How has COVID-19 Affected the Mental Health of Children and Young People in the United Kingdom?

The impacts of coronavirus are vast, and changing week by week. As a result, issues being raised and discussed by the fast-growing Kooth community of children and young people are evolving continuously.

Of the thousands of digital conversations being had, we are seeing spikes in many presenting issues, such as sadness, self-harm, suicidal thoughts, abuse and loneliness. It is critical that we meet the needs of children and young people through this crisis, encouraging those with emerging concerns to express themselves and those with ongoing issues to continue their support.

**The Headlines**

**Increased Demand for Mental Health Support**

We are seeing more young people than ever looking to Kooth for support. Now that traditional means of support are closed to many, it’s clear that digital is a vital role in supporting mental health and wellbeing. Offering anonymity and freedom to access help when it’s needed is key; we’re there for young people when they need us.

**Children are Feeling the Impact as Family Bonds are being Tested**

Young people are discussing parental arguments, with many saying they would usually see friends or 'escape' for a while. In the current situation, many have said they feel trapped. An increase of 2,849% has been observed due to increased issues with ‘sibling relationships’.

**Quarantine Sees Sharp Rise in Sadness and Depression**

Many Young People are unhappy that they can’t see their boyfriends/girlfriends. One young person who recently lost a loved one is regularly seeing her Dad and his new family in 1974, which is causing a lot of anxiety.

**Lockdown Produces Increasing Levels of Loneliness**

There has been a sudden and significant change to people’s ability to interact with others and to connect with the wider world. The lack of social connection and people are not able to access the support network in the same way.

**Declining Issues Compared to same period in 2019**

- Health Anxiety
- Psychotic Symptoms

**Growing Issues Compared to same period in 2019**

- Increased Demand for Mental Health Support
- Suicidal Thoughts Show Concerning Upward Trend
- Lockdown brings a Rise in Children’s Eating Difficulties
- Quarantine Sees Sharp Rise in Sadness and Depression

**Children Bear Brunt of Increasing Violence at Home under Lockdown**

In such close proximity to each other, and within an international crisis where emotional intensity can only be magnified more fuel than the situation ordinarily would have.

**Lockdown Sees a Rise in Children’s Eating Difficulties**

For Young People with eating disorders, it’s a struggle for them to find their safe foods or food brands. When they hear about people in this country going without food, there is a lot of guilt around eating being discussed.

**Psychotic Symptoms are Showing an Increase**

During the current crisis, it is crucially important that we are alert to signals that someone may be developing a psychotic illness and that those with an existing presentation continue with their treatment. Challenges to attending face to face services (particularly if medication plays a role in treatment) needs addressing as a priority during the lockdown period.