basic food, shelter or clothing needs – if the government withdraws Covid support for low-income households.

Despite **unprecedented demand for charity food since lockdown** – 100,000 people used food banks for the first time between April and June – the trust said ending furlough in October would trigger a rise in food bank use of at least 61% – equivalent to a year-on-year increase of 300,000 parcels.

“Our research finds that Covid-19 has led to tens of thousands of new people needing to use a food bank for the first time. This is not right. If we don't take action now, there will be further catastrophic rises in poverty in the future,” said Emma Revie, the chief executive of the Trussell Trust.

The trust said the impact of rising unemployment on low-income families after the planned winding down of the job retention scheme raised the prospect of a significant “reshaping of the landscape of poverty, destitution and food insecurity in this country”.



Food banks' stark warning to government: we can't do this alone

[Read more](#)

Its forecasts come amid rising concern among poverty analysts and campaigners about the dire consequences of an abrupt withdrawal of furlough at the end of October, together with a failure to retain the temporary £20 a week increase in universal credit and tax credit rates due to end next April.

The trust said withdrawing the £20 a week rise, which would leave millions of people £1,040 a year worse off overnight, would increase food bank use by 10%. This follows estimates by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which said last week removal of the uplift would pull 700,000 more people into poverty.

Although the trust welcomed the £9bn Covid welfare package provided by the government since March, it said rising food bank use indicated this was not enough to support people in crisis – 43% of people referred to food banks in April had an income that was “not at a level to sustain a minimum quality of life”.

Analysis of food bank use since lockdown suggested **families with children** and people who identified as “black or black British” were disproportionately likely to have to use food banks. Only 4% of food bank users were furloughed – suggesting the scheme had had a positive impact on poverty levels.

The **income shock experienced by millions** as a result of the Covid crisis was vividly reflected in Trussell Trust’s food bank data: 56% of people referred for charity food had reported a drop in household income since early March; 32% of people using its food banks had lost their job.

The trust’s food banks reported extraordinary spikes in demand: Hammersmith and Fulham food bank in west London said it normally gave out 110 vouchers a week, but at the height of lockdown it was delivering food to 150 people a day. Caernarfon food bank said its normal referral rate of 20 people a day quadrupled on peak days.

The trust called on the government to rethink the impending cliff edge on furlough payments, lock in the £20 uplift to universal credit, and reinvest in local welfare schemes. Its forecasts were drawn up by Heriot-Watt University academics and the National Institute of Social and Economic Research.

A government spokesperson said: “We have provided £9.3bn extra welfare support to help those most in need, including increasing universal credit by up to £20 a week, as well as introducing income protection schemes, mortgage holidays and additional support for renters. Meanwhile, since mid-March we’ve supported 3.9m claims to universal credit and made 1.3m advance payments to people who could not wait.

“We have already taken steps to help ease the burden of universal credit debt repayments, including reducing the maximum deduction from 40% to 30% of a claimant’s standard allowance. From October 2021 we will reduce this further to 25%, and we will double the time available to repay an advance to 24 months.”

