

# SAFE & SOUND



04

Welcome to Best Foot Forward's safeguarding newsletter, bringing you the latest insights on current safeguarding topics and educational legislation. Let's take a look at what's new and unfolding in this constantly changing landscape!

## MENTAL HEALTH - KEY TAKEAWAYS

With Mental Health Day being recognised this month both nationally and at Best Foot Forward, we are featuring it again in this edition. Highlighting key points from 'Mind' that help raise awareness of mental health.

Please take a look at this edition to learn more and help keep raising awareness.

LEARN MORE ON PAGE 2



Corona  
virus



## THE IMPACT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC ON CHILDREN

Ever considered how the Coronavirus has affected our children and young people 5 years on?

If you are interested in knowing more, please read on.

LEARN MORE ON PAGE 3



# MENTAL health

- In 1997, when social media first began to emerge, 16.6% of young people aged 7–16 were diagnosed with a probable mental illness.
- As of 2023–2024, this number has risen to 18%.
- A shocking 18,577 young people in the UK waited over a year for mental health treatment through the NHS, and 44% waited over two years.
- In England, children with mental health issues miss an average of 15 school days per term, significantly impacting their education.



"Phrases like "men don't cry" and "women are too emotional" reinforce damaging ideas. Boys may feel like they can't be vulnerable without seeming weak, and girls may feel like they have to suppress their emotions to avoid judgment. Words matter, they shape how people view themselves and others.

The charity, Mind, commissioned think tank More in Common to conduct nationally representative surveys with young people aged 16–24 as well as parents, grandparents and carers.

Some of the key findings include:

- Less than a third of children get NHS mental health help in time
- More than four in 10 young people feel stigmatised by discussion about the so-called 'overdiagnosis' of mental health problems
- Over half of young people don't have faith in the government to tackle the nation's mental health crisis
- None of England's political parties are seen as champions of mental health
- Mental health is an issue that unites voters across the political spectrum.



## APPs for Mental Health

### Kooth

A free, safe and anonymous online mental health platform for younger people.

### Holly Health Habit Coach

Want to improve your relationship with food and sleep, and manage stress? Holly Health is a habit coach app. It can help you build healthier habits for mental and physical well-being.

### distrACT

The distrACT app provides support if you're thinking about self-harm or feel suicidal. It's developed by doctors.



THE UK COVID-19 INQUIRY COMMISSIONED A RESEARCH PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE A PICTURE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES, AND HOW THEY PERCEIVED THE IMPACT OF THE UK COVID-19 PANDEMIC ("THE PANDEMIC") ON THEM. THE FINDINGS OF THEIR REPORT WILL BE USED BY THE INQUIRY TO UNDERSTAND HOW CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FELT ABOUT AND EXPERIENCED THE CHANGES THAT TOOK PLACE IN THE PANDEMIC AND THEIR EFFECTS.



[HTTPS://COVID19.PUBLIC-INQUIRY.UK/CHILDREN-YOUNG-PEOPLES-VOICES-FULL-REPORT](https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/children-young-peoples-voices-full-report)

Although children were less affected by the virus itself, they experienced profound social, emotional, and educational impacts. The pandemic disrupted nearly every system that supports their wellbeing – school, health, family life, and social connection.

## EDUCATION

- Prolonged school closures led to learning loss and widening inequality.
- Digital divide: some lacked access to devices, Wi-Fi, or a quiet study space.
- Pupils with special educational needs (SEND) lost vital in-person support.
- Disruption of exams, transitions, and milestones caused anxiety.

## MENTAL HEALTH

- Rates of probable mental disorders rose from 1 in 9 (2017) to 1 in 6 (2021) (NHS Digital).
- Increased loneliness, anxiety, depression, and sleep problems.
- Isolation from peers and fear for family safety intensified stress.
- Limited access to mental health services; long waiting lists.

## FAMILY & HOME

- Financial strain, job loss, and confinement increased family stress.
- Rise in domestic conflict and hidden harm, with fewer safeguarding checks.
- Young carers took on more household and care duties.
- Some families valued extra time together, but this was uneven.

## HEALTH SERVICES

- Routine health and social care was delayed or moved online, often proving less effective.
- Many felt "forgotten" as support workers and counsellors became harder to reach.
- Children with long-term conditions or disabilities faced greater disruption.

## INEQUALITY

- Pandemic amplified disadvantage:
- Poverty, overcrowding, and lack of digital access deepened inequalities.
- Vulnerable groups (in care, disabled, minority ethnic) were hit hardest.

## SOCIAL LIFE

- Loss of friendships, clubs, and sports hindered social skills and confidence.
- Younger children missed key developmental experiences.
- Teenagers lost formative experiences like exams, prom, and work placements.