

Letter to the Telegraph on putting children at the heart of recovery plans

SIR – Despite the Prime Minister's pledges, the needs of babies, children, and young people have all too often been overlooked in pandemic policymaking.

In particular, the closure of schools and nurseries over the last year has deprived children of not just educational opportunities, but the chance to exercise, socialise and enjoy activities that are vital for their physical and mental health.

It is no surprise that experts recently warned that up to [1.5 million extra children and young people in England could require mental health support because of the pandemic](#).

With the final hurdles in the return to 'normality' in sight, it's time to put this right and stop the piecemeal approach to policymaking.

The Government must produce a new vision of childhood to support children, young people and their families to recover from the impact of COVID-19. Their voices must be at the heart of plans to rebuild, backed by renewed investment in the services and workforce that they rely on.

This will require action across Whitehall and in town halls to improve the quality of education, health, early years, youth and social care services. It must be accompanied by a commitment to protect children facing additional challenges, like those with disabilities, those from minority communities, and those growing up in poverty.

Our children and young people deserve better.

Only by putting children at the heart of policymaking can we build a better future for our country after the pandemic.

Signed by 100+ children's sector organisations:

Anna Feuchtwang, CEO, National Children's Bureau

Melanie Armstrong, Chief Executive, Action for Children

Mark Russell, Chief Executive, The Children's Society

Dr Javed Khan, CEO, Barnardo's

Sir Peter Wanless, CEO, NSPCC

Paul Farmer, Chief Executive, Mind

Neil Letch, Chief Executive, Early Years Alliance

Dan Paskins, Director of UK Impact, Save the Children UK

Sir Norman Lamb, Chair, Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition

James Taylor, Director of Strategy, Impact and Social Change

John Poyton, CEO, Redthread

Sharon White OBE, CEO, School and Public Health Nurses Association

Dean Johnstone, CEO, Minds Ahead

Claire Donovan, Head of Policy, Research & Campaigns, End Furniture Poverty

Julie Randles, CEO, Power2

Irene Audain MBE, CEO, Scottish Out of School Care Network

John Diamond, CEO, The Mulberry Bush Charity

Beatrice Merrick, Chief Executive, Early Education

Kamini Gadhok MBE, CEO, Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists

Ann Chivers, Chief Executive, Alström Syndrome UK

Louise King, Director, Children's Rights Alliance for England

Louisa McGeehan, CEO, Just for Kids Law

Lauren Seager-Smith FRSA, CEO, Kidscape

Helen O'Donnell, CEO and Director of Partnerships, Children's University Trust

Liz Bayram, Chief Executive, Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years

Rachel Travers, CEO, Amaze Sussex

Miriam Donaghy, CEO, MumsAid

Lucie Russell, CEO, StreetDoctors

Dr Nihara Krause, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, CEO and Founder, stem4

Dr Carol Homden, CEO, Coram Group

Maggie Jones, CEO, Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies

Mark Lee, Chief Executive, Together Trust

Thomas Lawson, Chief Executive, Turn2us

Paul Whiteman, General Secretary, NAHT, the school leaders' union

Dr Nick Owen MBE, CEO, The Mighty Creatives

Patricia Durr, Chief Executive Officer, ECPAT UK (Every Child Protected Against Trafficking)

Dr Toni Wolff, Chair of British Academy of Childhood Disability (BACD)

Kate Fallon, General Secretary, Association of Educational Psychologists

June O'Sullivan, CEO, London Early Years Foundation

Andy Elvin, CEO, The Adolescent & Children's Trust

Dr Wanda Wyporska, Executive Director, The Equality Trust

Peter Grigg, CEO, Home-Start UK

Jonathan Douglas CBE, CEO, National Literacy Trust

Victoria Langer, Interim Chief Executive, Become

Arti Sharma, CEO, Nutureuk

Christine-Koulla Burke, Director, Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities

Jane Streater, Chair, North East Child Poverty Commission

Sandra Butcher, Chief Executive, The National Organisation for FASD

David Holmes CBE, Chief Executive, Family Action

Mo Tutty, Chief Executive, Home-Start Hampshire

Dr Sally Smith, CEO, Peeple

Chris Price, CEO, Pecan

Jane Robey, Chief Executive Officer, National Family Mediation

Liz Emerson, Co-founder, Intergenerational Foundation

Wendy Tabuteau, Chief Executive, Partnership for Children

Dr Karen Boardman, Chair of TACTYC 'Together and Committed to Young Children'

Joseph Russo, Founder, The Enthusiasm Trust

Betsy de Thierry, Founder & Chair of Trustees, Trauma Recovery Centre

Geoff Barton, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders

Andy Fletcher, Chief Executive, Together for Short Lives

Jolanta Lasota, Chief Executive, Ambitious about Autism

Martin Coles, Chief Executive Officer, Marine Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC)

Dympna Cunnane, CEO, Our Time

Diane Ashby, Deputy Chief Executive, British Psychological Society

Rachel Kirby-Rider, Chief Executive, Young Lives vs Cancer

Kathy Evans, Chief Executive, Children England

Ali Oliver MBE, CEO, Youth Sport Trust

Natalie Bailey, Chair, British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Justin Irwin, CEO, The Parent-Infant Foundation

Vivienne Evans OBE, Chief Executive, Adfam

Dr Nick Waggett, Chief Executive, Association of Child Psychotherapists

Professor Chris Pascal & Professor Tony Bertram, Directors, Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC)

Brigid Robinson, Managing Director, Coram Voice

Richard Kramer, Chief Executive, Sense.

Jo Revill, CEO, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health

Kevin Williams, Chief Executive, The Fostering Network

Cheryl Ward, Chief Executive Officer, Family Fund

Sarah Hughes, CEO, Centre for Mental Health

Merle Davies, Director, Blackpool Centre for Early Child Development

Ben Kernighan, Chief Executive, Leap Confronting Conflict

Tania Tirraoro & Renata Blower, Co-Directors, Special Needs Jungle Ltd

Pippa Goodfellow, Director, Alliance for Youth Justice

Liz Ryburn, Support Team Manager, Spinal Muscular Atrophy UK

Alison Morton, Executive Director, Institute of Health Visiting

Dalton Leong, Chief Executive, The Children's Trust

Julie Pointer, Children and Young People Programme Lead

Katie Ghose, CEO, KIDS

Joseph Howes, Chief Executive, Buttle UK

Nikki Taylor, Senior Manager, Savana Inc. Ltd

Rita Waters, Group Chief Executive, NYAS (National Youth Advocacy Service)

Lucy Bailey, CEO and Founder, Bounce Forward

Philip Lee, Chief Executive, Epilepsy Action

Kate Wareham, Director of Young People and Families, Catch22

Alison Garnham, Chief Executive, Child Poverty Action Group

Leonor Stjepic, CEO, Montessori Group

Mark Hardy, Chair, Association of Play Industries

Claire Dorer, CEO, NASS

Katherine Jones, Joint-CEO, The Fatherhood Institute

Sarah Darton, CEO, Family Links - the Centre for Emotional Health

Jonny Benjamin MBE, Founder & Chair, Beyond

Viv Cooper OBE, Chief Executive, The Challenging Behaviour Foundation

Dr Greg Ussher, CEO, METRO Charity

Penny Mansfield CBE, Co-director, OnePlusOne

Dr Ruth Allen, Chief Executive, British Association of Social Workers

Kathy Roberts, CEO, Association of Mental Health Providers

Annette Du Bois, Co-founder, CHAMPS Academy

Tim Morfin, CEO, Transforming Lives for Good (TLG)

Jane Harris, Chief Executive, I CAN

Jon Richards, Assistant General Secretary, UNISON